

CHAPTER XI.

ELTONHEAD MANOR IN THE 19th & 20th CENTURIES

The close of the 18th century marks a period of subtle change in America. The Federalist President, John Adams, was increasingly unpopular because of the X,Y, and Z Affair, whereby France was asking for a ransom to stop her depredation on the merchant shipping of the United States. Because of this and other fiascos, including a move to an unfinished White House, President Adams became increasingly depressed as his political power was waning. At the same time Thomas Jefferson's popularity began to surge as republican sentiments he espoused became widespread, not only in the newly settled frontier, but also in burgeoning cities like Baltimore. This brought a revitalization and the internal improvements (canals, roads, a centralized banking system and etc.) and helped to energize the expansionist spirit already ingrained into the American psyche. This would carry over until the Civil War, when storm clouds of a different kind would linger on the horizon.

Some families, like the Fitzhughs in Washington County, would have an itch to move westward and northward. In 1799, Peregrine Fitzhugh and his family would divest themselves of Maryland and move to New York State where he bought a large tract near Lake Ontario. Peregrine died in November of 1811, and in 1837, more than twenty years later, his widow applied for a pension in Sodus, New York (White 1990, p. 1206). In 1804 William Fitzhugh Jr. threw in with a party led Nathaniel Rochester which was headed to New York. According to tradition, the families sold all their lands and trudged north in a wagon train through the wilderness. This venture resulted in the founding of the City of Rochester (Williams 1906, p. 135). The extent to which William Fitzhugh Jr.'s migration was influenced by his brother Peregrine Fitzhugh's earlier move is uncertain. The town of Sodus, where the latter went, is less than 30 miles east of Rochester. William Fitzhugh (Jr.) finally settled down in Livingston County New York and accumulated considerable wealth before dying on December 27, 1839 (Williams 1906, p. 137). Notably, this very southern aristocratic family had not only abandoned the institution of slavery, but two of William Fitzhugh Jr.'s daughters even married prominent abolitionists: Gerritt Smith and James Birney (Williams 1906, p.140). This is in stark contrast to the descendants of Col. Fitzhugh's cousins who remained in Virginia. One of the later Fitzhugh's would write a stormy defense of slavery just before the outbreak of the Civil War. Another, Robert E. Lee, whose grandmother was a

Fitzhugh, would lead the armies of the Confederacy into battle. It is not surprising then that one or two of Col. Fitzhugh's descendants (i.e. C.D. Fitzhugh of Hagerstown and R. Allen Fitzhugh) crossed the Potomac River to fight with the Confederacy (Hartzler 1986, p.145).

Although many of Col. Fitzhugh's descendants ended up as Yankees, one would move to Baltimore and return to southern Calvert County. After Col. William Fitzhugh Sr.'s death, it seems his son John Fitzhugh ended up in the vicinity of **Mount Mill**. John Fitzhugh married Elizabeth S. Parran, whose father Richard Parran, had left her land adjacent to the north line of **Eltonhead Manor** (Hutchins 1982). At the time of her marriage, at age sixteen, she had lost both of her parents. Apparently the administrator of her estate felt that John Fitzhugh was a good match based on his prestigious family background. However, he seems to have been the black sheep in the Fitzhugh family. John Fitzhugh was not even mentioned in his father's 1798 will, whereas the other children and grand-children were bequeathed substantial inheritances. Although we do not have all the details, John Fitzhugh, who had life tenancy at **Preston** because of his marriage to Elizabeth S. Parran, sold his life interest in her inheritance to John Rousby Plater of St. Mary's County in May of 1808. At the time John Fitzhugh was living in Baltimore. In a suit Elizabeth S. Fitzhugh filed after the War of 1812, it appears that her husband had entered into the land deal against her wishes. In fact John Fitzhugh had tried to coerce his young wife to endorse the deal, but she held firm. He then abandoned her and his only daughter, Elizabeth M. Fitzhugh, in Baltimore and built a dwelling house at **Preston** adjoining **Eltonhead Manor**. In 1820 he listed himself with a younger male, who was helping him farm **Preston**, and a couple of slaves (U.S. Census, 1St. District Calvert County). It is clear from the suit that Elizabeth S. Fitzhugh was concerned because not only had her husband taken over a portion of her inherited property, but he was allowing John Rousby Plater to cut the wooded portions which greatly reduced its value (Appendix C). The greedy John Fitzhugh also seemed quick to cash in on the death of Dr. Thomas Bourne who had owed some money to Elizabeth M. Fitzhugh. Although he may be the original builder of an important house called **Preston** on St. Leonard's Creek, which still stands (Stein 1976), John Fitzhugh was certainly was no gentleman! Rather than a complete blackguard, he may have been naively taken advantage of by John Rousby Plater.

