

THE COMMUNITY OF FOUR LOCKS

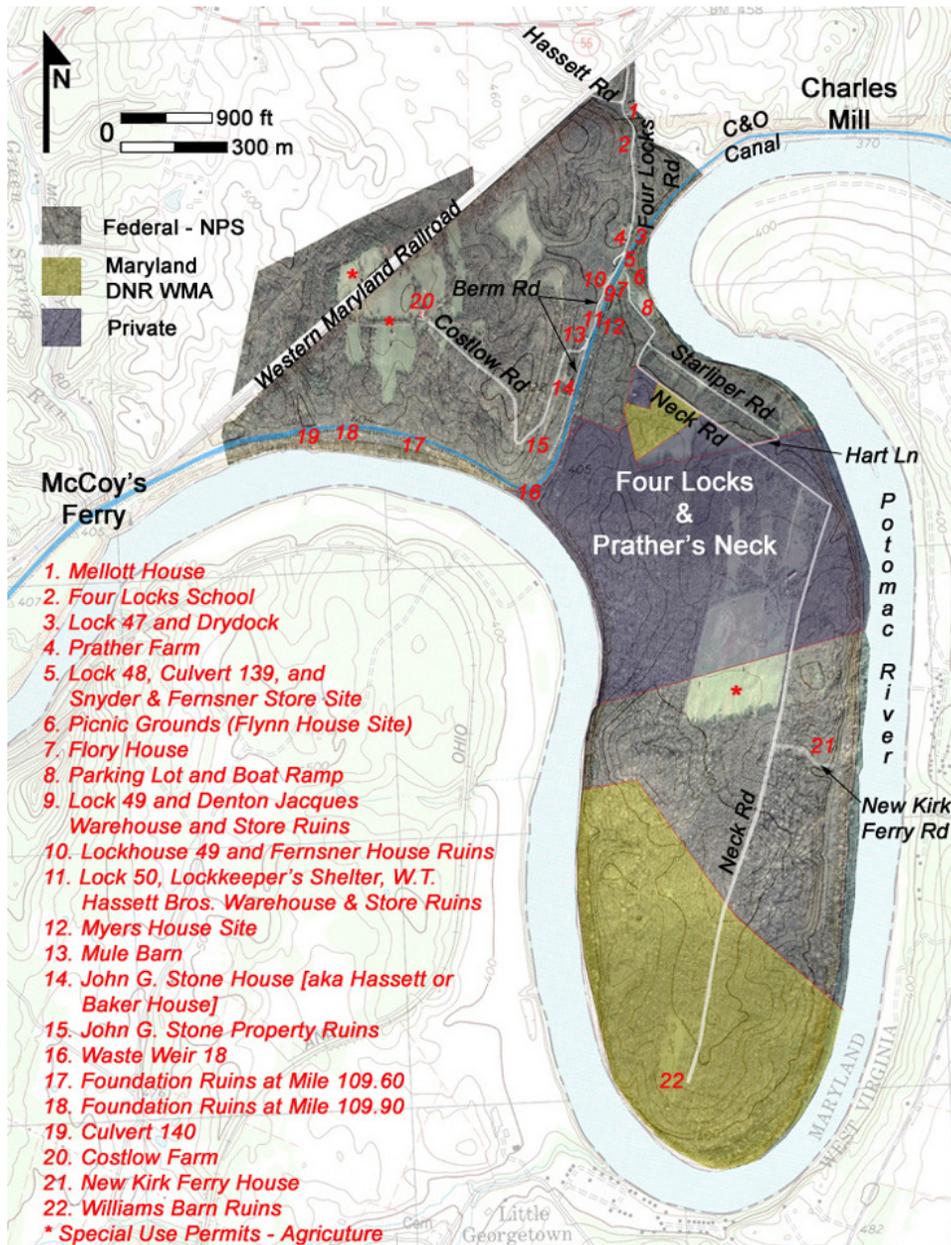
By

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Map and Photographs



Map of the Four Locks Area from the Cultural Landscape Inventory 2009



Original Mule Barn



Four Locks School



Feed store over Lock 49 bypass flume on the right, lock shanty beyond, and feed store at Lock 50 over the bypass flume at the next lock (50). Myers house at the upper left.



To lower left is lock 47 with the bypass flume in the center and a corner of the dry dock to the right. In the background is lock 48 with the feed store.



Photograph ca. 1914–15. Lock 49 shanty and warehouse to the upper right. People in the boat left to right: Erma Kendall, Charles (Sharpie) Taylor, Ida Mae Taylor, Samuel Taylor (Lock-keeper, standing), Fonrose Taylor (age 16), John Cowton Hassett, and Jeremiah Knode.

PROLOGUE

The history of Four Locks has fascinated me since I first moved there. I was living in a large, old stone house which dated back to the Civil War; all around me were remnants of what was once a busy little community; and, of course, the C & O Canal's four locks, lockhouse, mule barn, and other related structures.

However, I soon realized that I could not answer some of the questions visitors asked about the community's history. I discovered park files did not contain in depth historical research about Four Locks. I began talking to local citizens who related many stories and referred me to others to interview. These contacts extended to Pennsylvania, to New York, even to Texas. At the same time I discovered the Washington County Courthouse, the Western Maryland Room of the Washington County Library, including its census records and old newspapers. My goal was to document what the local folks were telling me. I was successful, too. As I answered one question, however, the research opened up new avenues to explore.

Historical research on any subject usually never ends. There is always new primary data to discover and interpret. The researcher finds new people to interview – consequently more information to document. The following document is a beginning only. It is certainly not complete. It will give the present park staff the knowledge to answer most of the questions from interested visitors; it will provide a mental picture of what Four Locks really was. More importantly, I hope it will raise someone's curiosity and interest to continue to explore, to answer, and to find more questions.

Mike Mastrangelo
Allegheny District Ranger
March 19, 1987

FOUR LOCKS: THE BEGINNING

The history of Four Locks began in 1833 and 1834 when Assistant Engineer Alfred Cruger submitted a plan for the construction of the Canal above Dam 5. Early surveys proposed that the Canal be cut one-half mile through Prather's Neck to avoid the four-mile loop that the Neck makes along the Potomac River. This dramatic rise in elevation made the construction of four locks necessary. Cruger's study proposed Locks 46, 47, 48 and 49 be constructed just below Prather's Neck. Lock 50 would be built just below the intersection of Licking Creek and the canal. Cruger also provided that the line of the canal be constructed to avoid a stone barn on the Prather Farm.

