

Historical Information for the Granite Historical Society 2024 Fall Hike

The Quarry Farm Hike

The Quarry Farm Property

In 1890 George Mann, who was one of the 5 owners of the newly formed Guilford & Waltersville Granite Company, purchased 243 acres of land lying between Davis Avenue and the Patapsco from the estate of Richard Davis, heir to the extensive Davis family holdings in Woodstock. Mann was one of 5 owners of the Guilford & Waltersville Granite Company. When he signed the property over to the company that property became known as the “The Quarry Farm”, although many in Granite called it “The Company Farm”.

During the 1840s and 50s Richard Davis had amassed some 450 acres in Baltimore County, starting with a tract of land named “Sewell’s Hope”, 150 acres, which he purchased from Rezin Worthington in 1840 (Worthington acquired that land in 1822). The rest of the Quarry Farm acreage had been part of “East Lothian”, a large parcel of land patented by William Hamilton back in 1752. **Figure 1.** The eastern boundary of the property ran from Davis Ave to the river along the current Divivo development. The western boundary was along the edge of the current Lehman, Frizzell and Malick properties. That western boundary was defined by a rock wall, probably built by Richard Davis around 1850, a wall still evident 175 years later. **Figure 2.** There’s also a small, interesting piece of pasture land on the Howard County side of the river. It was called “Pleasant Valley”, 6 ½ acres of bottom land lying between the Patapsco and B&O tracks. This author remembers Vernon “Pappy” Mathena, who bought the Quarry Farm in 1946, pasturing beef cattle in “Pleasant Valley”. Pappy sold much of this property to the state park in 1960.

The Guilford & Waltersville Granite Company did not run a full-blown farm. They kept their quarry work animals on the farm - mules, work horses, oxen – and they undoubtedly cut hay and most likely grew some corn for their livestock. An auction notice published when the quarry was selling the property listed beef cattle. There were 4 different pasture area on the farm property, and the 1899 Bromley map of Baltimore County indicates a group of 3 farm buildings just to the east of Putney’s Bridge. The map also shows that a farm house was located about where the mobile home park on Davis Ave is located today.

Waltersville Quarry Railroad

In 1836 True Putney and Hugh Riddle, operators of the Waltersville Quarry, acquired rights-of-way from 4 different landowners in order to construct a 2.1-mile railroad between the quarry and Patapsco River. The purpose of the railroad was to transport granite blocks to B&O trains across the river in Howard County; from there the blocks would go by rail to Edward Green’s “stone yard” in Baltimore where they would be dressed and sold. **Figure 3.** The B&O constructed a 2-mile siding east of Woodstock for this express purpose, and Putney and Riddle constructed a railroad bridge across the river, “Putney’s Bridge”.

This was a *narrow-gauge* railroad -- rails were set 3’ 6” apart instead of the normal 4’ 8” – which gave rise to the Granite community’s nickname for the railway, “The Dinky Track”. When the quarry operation closed in 1925 the tracks were dismantled, but 30 and 40 years on buried railroad ties were still visible and kids growing up along Davis Ave often hiked the Dinky Track and collected abandoned railroad spikes. They still occasionally turn up; the author found one just a few weeks ago. **Figure 4.** The old railroad bed and the stream bed which follows alongside of it is still lined with granite stone from the quarry, rubble accumulated over the decades and cut blocks unloaded from the train when it ceased to operate in 1925. Many of the blocks show evidence of drilled dynamite holes. **Figure 5.**

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Putney's Bridge

Putney & Riddle built a massive granite rubble mound on the northern river bank in order to level it with the B&O tracks on the opposite bank. **Figure 6.** Granite stone abutments were laid on either side of the river and a stone pier in the middle of the river supported the tracks. Amazingly enough, the bridge survived the largest flood in Patapsco River history in 1868, but a smaller flood in 1920 caused significant damage. The bridge was rebuilt (based on a *Jeffersonian* newspaper article) and concrete repairs, still visible today, were made to the abutments. **Figure 7.** A major flood in 1933 finally brought down the bridge, no longer in use, for good. Granite blocks from the collapsed pier still sit in the middle of the river.

Feldspar Quarries

There was no granite located on the Quarry Farm, but there was feldspar. 4 or 5 feldspar quarries, which now just look not so much like abandoned quarries but out-of-place holes in the ground, were located on the hill overlooking the river east of the Quarry RR, and 2 more of them on the flat just west of Putney's Bridge. The largest of the Guiford & Waltersville feldspar quarries was on the hill overlooking the Quarry RR. Unfortunately, that quarry was used as a dumping ground in the 1940s and 50s and still looks like it. **Figure 8.**

The largest feldspar operation in the area was on the Fannie Frost farm located not far off the railroad tracks west of the Davis Tunnel in Howard County. A very short B&O spur was once located there to facilitate loading feldspar onto train cars. Some of the feldspar mined in Woodstock and Granite was ground into potash fertilizer; much of it was shipped by rail to Trenton, New Jersey where the Eureka Mining Company and the Golding and Sons Company crushed the rock for the manufacture of pottery.