Analysis of kinship as well as the Chancery Case of E.S. Fitzhugh vs J.R. Plater (Appendix C) demonstrates that John Fitzhugh was John Rousby Plater's uncle and the only "family" close by after the rest of the Fitzhughs left the area. As we saw above, John Fitzhugh had "transferred" (perhaps not quite legally) some of the property his wife had inherited to John Rousby Plater, who was actually his nephew (i.e. the son of John Fitzhugh's half sister Elizabeth Plater). John Rousby Plater was born in 1767, the second son of George Plater III and according to Elizabeth S. Fitzhugh had received money from his uncle, John Fitzhugh. George Plater III had risen in politics to become Governor of Maryland following his wife's death. However successful George Plater might seem on the surface, he certainly was not a man of brilliant reputation (Hollowak 1980, Vol II p. 287). Governor Plater died shortly after entering office and left his land

in St. Mary's and Prince George's Counties to his three sons: George, John Rousby and Thomas (Saint Mary's Co. Wills JJ#2, f 28-29). The part of the estate that went to the eldest son George Plater IV was eventually so mismanaged after his death by his son George V, that the Platers lost control of much of **Sotterly**. In contrast, John Rousby Plater (and later his son, John Rousby Plater II), flourished in St. Mary's County, but may have been an opportunist, as Elizabeth S. Fitzhugh alleged in her petition, as Oratrix, to Chancery Court in 1719 (Appendix C):

"...upon an Investigation of all transactions between him the said Plater is justly indebted to said John Fitzhugh, as she believes, that the said John Fitzhugh had in the early part of said Platers life advanced for him or supplied him with large sums of money - Your Oratrix further shews that since the time of said Conveyance from John Fitzhugh aforesaid to said Plater, the said Lands belonging to your Oratrix which were cleared lands fit for cultivation, have been in a constant state of Cultivation, either by said Plater or by those he has suffered to cultivate them, and that they have been cultivated in such an improper manner in such a course of husbandry as hath been very prejudicial to the Estate of Inheritance in the lands belonging to your Oratrix on the D[smudge] of said John Fitzhugh, and the said Plater, as having a life Estate in the Land, is not legally entitled to cut wood or Timber Thereon, except for the necessary use of the place the farms and plantations, of which it is composed, and the Buildings thereon; yet the said Plater hath permitted Large Quantities of Wood & Timber to be cut, sold and carried to market, which grow upon the land; and great waste to be done therein to the great injury of your Oratrix, who had & yet has the Estate of Inheritance in the said Land. Your Oratrix further shews that her family consists of herself and an only Daughter, who is the cousin of the said Plater in the first degree, she and said Plater being Brother and Sister children, and at least confers as much Honor upon, as She can increased (?) From, her said relation, yet, altho with and having obtained an act in her favor from the last legislature your Oratrix and her Daughter, his truly respectable cousin, who he had for years had no resources, with which presure her making wearing aparell, but by the labor of her hands, which have been destitute of every means of support, the said Plater cruelly and ungenerously opposed the Petition, and endeavored to prevent her obtaining the Relief she Sought for..."

These must have been serious allegations to a man who wished to maintain an upstanding reputation. John Rousby Plater (Sr.) had married Elizabeth Tootel, a daughter of one of the oldest families in St Mary's County. He eventually became a county judge. Furthermore he was interested in politics at the highest level and was made a Presidential Elector when he was only 30 years old (Richardson 1967 p. 202). Just before the full scale invasion of the Patuxent River by the British, before the assault on Washington, John Rousby Plater sold two tracts in **Eltonhead Manor** to Nathaniel Dare. He may have been under some pressure to sell. Admiral Cockburn and the British Navy were on their way to the Patuxent. The American & Commercial Daily Advertiser reported on June 8 and 9, 1814 that the British had landed near **Rousby Hall** and destroyed several watercraft in the creek (Shomette 1981, p. 218). The largest tract that John Rousby Plater sold to Nathaniel Dare was just over 299

acres, between Mill Creek and St. Johns Creek. The second was a little over 16 acres and ran from the 16th course of **Eltonhead Manor** to a white oak in the swamp of St John's Creek and back to the beginning (Calvert County Land Book I, folio 488). The latter tract was very close to **Preston** which Elizabeth S. Fitzhugh had inherited from her father in the late 1700s.