On June 16, 1835, Charles Fisk, Resident Engineer, reviewed Cruger's proposals and made several changes. Lock 46 was moved downstream one and one-third miles to within 600 feet of Lock 45. By so doing Fisk raised the level of the Canal to insure against high water backing up from Dam 5 and also the culverts from being blown out during high water. It also made it easier to construct four locks since the level was already high. Locks 47, 48, and 49 were kept very close to Cruger's proposals. However, Fisk changed the alignment of the Canal so that it would run through the stone barn which Cruger wanted to avoid. Fisk argued that while Cruger avoided the barn, the barnyard would have been destroyed. Furthermore, avoiding the barn would interfere with the line of the Canal at a location where four locks so close together would necessitate having the most straight line as possible.

Finally, Fisk relocated Lock 50 from Licking Creek to within 200 feet of Lock 49. This move eliminated the need to make a deep cut through Prather's Neck. This deep cut would have been made through limestone, a difficult and costly project. Furthermore, by raising the Canal, Fisk could construct culverts big enough to flow freely and not become backed up with silt or debris. Finally, Fisk felt that a source of stone for the lock construction was closer to Four Locks than to Licking Creek. Fisk's proposals were accepted by the Canal Company and soon after construction on Sections 205 and 206 began.

The following briefly outlines the various contractors and costs for the four locks and Lockhouse 49:

LOCK 47 - Work began in February, 1836 and was completed in December, 1837. The primary contractor was D. K. Cahoon who completed the lock at a cost of \$10,546.05. David Lyles was called in for some additional work and charged the Company \$737.00.¹

LOCK 48 - Work was to start in 1835 by D. K. Cahoon but his contract was annulled in May, 1836. Michael Byrne became the primary contractor in February, 1837, and finished the work in June, 1838 at a cost of \$13,814.32.²

¹ Research of William Davies

² Ibid

LOCK 49 -

D. K. Cahoon was the original contractor, but the contract was annulled in May, 1836. Michael Byrne took over the contract in February, 1837, and finished in June, 1838 at a cost of \$17,713.78. David Lyles also did work on the lock in May, 1839 at a cost of \$9,707.50.³

LOCKHOUSE 49 -

This building was constructed to house the lockkeeper and family. This lockkeeper was to operate all four locks. As we will see later, through informal agreements, other people assisted in tending the locks in Four Locks. This was particularly true after 1900. Jesse Scoffield was the contractor who built the lockhouse. Work was started in October, 1837 and completed in March, 1839 at a cost of \$1,447.50.⁴

LOCK 50 -

D. K. Cahoon again was the original contractor, but his contract was annulled in May, 1836. Michael Byrne started work in May, 1837 and David Lyles finished it in May, 1839 at a cost of \$13,783.30.⁵

Each lock has an 8 1/4 –foot lift and is made of limestone from Prather’s Quarry one mile to the south of the locks. Lock 48 was built over an active sinkhole, and its foundations had to be rebuilt in 1870. The National Park Service filled in this lock in the early 1970s.⁶

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid and Harlan Unrau research

⁶ Ibid

CANAL MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

The management of maintenance operations on the canal changed quite often throughout its history. In April, 1839, the section between Dams 5 & 6 was completed and watered. It became the Fourth Division with John G. Stone as Superintendent. In 1844, the number was reduced to three; Stone remained Superintendent of the 3rd Division which ran from just above Dam 4 to Dam 6. He received an annual fee of \$800 and was responsible for the toll collectors, lock tenders, and repair crews.

The canal between Dam 6 and Cumberland was completed in 1850. In November, 1850, a six-division alignment was created. Four Locks was a part of the 4th Division (Williamsport) with John G. Stone as Superintendent.

In 1856, a new reorganization was created with Denton Oliver as Superintendent of the Hancock Division, Dam 4 to Dam 6. This alignment lasted until 1858 when the old six-division alignment was restored with Lewis Stanhope Superintendent of the Hancock Division (Dam 5 to Lock 58). Incidentally, John G. Stone was appointed general manager and engineer.

In 1860, the six divisions were abolished and 18 supervisorships were created with each supervisor earning \$55 per month. Emanuel Tice was the supervisor of the Four Locks section. The *1877 Washington County Atlas* lists an "E. Tice" living just west of Four Locks. In 1862, a new reorganization abolished the supervisorships and re-established the six divisions. Four Locks was again part of the Hancock Division (Dam 5 to Dam 6) with Thomas Hassett as Superintendent. In 1868, a seventh division was created; but in 1870, the number was reduced to five with Denton Jacques as Superintendent of the 4th Division (Hancock). In 1873, Jacques earned \$83.33 per month with the lockkeepers \$2.00- \$2.50 per day. Jacques lived in Prathers Neck.

Following the disastrous flood of November, 1877, the management was reduced to three divisions with Stanhope as Superintendent of the 3rd Division from Dam 4 to Cumberland. However, in the spring of 1878, after navigation was restored, the old 7-division system was re-established. Soon, the introduction of the telephone facilitated management operations and the number of divisions was reduced to two – Lewis Stanhope was named Superintendent of the 2nd Division, Lock 39 to Cumberland.

After the great flood of 1889, the company could not raise funds for the repairs.

As the majority owner of previous bonds, the B & O Railroad had receivers appointed to repair and operate the canal. These receivers did set up a management system for the maintenance and operation of the canal. However, detailed records of this system and its personnel have not been found.