The Davis Branch Bridge

At the eastern end of the Quarry Farm property Davis Branch enters the Patapsco from Howard County. An arched railroad bridge over the branch, visible from the Baltimore County side of the river, supposedly dates to the *1st alignment* of the B&O railroad. Visible in the attached photo, **Figure 9**, in 1980 the bridge was reinforced with steel braces. Davis Tavern, located near the branch when the railroad was built in the early 1830s, served as the first B&O station, if you can call it that. The first station at Woodstock was just a wooden platform. It dates to 1848 when the B&O bought an acre of land from Peter Gorman. The iconic Woodstock Baldwin train station was built in 1884 or 1885.

The Swinging Bridge

In 1930 the Maryland Gas Transmission Company, in order to run telephone cables, acquired 20-foot rights-of-way from various landowners in Granite, including Andrew Kirkpatrick, who at that time owned the Quarry Farm property. To cross the river the company laid a cast concrete pipe, perhaps 6 inches in diameter, through which cables were run. That casting is sometimes visible on the bottom of the river depending on how much silt is accumulated. The company also built a swinging bridge across the river for the convenience of their maintenance crews. Kids along Davis Ave, including this author, spent many a playful afternoon on that bridge. Remnants of the wooden anchors for the bridge are still evident on both sides of the river. **Figure 10**

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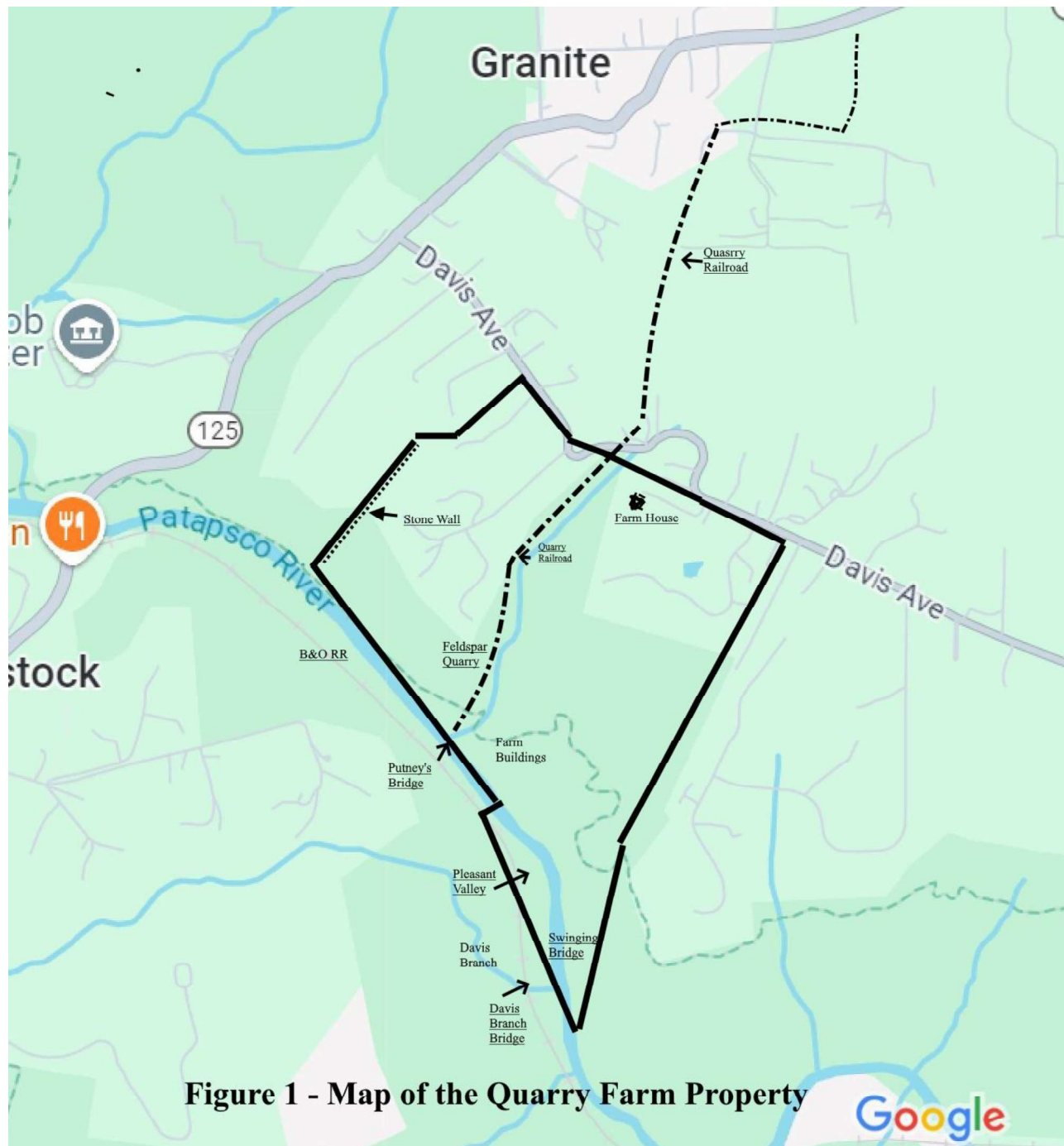