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Just before the end of the 18th century people of Calvert County were undoubtedly beginning to feel the winds of change in terms of politics. Despite the majority opinion in the nation, most Calvert gentry would remain staunch Federalists through Jefferson's terms of office. However, they also felt a gust of wind from a more direct source, and one which would change the fate of the Bourne family at **Eltonhead Manor** significantly. The May 2, 1799 issue of the Maryland Gazette reported that a terrible storm buffeted the little county seat of Prince Frederick:

"On the evening of Saturday the 27th [of April] after the court had broke up, those who had been attending it were preparing to depart, and were waiting at the tavern till a gust should be over which appeared to be ceasing. On the moment the wind reaching the house it blew with such violence that the whole frame immediately gave way from the door, and the sides and the roof were blown to the ground. Nearly twenty persons were in the house who had barely time to get out of the door on the leeward side, and were caught in situations more or less dangerous. Some escaped unhurt, others were considerably bruised, and four persons were killed"

The four men who perished in wreckage of the tavern were Allen Roberts, John W. Simmons, Thomas Bowen and Jesse Bourne, the master of the largest intact portion of **Eltonhead Manor** (Appendix F). The next year a Calvert County census-taker recorded four Bourne households in close proximity (U.S. Census 1800, p. 414). Sarah Jr., with no husband, five children under 20 years old, and 17 slaves, was most likely the recent widow of Jesse Bourne. Sarah Bourne, a woman over 50 years old, had 9 slaves and most likely was Jesse Bourne's mother. There were two young men named Bourne in 1800 according to the census. Thomas Bourne was the brother of the deceased and had no wife or children, but had 26 slaves. William Bourne was a young man with a wife and two boys in his household and possessed but one slave. However, William seems to have set his sights elsewhere. On May 17, 1801, he made an agreement to sell 381 acres of **Eltonhead Manor** (Calvert County Land Book I, folio 268) to Aaron Partridge (provided that the buyer pay the last installment of \$521.67 of the total sale price of \$1509 on December 25). This emigration of the Bourne family beginning with George Bourne in the previous decade and continuing into the early 1800s with James E. Bourne (see below) reflected a trend where younger members of Calvert County gentry would go west to lands where their chances were better.

Tobacco farming became less lucrative in the Chesapeake, but a shift to wheat was not an easy substitute at **Eltonhead Manor** due to the steep topography. Wheat needs to be plowed rather than hoed like tobacco and disturbing the steep slopes with

plow and oxen was a precarious proposition. Without proper contour plowing, the already depleted soils would be washed into the Bay or Mill Creek. Whether Aaron Partridge was able to make a go of it remains to be seen. We have found no listings under "Partridge" in Hutchins (1982), or other references to him in Stein (1976) or O'Brien (1992), so we don't know much about how he fared at **Eltonhead Manor**. However, by U.S. Census of 1820, of the seven Partridge heads-of-families reported in the Maryland and D.C. Index (Parks 1986 p. 186) none were listed in Calvert County. Aaron was not listed at all and the closest person by that surname was Ann Partridge in Saint Mary's County across the Patuxent.

The other member of the Bourne family who left Calvert County in the early 1800's was James E. Bourne. He was the son of Jesse Jacob and Anne Bourne (O'Brien 1992) and the great grandson of Jesse Jacob Bourne (the Quaker who died in 1736 leaving the eastern half of **Eltonhead Manor** to his four sons):