In spite of the numerous reorganizations throughout its history, regular canal maintenance continued to be performed by labor crews headed by supervisors who reported to the division superintendents. Even while the canal was closed to navigation during the winter months, maintenance was performed year-round. Duties included removing silt and other obstructions from the canal, making repairs to locks, aqueducts, culverts, and repairing the towpath; lockhouses, shops, and

offices were improved; lock gates, wickets, and waste weirs were restored or replaced; culverts had to be cleaned; breaks in the canal needed to be fixed; and berm banks were strengthened.⁷

The community of Four Locks grew as a direct result of the C & O Canal and the businesses associated with Canal operations. This “permanent” community thrived as long as the canal was operating. Family names of Four Locks included the Florys, Flynns, Snyders, Meyers, Taylors, Fernsners, Bowers, Mouses, Harts, Mosiers, Brewers, and Crawford. At different times, however, two families – the Prathers and the Hassetts – played major roles in the founding and leadership of Four Locks, Maryland.

⁷ “Management of Maintenance Operations on the Canal, 1830-1924,” original Canal Co. records, Unrau research

THE FOUR LOCKS COMMUNITY

Most of the land obtained by the C & O Canal Company in the early 19th Century was owned by Samuel Prather. The majority of early deeds in the Lands Records of Washington County refer to lands originally owned by Samuel Prather and condemned by the Canal Company. While certainly not planned this way, Samuel Prather's role as the prominent landowner cannot be denied. One example of this is shown in a brief history of the Thomas Hassett House – the large two-story stone dwelling on Four Locks Road overlooking Lock 47 and the Potomac River.

THOMAS HASSETT FARM

The history of this particular tract of land can be traced to several original patents, including "Rocky Neck," "Rocky Neck Amended," and "Good Luck." Rocky Neck totaled 548 acres and was granted to Lancelot Jacques and Thomas Johnson on May 17, 1763.⁸ Rocky Neck Amended was surveyed for Denton Jacques on October 18, 1811, and totaled 548 acres.⁹ Good Luck was granted to James Prather on April 16, 1790 with 160 and 117 ½ acres.¹⁰

On April 2, 1824, Samuel Prather and his wife Elizabeth, a daughter of Denton Jacques, purchased land from the estate of James and Elie Prather.¹¹ Conflicting accounts show this purchase to be either 197 or 257 acres. On February 24, 1825, he purchased 225 acres from Lancelot Jacques, Jr., a trustee for Denton's estate.¹² The Mackall Survey Map shows Samuel owning this property in 1835 when the C & O Canal Company condemned him and John Cowton. Samuel lost a portion of his property to the Canal for \$2800.¹³ Furthermore, in 1844, the Washington County Commissioners purchased land from several owners to create what is now Four Locks Road. Samuel Prather was one of the landowners.¹⁴

Circa 1846, Samuel died leaving several heirs. One of his heirs, Catherine Prather Snider (wife of John R.) died just after her father. This left a problem in settling Samuel's estate. In 1859, William Cushwa, a trustee for the Circuit Court, was appointed to settle Samuel's estate, i.e. Jonathan D. Prather vs. John R. Snider.¹⁵ On page 589 reference is made that Jonathan Prather purchased 159 ¼ acres for \$55 per acre. This sale was advertised in the newspaper¹⁶ and advertises deceased Samuel's property including a deed No. 1 located in Four Locks with 153 ¼ acres and a two-story stone house "with an orchard of excellent fruit trees." Page 589 states the survey for the 153 ¼ acres was actually 159 1/4 acres. Prather's purchase is recorded in the Washington County Courthouse.¹⁷

⁸ Land Patents book I/139-40

⁹ Land Patents Book I/286

¹⁰ Land Patents Book 2/42-43

¹¹ Lands GG/774-5

¹² Lands HH/171

¹³ Liber 20/110

¹⁴ Road and Land Records OHW I/366-69

¹⁵ Equity Records 1566 and Chancery Records 10/580-598

¹⁶ Chancery Records 10/590

¹⁷ Lands IN 16/339-40

On the top of the south side of the present stone house is a keystone with the date “1868.” Therefore, this house was completed, added on, or renovated during the occupancy of J. D. Prather. Very little is known about Jonathan Prather, except that he was a farmer and operated a warehouse over the Lock 49 flume. Also, Washington County Post Office Records show a post office located in Four Locks from June 30, 1858 to January 21, 1865. The postmaster was John D. Prather.

Of further interest are two Mason Dixon markers which serve as doorsteps for the two entrances on the east side of the house. Two Englishmen – Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon – were hired to settle the boundary dispute between Maryland and Pennsylvania. Every mile had a simple intermediate stone with an “M” and “P” on either side. A fancier crown stone was placed every fifth mile.

On December 13, 1905, Thomas and Margaret “Miss Kate” Hassett purchased this tract from Jonathan Perry and Frank Mish who were administrators for the estate of Jonathan Prather.¹⁸ Prather died in 1878 and his wife Ann Catherine died in 1905. Thomas Hassett was a prominent citizen of Washington County. A Republican, he served two terms as a County Commissioner, and was President of the Board of Commissioners in his second term. He was a director for the Washington County Museum, a director of Potomac Edison Company, Vice President of the Clear Spring Bank, and vestry for St. Andrews Episcopal Church. “For many years he was a purchasing agent for the C & O Canal.”¹⁹ He purchased grain and other supplies from local farmers, stored them in a warehouse building in Four Locks, and sold these to the Canal Company. In addition to all these responsibilities, Thomas still found time to be a “gentleman farmer” growing wheat and corn, caring for a home orchard and a few animals, and riding horses.

Mrs. Hilda Cushwa describes visiting the Hassett House and Thomas’ wife Miss Kate. “When you came to the Hassett House it was a happy day. Miss Kate was a special person...a loving and caring person who enjoyed a cultural life.”²⁰ She was a skilled artist and also did knife carvings on large tree lichens. She also gathered people around her who enjoyed the same life, particularly friends who sat for hours and painted the Potomac River and Four Locks from the front porch. Thomas died in 1941 and Margaret in 1956.

In 1956, Henry and Hazel Starliper purchased the home from the Hassett estate.²¹ Mrs. Starliper stated that next to the big stone house was a bake oven (the back portion of today’s garage). She also said that the barn burned down during their tenure as owners.

The house and property passed through two more owners before the U. S. Government purchased it in 1973 as tract 76-111.²²

¹⁸ Lands 122/655

¹⁹ Hassett Obit., *Morning Herald*, 1941

²⁰ Hilda Cushwa Interview, 9-17-84

²¹ Lands 315/14

²² Lands 560/461

Two Hassetts – William T. and Charles – played major roles in canal operations at Four Locks. While they did not live in the Four Locks community, they did live nearby and were looked upon as prominent citizens and leaders in the canal company.

