

The Yount Family

By Barbara Glakas

One of the older homes in Herndon is commonly known as the Yount or Payne house. It is grand old house that sits atop a hill at 106 Monroe Hill Court, sometimes affectionately referred to as “The Monroe Hill house.”

This land was originally part of what was known as the Thompson Tract, about 198 acres of land on the east side of Monroe Street. Slowly the Thompsons sold off various pieces of land, including the land where the Yount house now sits.

In the 1860s the land changed hands several times from John Thompson to Daniel Cayler to Robert Matthews to Austin P. Brown and to Alonzo J. Downing. It is believed the house may have been built in the late 1860s during the Brown/Downing time period.

Laura R. Yount (1848-1918) – then married to Ephraim M. Yount (1844-1927) - bought the house and about fifty acres of land in 1878. The Younts and their heirs owned the property for the next 90 years.

Ephraim M. and Laura R. Yount were both born in Pennsylvania. The Yount family came from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. They lived there during the Civil War and saw President Abraham Lincoln when he arrived to give his Gettysburg address. Ephraim’s sister once wrote about the address and characterized the speech, saying, “the speech of the great man would never be forgotten.” She also recalled how she threw a bouquet of flowers in the open window of the train where Lincoln was sitting as he prepared to leave Gettysburg and return to Washington. The Younts were very proud of their 35-star U.S. flag that once hung in front of the hotel that their father, Israel Yount, operated in Gettysburg, a flag Lincoln saluted as he passed by the hotel. The Younts later brought the flag to Herndon with them, flying it in front of their house on national holidays.

Prior to coming to Herndon, the 1870 census showed that Ephraim was in law school in Pennsylvania. But once in Herndon he was working as a government clerk in the Pension Office in Washington, D.C. We speculate that this job may have been what brought Ephraim to the Washington region. It was during this time period that Ephraim and Laura purchased their Herndon property. In addition to being a government employee, Ephraim also engaged in farming. In the 1900 census Ephraim’s occupation was listed as a grocery merchant. It was not unusual for farmers to have grocery stores.

The Younts had four children: Clarence Edgar (1874-1954), Alice Maude (1875-1963), Maurice Arthur (1880-1966), and Ephraim Claude (1882-1959). Clarence was a Colonel in the Medical Corps in WWI and lived in Arizona, while his siblings stayed in Herndon and lived at the family house.

Alice Maude never married. She was a homemaker and farmed. In her youth she attended the Herndon School on Center Street and later graduated from Central High School in Washington, D.C. She was an active member of Herndon’s First Congregational Church, formerly on Pine

Street, which later merged with other churches and became the Trinity Presbyterian Church. She was a member of the Herndon Fortnightly Club and, for many years, served as the Secretary-Treasurer of Herndon's Chestnut Grove Cemetery.

Maurice A. Yount also attended schools in Herndon and Washington, D.C. He graduated from the old Business High School in Washington (now Roosevelt High School). In 1918 he married Elma Broadway (b. 1889), and they lived together in the Yount family home. Maurice followed in his father's footsteps, doing some farming and was also a store merchant, operating a grocery store on Station Street for many years. In later years, Maurice's old grocery building became a plumbing shop owned by Cliff Reeves. The building used to be located between the current Great Harvest Bread Company and the Dominion Animal Hospital, but it is no longer there. It was damaged in a gas explosion in c. 1963-64.

Like his siblings, Ephraim Claude Yount attended schools in Herndon and in Washington, D.C. He graduated from the Lewis Hotel Training School in Washington. Afterwards he moved to Arizona where he served as the assistant superintendent of the county hospital in Prescott, Arizona. During WWI he served as a Private First Class in the Medical detachment of an Army Infantry unit in Arizona. His obituary said, "he also saw some action on the Mexican border." He spent some time out west doing government and hotel jobs, but ultimately returned to Herndon. The 1920 and 1930 census documents list him as a clerk at the A&P store and a grocery salesman. He was also known to have worked as the Postmaster at Sunset Hills for several years. Ephraim Claude Yount remained a bachelor all his life.

After Laura and Ephraim Yount died - in 1918 and 1927, respectively - their children continued to live in the family house.

All of the Yount children died in the 1950s and 1960s, leaving Maurice's wife, Elma Yount, as the sole survivor. Elma eventually moved out of the Yount family house, living elsewhere in Herndon. She died in 1981. Ephraim and Laura Yount, and three of their four children are buried in Herndon's Chestnut Grove Cemetery. Clarence Yount is buried in Arizona.

The Yount house was sold to Col. Carl Payne in 1968. The Payne family owned the house for the next 38 years. Payne was a WWII veteran. He once said in a WUSA interview, "When I bought the house it was literally falling down. The floors were sagging, the windows leaked. It was in bad shape. I put a lot of love and a lot of money into it."

In 2006, Payne, 93 years old, sold the house to Lawrence Doll Homes. Doll wanted to save the home and incorporate some of its architectural style into the 11-home development they had planned for the property. The Paynes moved to a retirement community in Loudoun County.

The land around the house was cleared and the old Yount house needed to be moved about 200 feet in order to accommodate the new development. Col. Payne, Herndon's Mayor and others were present to watch the 3,000 square foot house being moved on a set of wheels. Payne said, "It's sort of sad to see in a way, but I guess progress has to go on."

The Yount's old house was renovated, continues to sit in a stately manner on what many call Monroe Hill, and is now occupied by a new family.

About this column: “Remembering Herndon’s History” is a regular Herndon Patch feature offering stories and anecdotes about Herndon’s past. The articles are written by members of the Herndon Historical Society. Barbara Glakas is a member. A complete list of “Remembering Herndon’s History” columns is available on the Historical Society website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org.

The Herndon Historical Society operates a small museum that focuses on local history. It is housed in the Herndon Depot in downtown Herndon on Lynn Street and is open every Sunday from noon until 3:00. Visit the Society’s website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org, and the Historical Society’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonHistory> for more information.

Note: The Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday. If you have an interest in local history and would like to help, contact HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com.