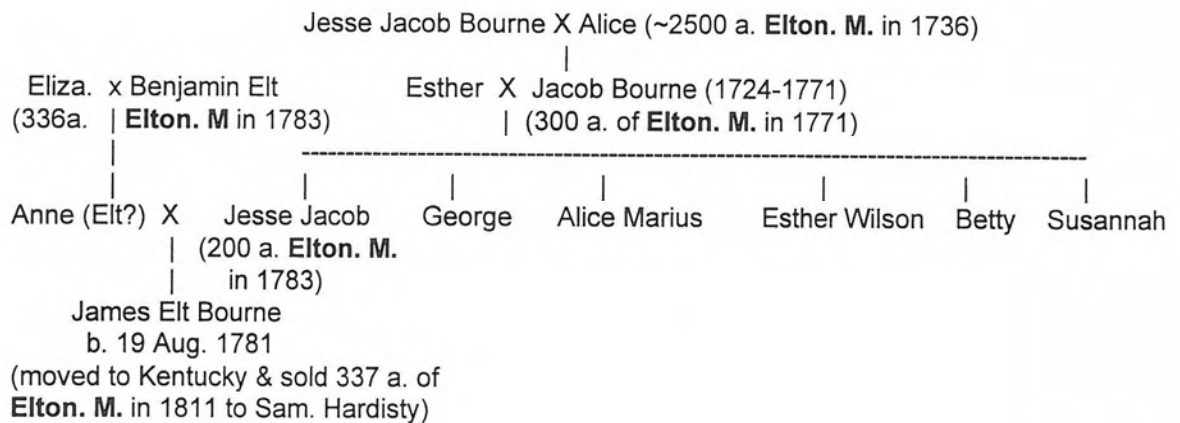


Figure 19. The Genealogy of Jesse Jacob Bourne and his wife Anne Elt in the 18th and 19th Centuries.

As we see from the above genealogy, in addition to his Bourne ancestry, Benjamin E. Bourne was the grandson of Benjamin Elt. Most likely his mother was Benjamin Elt's daughter Anne. After Benjamin Elt died (before 1800), his widow Elizabeth married John Ireland (the Sheriff of Calvert County, who bought a portion of **The Goare**, see above). On June 1, 1811, John Ireland conveyed his interest in property at **Eltonhead Manor** to Benjamin Elt Bourne (who was to have the land at the death of Elizabeth, according to Benjamin Elt's will). By this time Benjamin Elt Bourne had moved west and was living in Shelby County, Kentucky (Calvert County Land Book I, folio 412). Not surprisingly, since he seems to have had no intention of returning to Calvert County, Benjamin Elt Bourne turned over the property the same day to another buyer, Samuel Hardisty, for \$800. The tract was described as "Beginning at the Bay at a Stone and running W 450 perches then South one hundred and twenty perches, then E 450 perches then to the beginning containing and laid out for three hundred thirty and seven acres of land" (Calvert County Land Book I, folio 417). Because of the

equidistant north and south boundary lines, at right angles to the north-south line, we surmise that this tract may have spanned Little Cove Point and been the one above the southernmost partition of the Bourne heirs (Fig.12). If this interpretation is correct, the present airfield in the Ranch Club should be near the center of this parcel. Unfortunately there is little else (landmarks, adjacent property owners or etc.) in either of the 1811 land records to further pin down Benjamin Elt's old property.

What is surprising is not so much that James E. Bourne decided to sell his share of **Eltonhead Manor** but how low the price of land in Calvert County had fallen just prior to the War of 1812. He sold it to Samuel Hardisty for only \$2.37 per acre! This in part reflects the hard times that tobacco planters faced beginning with the trade embargo in 1807. President Jefferson was generally despised by federalist tobacco planters when he pushed for an embargo of American exports to protest England's impressment of seamen into the Royal Navy. As the tobacco piled up in warehouses around the Chesapeake Bay, planters increasingly fell deeper into debt and land prices throughout the watershed plummeted. However by 1810, investors had begun to buy up plantations, according to Rosalie Calvert in a letter to her wealthy father in Belgium: "You have told me to buy land, but good properties in Maryland are so expensive that you have to cultivate them yourself--you cannot get five percent [return] from leasing them out. Land in Maryland is more expensive than in any other state, except near big cities like Philadelphia. Everyone I have consulted advises against stock and in favor of land, I will get all the information I can on this subject in order to seize whatever opportunities present themselves..." (Callcott 1991 p.230, 237&238). Reflecting this trend toward higher prices, in 1810, Rosalie Calvert's husband, George Calvert, had to pay \$30 per acre when he bought 37 acres of land with good soil east of Washington D.C. (Prince George's County Land Records; Liber J.R.M.14, folio 24). Thus the selling price of James Elt Bourne's piece of **Eltonhead Manor** land appears extraordinary cheap. However, we must remember that Benjamin Elt rated this land as only half the normal value in 1782 and it seems consistent with that assessment.