William T. Hassett was born in Four Locks in 1839 to Thomas and Ellen Hassett. However, he established his own home along Route 56 between Four Locks and Green Spring Furnace, a farm he named “Cherry Hill.” William was a superintendent of a division on the C & O Canal for many years.²³ The *Washington County Atlas of 1877* shows the “William T. Hassett and Brother” warehouse in Four Locks at Lock 50. William’s brother was John C. Hassett who lived in Four Locks. Among other duties, John was a storekeeper on the Canal. Charles Hassett was widely known as a farmer and for years a division superintendent of the C & O Canal.²⁴ Charles repaired the Canal and was in charge of maintenance, i.e. leaks, potholes, etc.²⁵

JOHN C. HASSETT HOUSE

Another tract, presently known as the Baker Property located west of Lock 50, can also be traced back to Samuel Prather. Research has not determined the actual origin of the present dwelling. However, the tract was purchased from Prather by the Canal Company. In 1859, John G. Stone, Superintendent of the 3rd Division, purchased a 99-year lease and eight acres for \$880 from the Canal Company, “...land shall be used in no manner to interfere with the navigation of the canal or cause injury to the canal or any of its works.”²⁶ Further, as early as 1844, Stone wrote to Thomas Turner, clerk of the C & O Canal Co., that this house in Four Locks was finished and he was living in it.²⁷

In June, 1860, this lease was conveyed for \$50 to Thomas Hassett and included 4 ½ acres.²⁸ This tract had a two-story weatherboard dwelling on it.²⁹ The 1860 Census lists Thomas Hassett, age 46, as a carpenter from Ireland living in this area. Furthermore, it lists his wife Ellen Hassett and their children. In 1870, the census lists only Ellen Hassett, age 42, and their children. This is verified by Register of Wills records and St. Peters Lutheran Cemetery records listing Thomas’ death on August 27, 1866. The *1877 Washington County Atlas* shows “Mrs. Hassett” in this house. Incidentally, this Thomas was the grandfather of Thomas Hassett who lived later in the stone house on Four Locks Road. This older Thomas is the beginning of the Hassett Family in this country. Thomas also served as a division superintendent for the C & O Canal Company and performed other canal related duties as well. Thomas’ administrator, William T. Hassett, sold this property to John C. Hassett (one of Thomas’ sons) in 1907.³⁰ John paid a total of \$750 for two parcels of land. The first was .28 acre near Lock 50 which originally belonged to Samuel Prather and condemned for the use of the C & O Canal Co. It was later conveyed to Thomas Hassett by the C & O Canal Co. in February , 1858.³¹ The second tract is 4 ½ acres originally

²³ William Hassett Obit., *Daily Mail*, 5-14-1908

²⁴ Charles Hassett Obit., *Morning Herald*, 4-16-1931

²⁵ Daniel Snyder Interview, 11-3-84 & *Memories Coming Home*, pg. 194, 1900 Census

²⁶ Lands IN14/373-74

²⁷ Davies Research, National Archives, RG-79, Tray 167

²⁸ Lands IN15/94

²⁹ List of Sales 36/743 (Register of Wills, Wash. Co. Courthouse)

³⁰ Lands 125/666 and List of Sales 36/743

³¹ Lands IN 13/222

taken by the C & O Canal Co. from Samuel Prather and then conveyed to Thomas Hassett by John G. Stone in 1860. The 1900 Census lists John Hassett as a mail carrier.³² The 1910 Census also listed him as a storekeeper on the Canal; "...and for many years he was connected with the Canal Towage Co."³³ This relates to a reference in the *1877 Washington County Atlas* listing "W.T. Hassett and Bro. Store." William T., of course, was John's brother. Apparently, this store sat over the flume at Lock 50, and contained feed, hay, bow and stern lines, and towlines.³⁴ Of note, John, also a farmer, pumped water from the Canal using a small gas engine and made an ornamental fountain for his front yard.³⁵ John Hassett died in 1917.

In 1921, Louis Meyers bought the property for \$1500 from William T. Hassett, the administrator for the estate of John C. Hassett.³⁶ Mr. Meyers did not live in the house full-time, but used it frequently as a part-time cottage and rented other parts of the house. Some of the renters of this property were: Ben Kisner, Philip and Martha Mellott, Albert Hart, Westley Mann, and Walter Suffecool.

In 1946 Louis and Mary Meyers granted the 4 ½ acres under the 99-year lease and house to their daughter Gladys Baker.³⁷ A later deed in 1951 grants ownership to both Clarence and Gladys Baker.³⁸

Finally, in 1976, the National Park Service purchased the improvements from Baker and became tract 76-133.³⁹

LEWIS FERNSNER HOUSE

Behind Lockhouse 49 is a stone foundation. There was a two-story weatherboard house located on this foundation. This land which was part of "Good Luck" was condemned by the Canal Company from Samuel Prather. In 1863, Thomas Hassett received a 99-year lease and six-room dwelling from the Canal Company.⁴⁰ However, Lewis Fernsner was living in this house in 1872 when it was destroyed by fire. Thomas Hassett and Fernsner made an agreement in 1871 for Fernsner to purchase this.⁴¹ In 1888, William T. Hassett, administrator for Thomas Hassett, sold this property to Lewis Fernsner.⁴² A second plot next to the above had been conveyed to Lewis Fernsner in 1860 by John G. Stone.⁴³

As stated above, the original house that Lewis lived in burned down in March 1872. With the financial assistance of a group of friends, Lewis immediately rebuilt the house.⁴⁴ Lewis was a

³² *Seems Like Yesterday*, Clear Spring Alumni Association, pg. 52

³³ John Hassett Obit., *Morning Herald*, 4-19-1917

³⁴ J. P. Mose Interview, 6-17-86

³⁵ Donald Ankeney Interview, 10-11-84

³⁶ Lands 160/447

³⁷ Lands 234/552

³⁸ Lands 261/227

³⁹ Lands 609/474

⁴⁰ Lands IN16/525

⁴¹ Sales GG/246

⁴² Lands 92/159

⁴³ Lands IN15/143

⁴⁴ H. Jayne Fernsner Sterling Interview & original Fernsner papers, 10-24-84

carpenter working throughout the Four Locks-Clear Spring communities. He also repaired Canal boats at the drydock at Lock 47. From April 17, 1885 to April 12, 1887, Fernsner was paid \$254 for 127 days work repairing Canal boats.⁴⁵ Lewis apparently owned his own Canal boat since he paid taxes on it from at least 1879 to 1881. In the 1880 Census he is listed as a boatman. Behind the house was a stable with horses, a chicken yard, and a garden.