Figure 1 - Map of the Quarry Farm Property

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Figure 2
Rock Wall Along Western
Boundry of the Quarry Farm

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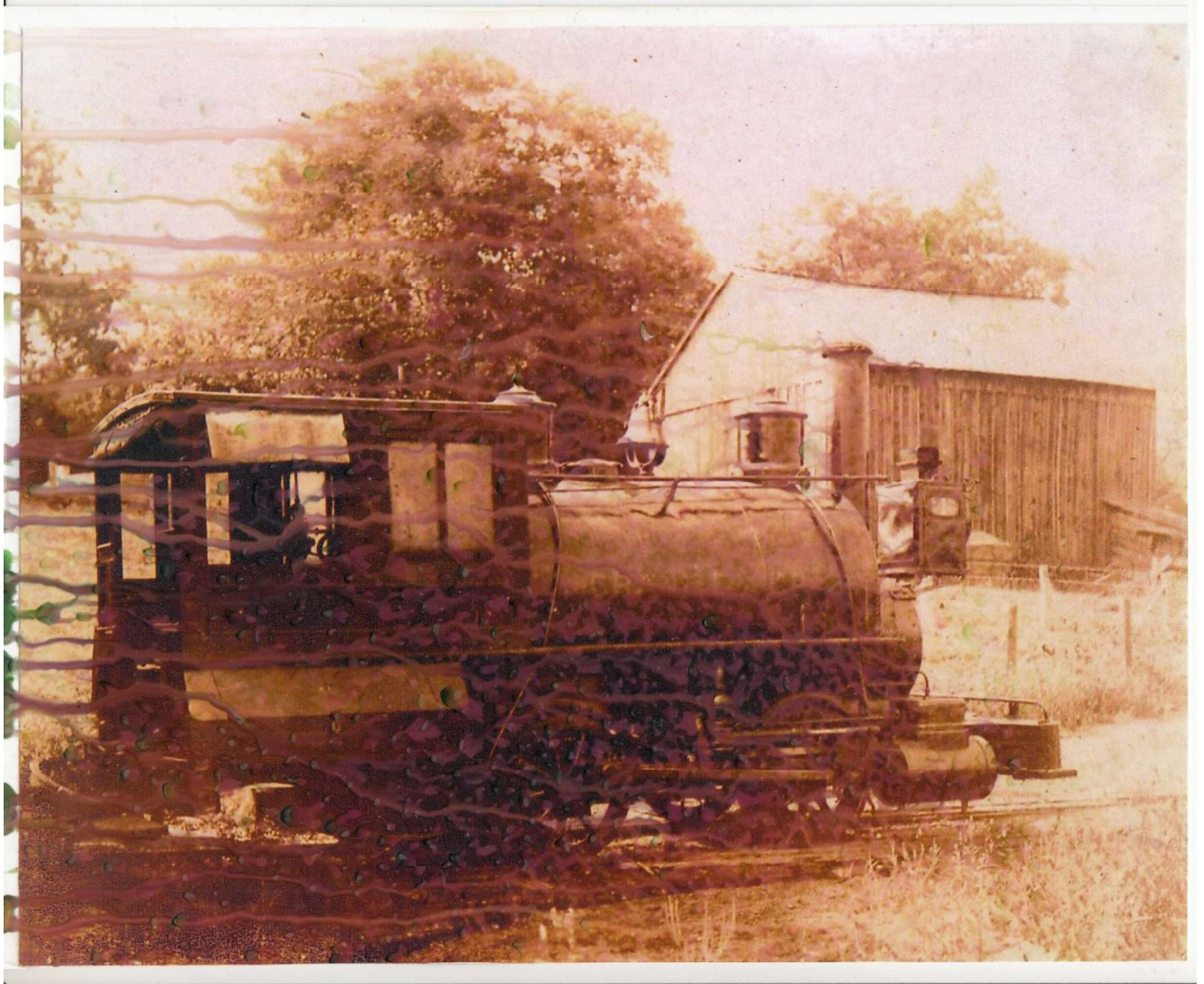


Figure 3 – Waltersville Quarry Railroad Engine. Date unknown.

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Figure 4 (Left) – Waltersville Quarry Railroad Spikes. One was found by the author in the 1950s and the other just this past summer. Can you guess which is which?



Figure 5 (Right) – Granite block abandoned along the Dinky Track. See the evidence of dynamite blasting.

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Figure 6 - Mound on the North Bank of the Patapsco for the Waltersville Quarry Railroad.

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Figure 7 – Putney's Bridge Abutment on the South Bank of the Patapsco.
You can still see concrete repairs made to the stonework in 1920.

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Figure 8 – Feldspar Quarry filled with Accumulated Junk.

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Figure 9 (Top) – Davis Branch Railroad Bridge. The steel girders you see were added as bracing around 1980.



Figure 10 (Bottom) – Remains of a support for the Maryland Gas Transmission Company Swinging Bridge. Pieces of steel cable and foot-planks are still evident.