Although some of the Bournes were in a rush to head west where virgin soils and a diversity of crops obviously provided more opportunities, not all of them left Calvert County. In the 1820 Census Index, three Bournes were listed for Maryland and the District of Columbia: George, James I. and John Bourne. All were living in the first district of Calvert County; the latter two more than were likely living adjacent to one another judging by the groupings of the census (Parks 1986, p. 26). By mid-century a part of **Rousby Hall** at or adjacent to the southern end of **Eltonhead Manor** was owned by a James I. Bourne. One of the land records (Calvert Land Record Liber; SS #1, folio 574), recorded after the 1882 fire, indicates that James I. Bourne owned the eastern portion of **Rousby Hall**.

After James I. Bourne's death **Rousby Hall** was sold by a trustee for the estate, Charles S. Parran, to Charles Gelermen and Thomas Sewell Jr. (Appendix D). Another interesting sidelight in the above deed is the fact that a farm at the south end of what had to have been originally **Eltonhead Manor** (to the east of **Rousby Hall**) "at Drum

Point" was owned by "Fitzgerald and Booth of Baltimore". According to Dodd (1995), land purchases were made in southern Calvert County by a Baltimore firm of commission merchants in the name of Richard B. Fitzgerald. Apparently they also bought what is now Solomon's Island in 1856. They played a role in assembling property for speculation by the Peruvian guano importer, Frederick L. Barreda. Ultimately Barreda intended to build a railroad through Calvert County. When Richard B. Fitzgerald became incapacitated due to a serious illness, the property was sold by a court appointed trustee. Frederick Barreda and later his brother, Felipe, ended up with several thousand acres of **Eltonhead Manor** around Drum Point. These lands are detailed in a deed from Frederick to Felipe Barreda in 1881 (Appendix D) which mentions five tracts: **Mill Mount (or Manor Quarter) Mount, Drum Point Farm, Chews and Coopers** (Fig. 20). In plotting the five tracts several other family names were mentioned living adjacent to the property including Thomas Tucker, Dixon and Hooper. These have been placed on Fig. 20 in the approximate locations of their land. The exact locations of these tracts is still in doubt due to lack of closure of some tracts (e.g. **Mill Mount**), which may be due to copy errors and difficulty in pinning down the starting points of the surveys. None-the-less, Figure 20 gives an approximation of some of the key tracts that evolved out of **Eltonhead Manor** in the 19th century.

The Barredas were apparently counting on the railroad to restore their original investment and had almost acquired enough property for the three mile stretch between St. Paul's Church and Drum Point. An account of the Barredas and fertilizer industry in Baltimore is available in Owens (1941, p. 254):

"After a slow recovery from the depression which began in 1834 and continued for nearly ten years farmers began for the first time to use prepared fertilizers in place of manures produced on the farm. It was about time, for the soils had been badly treated for years. Tobacco growers were getting desperate all over the South, and even wheat fields were beginning to show the need for some sort of rejuvenation. Synthetic fertilizers were unknown, but the English had discovered that on the Chincha Islands off the coast of Peru there were vast deposits of excrement of various types of aquatic birds, called "guano". A small lot of this substance was brought into Baltimore in 1824, but because the farmers knew nothing about it, it found only a slow sale. However, the need was great, and in the early forties a brisk trade began. Realizing that it had a valuable commodity of only limited supply, the Peruvian government established a monopoly and made its deals with a single firm of merchants. Several agents in turn held the contract, one of the most successful and important ones being that of Barreda and Brother. The Barredas and their relatives, the Barrils, were important Peruvian families - they still are - but their associations with Baltimore, started at that period, are still vigorous. The vast Drum Point Estate, where the broad and deep estuary of the Patuxent River meets the bay, is still in the possession of the allied families. For a long time all Marylanders thought that a great new port was to be built at the mouth of the Patuxent and that the Barril y Barreda clan would dominate it."