One of Lewis' sons, Samuel, operated a general store at Lock 48 in partnership with Jacob "Jake" Snyder. Jake Snyder married Sam's sister Lela and also lived in this house before moving to Big Spring. Samuel lived in this house until his death in 1934. Incidentally, he died from injuries received after being gored by a bull sheep owned by Thomas Hassett.

The administrator for Lewis Fernsner who died in 1905, sold the two parcels of property to David Ankeney in 1937.⁴⁶ Ankeney did not live in the house, but rented it to Albert Hart.

In 1961, Mrs. Ankeney sold the property to Clarence Baker,⁴⁷ who kept it a short time until it was sold to the National Park Service. This house was finally removed by the National Park Service in the early 1960s because of advanced deterioration.

FLYNN HOUSE

Historic photographs show and older residents remember the Flynn House located along the towpath and between the Potomac River, situated between Locks 47 & 48. James Flynn and his family lived in the house and he is listed in the 1870 Census as a locktender. However, as early as 1861, James is listed as lockkeeper for Locks 47 & 48. In the 1880 Census, James is still shown as a locktender and three of his sons – Joseph, Aloysius, and John – are also listed as lock tenders. The 1900 Census lists Aloysius, Frank, and Emmett, James' sons, as lock tenders. In fact, Aloysius is listed as locktender through the 1910 Census. The last residents were two sisters, Ella and Maggie, and one brother, Charles "Dutch" Flynn. There was an outdoor brick bake oven next to the house and the Flynns sold bread to the canallers for .10c a loaf. "Dutch" Flynn occasionally tended Lock 48 and worked as a repair hand for the railroad and C & O Canal according to the 1900 Census. Photos show a white fence along the towpath adjacent to this property. The 1936 Flood took the Flynn House away and it was never rebuilt.⁴⁸

HENRY & ELLEN MYERS HOUSE

Along the towpath at Lock 50 exists a white root cellar. At one time next to this cellar was the home of Henry and Ellen Myers. In the 1910 Census, Henry is listed as a locktender. Ellen kept fruit, potatoes, and other vegetables here. After Henry's death, Isiah "Didge" Crawford lived as a boarder with Myers and occasionally tended Lock 50.⁴⁹ Crawford utilized the watch shanty still standing today at Lock 50. One of the more colorful residents of Four Locks, Mr. Crawford is remembered for his drinking, friendliness, tobacco-chewing, and the Canal boat captains yelling,

⁴⁵ Receipt "W. T. Hassett & Bro to Lewis Fernsner, Sr." dated 10-5-1887, papers of H. Jayne Fernsner Sterling

⁴⁶ List of Sales 51/238

⁴⁷ Lands 373/570

⁴⁸ George Bowers Interview, 10-11-84; Hilda Cushwa Interview, 10-3-84

⁴⁹ George Bowers Interview, 10-11-84; Martha Mellott Interview, 10-7-84; 1910 Census

“Lock Ready! Lock Ready! Mr. Crawford.” Didge also had a garage next to the Myers house. Fonrose Taylor, Sr. who lived in Lockhouse 49 used this garage to store his truck and used the towpath as access.⁵⁰

HOUSE AT LOCK 50

The land adjacent to Lock 50 on the north side of Berm Road was originally owned by Samuel Prather and condemned by the C & O Canal Company. In 1858, Thomas Hassett purchased .28 acre in a 99 year-lease, and a one and one-half story weatherboard dwelling opposite Lock 50 from the Canal Company.⁵¹ It is unclear what Thomas used this structure for. One possibility may have been that it was rented or leased to occupants who may have assisted in tending Lock 50 or working the feed store there. In 1907, it was granted to John C. Hassett by William T. Hassett, administrator for the estate of Thomas.⁵² John paid \$150 for the tract.⁵³ Kenneth Taylor of Hagerstown remembers living in this house from approximately 1912 until 1922.⁵⁴

In June, 1921, William T. Hassett sold the house to Hugh L. Bond, Jr., Herbert R. Preston, and George A. Colston, surviving trustees of the Canal Company for \$400.⁵⁵ Rudolph and Virgie Hart lived in the house during the mid 1920s.⁵⁶ It is not clear when James Taylor, Kenneth’s father, moved into the house or who lived in the house after the Harts. However, James William Taylor is listed in the 1910 Census as a boatman on the C & O Canal. He may have also assisted in operating the feed store over Lock 50 after Cowton Hassett, John’s son, died in 1920.⁵⁷

Since the Canal Company owned the house, an agreement was reached between the C & O Canal Company and George Bowers for Bowers to live in this house. Thomas Hassett was instrumental in working out this agreement. Mr. Bowers lived in the house ca. 1935 until 1960. In 1939, he was given a special use permit by the National Park Service to live in the house at a cost of \$12 per year. Mr. Bowers grew up in the Four Locks area, went to the Four Locks School, and did odd jobs throughout the community. His father Harry Bowers also worked along the Canal and helped repair Canal boats at the Lock 47 drydock. After the Canal ceased operations in 1924, Mr. Bowers was able to use the Lock 50 watch shanty as a chicken house. He helped remove several old Canal buildings falling to disrepair.⁵⁸

This structure burned down in the 1960s.

FLORY HOUSE

Little is known about the beginning and early history of this house. Thus far, research and interviews have provided little information about the owners of the Flory House. This house still

⁵⁰ Fonrose Taylor, Jr. Interview, 11-3-84

⁵¹ Lands IN13/222

⁵² Lands 125/666

⁵³ List of Sales 36/743; Inventories of Appraisements 38/544

⁵⁴ Kenneth Taylor Interview, 11-4-84

⁵⁵ List of Sales 47/27

⁵⁶ Alice Hart Interview, 11-9-84

⁵⁷ J. P. Mose Interview, 6-17-86

⁵⁸ George Bowers Interview, 10-11-84

stands across from Lock and Lockhouse 49. It has the date “August 10, 1883” engraved in stone on the north side of the house. The significance of this date has not been determined.

Alexander M. Flory was a major in the 1st Potomac Home Brigade, Maryland Cavalry. The 1870 Census lists Alex, age 39, as a retail merchant. The 1880 and 1900 Census’ list Alex’s occupation as merchandising. By the 1910 Census he is shown as a retail merchant in groceries. The *1877 Washington County Atlas* shows a store at or very close to the Flory House. Some residents thought that there was a small store-post office located directly behind the Flory house;⁵⁹ others thought it was actually in the house.⁶⁰ Post office records for Four Locks show Alex Flory as postmaster from 1882-85 and his second wife Mary A. Flory postmaster from 1885-1903. From this bit of documentation and interviews Alex Flory apparently operated a small store and post office either in or adjacent to his home.

In the 1900 Census Ann Silver is listed as a boarder in the Flory home. Alex died on May 2, 1913. According to his obituary after the Civil War, “he was associated with the Hassett Brothers under the firm name of Hassett and Flory until three years ago (1910) when he retired from active business.” Silver cared for Mrs. Flory who died in March, 1925. Ann Silver remained in the house until her death in 1928. Mary Flory left her home to Lida, Libbie, and Mabel Hassett.⁶¹ Incidentally, Mary Flory was a Hassett, and Lida, Libbie, and Mabel were her nieces.

Mrs. Martha Mellott remembers living in this house from 1929 until 1931. She rented it from Thomas Hassett, a brother to the above three sisters. Mrs. Mellott’s son Charles was born in this house.⁶²

The house remained in the Hassett family until 1947 when Thomas’ widow Mary Catherine sold it to Vernon and Mary Anders.⁶³ Charles and Margaret Lewis acquired the house in 1957 from Mary Anders.⁶⁴ Finally, the National Park Service purchased the property known as tract 76-105 from Lewis in 1973.⁶⁵

OTHER HOUSES

West of Lock 50 beyond the Canal berm and behind the Baker Property (John Hassett House), several old structures still stand in the wooded area. The *1877 Washington County Atlas* lists the families who lived in this area. They included T. Mouse, J. Irwin (a boatman), H. Shank, S. Miller, and Shawes Heirs (Henry, Jacob, and David were boatmen).

Martha Mosier Mellott of Big Pool was born in the first of these in 1901. Her home pre-dates the Civil War and occupies land owned by the Canal Company and leased to various people for 99 years. The foundation of their garage still exists behind the home.¹⁰⁴

⁵⁹ Ibid; Don Ankeney Interview, 10-11-84; Fonrose Taylor Interview, 11-3-84

⁶⁰ Guy Angle Interview, 11-6-84; Paul Shank Interview, 12-6-84

⁶¹ Will Book 15/373

⁶² Martha Mellott Interview, 10-7-84

⁶³ Lands 242/585

⁶⁴ Will Book 23/461

⁶⁵ Lands 566/29

¹⁰⁴ Martha Mellott Interview, 10-7-84

Behind and west of the Mosier home is a garage or large shed which belonged most recently to Guy Kidwell. The Kidwell home burned in the early 1970s. At one time this house belonged to Thomas Mouse who was a level walker, repairing the towpath between Four Locks and Big Pool. Mouse, armed only with a shovel, made minor repairs and reported the major ones to Charles Hassett.¹⁰⁵ The Mouse family were long time residents of Four Locks. In 1860, the 27-year old Tom Mouse was a lockkeeper. However, in 1870 and 1880 he is listed in the Census as a boatman. His son John is also listed in the 1880 Census as a boat hand. In 1900, John Mouse is listed as a boatman. It is John's son, Tom, who later became the level walker for this area.

Just west and beyond the Kidwell garage towards the Costlow Road is another home which belonged to Foster Taylor, a relative of the Taylors who lived in Lockhouse 49. George Bowers lived in the house before Taylor.¹⁰⁶

FOUR LOCKS POST OFFICE

This growing community also justified its own post office. It was probably located behind the Flory house and attached to a small store.⁶⁶ There is some reason to believe that at one time it may also have been located in the Snyder-Fernsner Store. This post office was established on June 30, 1858 and dissolved on January 21, 1865 when it was moved to Clear Spring. The Four Locks Post Office was re-established on April 18, 1878 until it was dissolved permanently on March 31, 1903 and moved to Big Spring. Postmasters for the Four Locks Post Office were:

John D. Prather – June 30, 1858 to January 21, 1865

James A. Flynn – April 18, 1878

Edward Smith – December 8, 1878

Joseph Edward Smith – January 16, 1879

Allen Brewer – July 2, 1880

Edward Brewer – July 11, 1882

Alexander Flory – August 2, 1882

Mary Flory – December 16, 1885⁶⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ibid & George Bowers Interview, 10-11-84; Virginia Messina Interview, 2-16-87

¹⁰⁶ George Bowers Interview, 10-11-84

⁶⁶ George Bowers & Don Ankeney Interviews, 10-11-84

⁶⁷ "Washington County Post Offices" Washington County Library

Canal Structures and Stores

Located at each of the four locks was a unique and important structure necessary for the operation of the C & O Canal and the economic welfare of the Four Locks community.

LOCK 47

There was a drydock next to the flume to repair canal boats. This may be the same boat repair operation that Thomas Hassett was granted the right to erect in 1852.⁶⁸ Some of the people who later worked at this drydock were Lewis Fernsner, Harry Bowers, Bill Murray, and John Hurtman.⁶⁹ Mr. Hurtman occasionally assisted in tending Lock 47. At this lock was also a watch shanty where lock tenders could stay during inclement weather, at night, etc.

In a letter to the President and Directors of the C & O Canal Company from J. O. Wharton in 1852, Wharton requested to lease water from the flume of Lock 47 to convert his existing warehouse into a mill to grind bone dust and manure for fertilizer.⁷⁰ There is no indication if permission was granted or how long this operation remained in existence. No photographs have been found of this building.

LOCK 48

At this lock was also a small watch shanty for the tenders. However, the main structure located here was a store over the by-pass flume on the berm side of the lock. In 1875, the Canal Company entered in an agreement with James Flynn to build a store which in no way could interfere with Canal operations. He leased this property for \$36 per year beginning on June 1, 1875.⁷¹

In June, 1876, this general merchandise and feed store was sold by Flynn for \$3200 to Joseph M. Smith and William Smith under the name "Smith and Brother."⁷² The *1877 Washington County Atlas* also makes reference to the Smith & Brother Store. In Nora Snyder's *History of Clear Spring* she writes the following with regards to this store: "Smith and Brother, Dealer in Dry Goods, Hats, Caps, boots, shoes, and everything usually kept in a first-class country store."

On January 1, 1884, the Canal Company leased this ground with store to J. Edward Smith for \$36 per year and ending January 1, 1894.⁷³ While the Canal Company made this agreement with J. Edward Smith, insurance records show that Sam Fernsner and Jacob H. Snyder had this one-story general store with attic as early as 1884.⁷⁴ There is no record of the transfer of this store to

⁶⁸ Davies Research, National Archives

⁶⁹ George Bowers Interview, 10-11-84; H. Jayne Fernsner Sterling Interview, 10-25-84; Millard Shank Interview, 1-6-84

⁷⁰ Davies Research, National Archives

⁷¹ Lands 73/65

⁷² Lands 74/438

⁷³ Lands 95/69

⁷⁴ Aetna & Union Insurance Co. of Philadelphia insurance policies, 1884; papers of H. Jayne Fernsner Sterling

Snyder & Fernsner. However, there is a notation on a deed that a copy of that agreement deed was sent to Jake Snyder on July 26, 1890.⁷⁵

Furthermore, the Canal Company receipts show Snyder and Fernsner paying \$36 rent per year to the Canal.⁷⁶ These annual receipts are available to 1922 and are signed by either William T. Hassett or Charles Hassett.

Some of the inventory of the Snyder-Fernsner Store included:

knitting needles	black powder
candy	scissors
canned goods	molasses
kerosene	sugar
eggs	coffee
bread	wick
cigarettes	coat oil
lye	stove polish
grain	baled hay

Incidentally, Frank Zimmerman who boated on the Canal remembers the store's hams as "the best around."⁷⁷

LOCK 49

As with Locks 47 & 48 there was also a small watch shanty located here. Over the Lock 49 flume was a large building or warehouse. In 1863, a 10-year agreement was made between Denton Jacques and the C & O Canal Company for Denton to lease land and erect a warehouse over the flume for the sum of \$10 annually.⁷⁸ In 1872, the agreement to operate a feed and supply store and warehouse was renewed at a cost of \$36 per year.⁷⁹ After Jacques passed away, John D. Prather paid Jacques' executor Alex Flory \$310 for this store.⁸⁰ This agreement was apparently made prior to Prather's death in 1878, but not recorded until 1879. Prather's wife Ann continued to operate this store after John's death.⁸¹ Even after Ann died in 1905 records show corn was sold to the Snyder-Fernsner Store and to the Canal Towage Co. in 1906.⁸² This operation included a storehouse, warehouse, and icehouse. Local farmers hauled grain and hay continuously, and this warehouse was used to store hay, oats, and a feed grinder.⁸³ A concrete wall still stands as a reminder of the warehouse operation.

⁷⁵ Lands 95/69

⁷⁶ Papers of H. Jayne Fernsner Sterling

⁷⁷ Frank Zimmerman Interview, 2-17-87

⁷⁸ Lands McKK4/683 & IN17/145

⁷⁹ Lands McKK 4/683

⁸⁰ List of Sales CC/498

⁸¹ Accounts 29/579 & 30/809; List of Sales CC/362

⁸² Accounts 41/433

⁸³ J. P. Mose Interview, 6-17-86; F. Taylor, Jr. Interview, 11-3/84; Daniel Snyder Interview, 11-3-84; Guy Angle Interview, 11-6-84

As a child Hilda Cushwa crossed this lock many times to visit the Florys. There was a board plank over the downstream end of the flume and then she walked across the closed lockgates.⁸⁴ A full canal, particularly below the rushing waters of the by-pass flume could be quite dangerous. This was unfortunately true on July 30, 1923, when 8-year old Albert Hart accidentally fell into the “turbulent waters” of the Canal in Four Locks. He faced certain death until 11-year old Louis Myers jumped in and saved the unconscious Hart.⁸⁵

LOCKHOUSE 49

Originally, this two-story brick structure was the only designated lockhouse in Four Locks. Informal agreements, however, were made allowing others living in the area to assist in tending the locks. Census and Company records also reflect these arrangements by listing persons with the occupation of lockkeeper. For example, in a letter from Samuel Fernsner to Lewis Stanhope Brewer on September 28, 1911, Fernsner writes, “Flynn’s still have the two lower locks of the four. Samuel Taylor has the lock where your people had and Henry Myers’ widow had the upper lock.”

Daniel Brewer was the lockkeeper for Locks 47-50 from July 1, 1839 to 1850. In December, 1850 until March 1851, John S. Moore is listed as lockkeeper for the Four Locks. Both men earned an annual salary of \$300.⁸⁶ Company records in the 1850s list a number of lockkeepers for this area: Lewis G. Stanhope, Henry Otto, Samuel Morany, William H. Lowe, and D. Wiland.⁸⁷ Also, Samuel Morany complained to the Company that his pay was too low to hire an assistant. In response, the Company in June, 1855, agreed to raise his annual salary to \$500.⁸⁸ It is not clear whether these lockkeepers lived in Lockhouse 49, in the house later occupied by the Flynn’s, or elsewhere. Furthermore, the 1860 Census lists Thomas Mouse as a lockkeeper.

A Dr. C. R. Brewer in Iowa contends his grandfather Joseph Gustavus Brewer was the lockkeeper in Lockhouse 49. Dr. Brewer’s father Lewis Stanhope Brewer was born in the lockhouse in October 1870. In both the 1870 and 1880 Census’ Dr. Brewer’s information is confirmed because Joseph G. Brewer is listed as lockkeeper. Actually, Joseph Brewer became lockkeeper in 1861.⁸⁹ Joseph Brewer died in 1881 and was remembered as “...a well-known citizen of our county, and locktender on the canal at Four Locks.”⁹⁰

According to Company records, Mrs. Joseph Brewer remained in the lockhouse until 1883. These same records list either a Thomas Mouse or a Thomas Moore as lockkeeper from 1883 until 1888, followed by a James W. Turner until 1889.⁹¹

Four generations of Taylors lived in the lockhouse with Sam Taylor as the lockkeeper from 1889 until 1924. The last Taylor, Fonrose, Jr. and his daughter, lived in the lockhouse until 1971. He

⁸⁴ Hilda Cushwa Interview, 9-17-84

⁸⁵ *Morning Herald*, 8-18-1983

⁸⁶ List of Persons in the Employment of the C & O Canal Co., original papers, Unrau research

⁸⁷ Davies Research, National Archives

⁸⁸ *A Study of the Lives of Lockkeepers and the Boatmen*, Unrau

⁸⁹ Davies Research, National Archives

⁹⁰ Brewer Obit., *The Mail*, 8-12-1881

⁹¹ Davies Research, National Archives

said that the kitchen was located in the basement. The living room was on the east side of the first floor and a bedroom on the first floor, west side. Both rooms on the second floor were bedrooms.⁹²

LOCK 50

The watch shanty is still located here, the only one left on the entire C & O Canal. A large building or warehouse, similar to the one at Lock 49 was located over the flume. Older residents remember this as a feed store.⁹³ The *1877 Washington County Atlas* lists a “W. T. Hassett & Bro.” store. This building over Lock 50 probably is that store. On August 10, 1865, William Hassett was granted permission to build a feed store with a 10-year lease at \$36 per year.⁹⁴ The 1870 Census lists William T. Hassett as a retail merchant and his brother John is later listed as a storekeeper on the C & O Canal. Earlier records also list the firm of Thomas and William T. Hassett. Among other items, the inventory of this firm in 1866 included a young black mule (\$150), 1 canal boat (\$500), 3 sets of boat harnesses, 3 tons of hay and 60 bushels of oats.⁹⁵ During the later years of operations, large rolls of tow and bow lines were stored in this structure.⁹⁶ Corn, oats, and hay purchased from local farmers by the Canal Company were stored in this structure. Cannallers stopped here or at Lock 49 and picked up what supplies they needed, usually from Thomas or Charles Hassett.⁹⁷

MULE BARN

Across from Lock 50 is the Mule Barn, reconstructed by the National Park Service. According to the *Mule Barn Historic Structures Report* the barn was not very significant to the operations of the Canal. While it was important for the feeding, housing, caring, and wintering of mules, no mention of the barn is made in annual reports or construction records. There is a possibility that the barn may have been owned or operated by a private contractor.

Mules were generally purchased when they were two and one-half years old. In general, they lasted until they were 15 years old. Each captain usually kept two teams of two or three mules with his boat. Mule teams were usually changed while the boat was in the lock. A gangplank was thrown over the boat while in the lock and teams exchanged. Mules were usually reshod once a month.⁹⁸

CEDAR GROVE OR FOUR LOCKS SCHOOL

The origin of this school is uncertain. However, the *1877 Washington County Atlas* refers to this school as “School No. 8.” It was locally called Cedar Grove School and later Four Locks School. As Four Locks grew, the need for a school justified the creation of this one-room schoolhouse. It received students from Four Locks and Big Spring.

⁹² F. Taylor, Jr. Interview, 11-3-84

⁹³ J. P. Mose Interview, 6-17-86; Guy Angle Interview, 11-6-84; Frank Zimmerman Interview, 2-17-87

⁹⁴ *A Study of the Lives of Lockkeepers and the Boatmen*, Unrau

⁹⁵ Accounts 23/929-929; Inventories & Appraisements V/578-79

⁹⁶ F. Taylor, Jr. Interview, 11-3-84; Frank Zimmerman Interview, 2-17-87

⁹⁷ Frank Zimmerman Interview, 2-17-87

⁹⁸ C & O Canal Historic Resource Study, Chapt. 16, Unrau

In addition to studying basic classroom subjects, students were required to stack firewood for the school's fireplace or pot-bellied stove and carry drinking water from local wells. In fact, Charles Mellott carried water from the well at Thomas Hassett's house back to the school. He admitted that occasionally he and the other boys would purposely spill much of the water before getting back to the school. The teacher made them return for more water, thus missing classes.⁹⁹

In 1880, teachers were required to teach eight grades and were paid \$240 per year.¹⁰⁰ The following is a list of subjects taught in this school from 1899 to 1903: spelling, language, physiology, geography, morals, writing, arithmetic, nature study, and reading.¹⁰¹ The family names registered in this school included: Kuhn, Brewer, Fernsner, Angle, Mouse, Mosier, Myers, Hart, Snyder, Taylor, Hassett, Shaw, Bell, Johnson, Shank, Charles, and Forsyth.¹⁰²

The school closed in 1943 and the dwelling returned to a private residence. In 1973, the National Park Service purchased this property from Joseph Murray and became tract 76-116.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Charles Mellot Interview, 10-7-84

¹⁰⁰ "Vanishing Schools" *Morning Herald*, 9-1-79

¹⁰¹ Maryland Public School Register for School No. 8, C & O Canal Library

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Lands 566/697

CONCLUSION

Today, there is little to remind us that this vanished community was once a busy center of canal activity, trade, and small businesses. When the Canal ceased operations in 1924, Four Locks slowly began to die as an active community. While Four Locks lost its economic importance in 1924, it would soon become a major center for recreation focusing on the Potomac River and its slackwater above Dam 5. Popular for its boating and fishing, Four Locks would boast numerous dwellings – summer residences for people from the four-state area. Today, recreation is more popular than ever, but the seasonal residences have all but vanished.

One only needs to take the time, enjoy the solitude, walking slowly past the four locks, the lock-house, the mule barn and the other structures to feel what there was here...and to dream about what might have been!