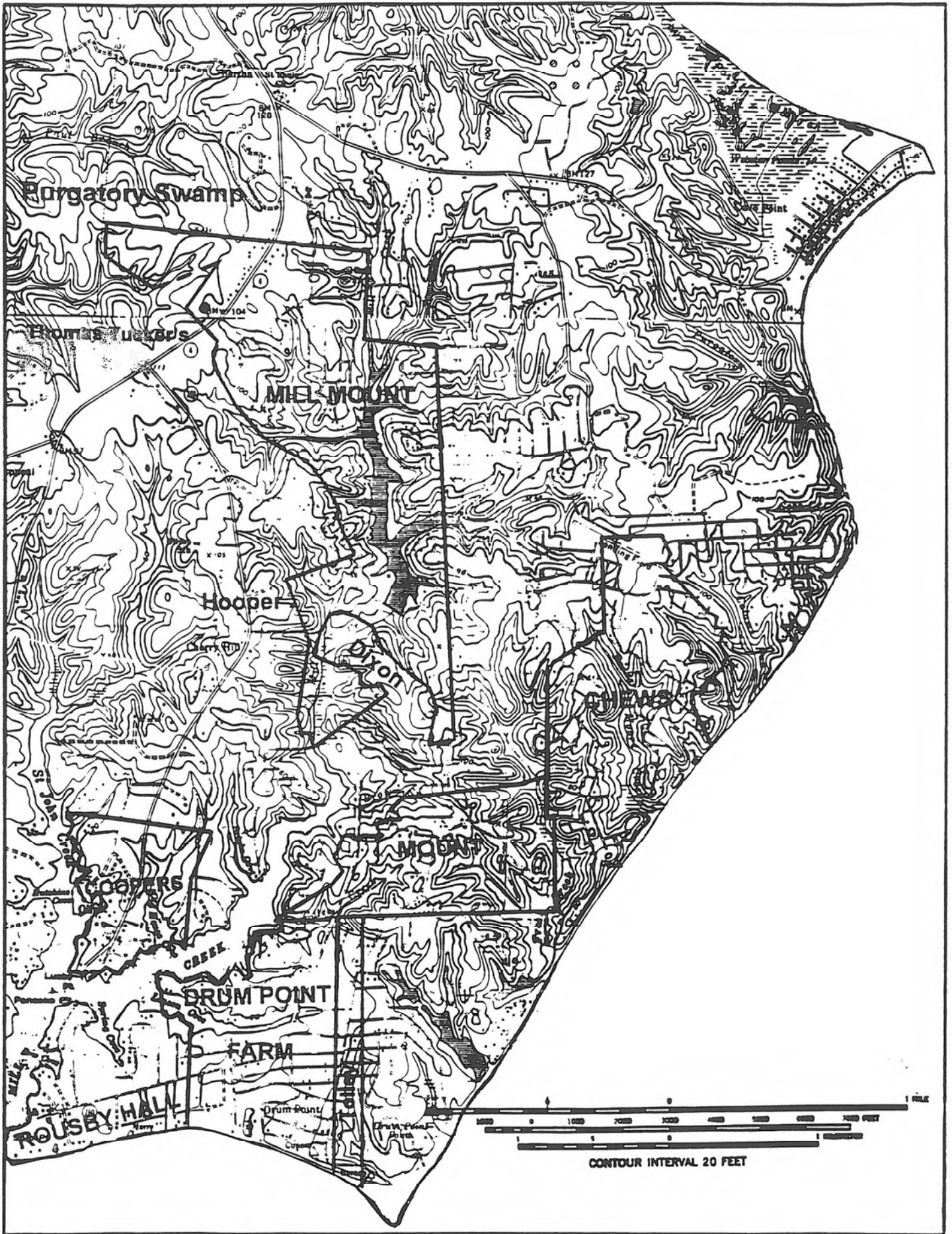


Figure 20. Tract Names which superseded "Eltonhead Manor" by the 19th Century on a U.S.G.S. Map (showing contour lines with 1929 vertical datum).

The impact of the Barreda family's efforts to import large quantities of guano would not be limited to property transfers at Drum Point and **Eltonhead Manor**, but would eventually have ramifications throughout the Bay region. Before its widespread use, runoff would contain primarily inorganic sediments which do not stimulate algal growth and usually cause more localized environmental problems. Increasingly, after the civil war, farmers would use cheap guano to fertilize their fields which inevitably led to increased nutrient runoff from agriculture. This agricultural runoff, coupled with sewage inputs, began a serious problem involving cultural eutrophication, which has culminated in massive algal blooms in large sections of the Bay, subsequent losses of submersed grasses in the shallows, and anoxia in the deeper waters in the summer. Cornwell et al. (1996) have documented the past sequence of eutrophication in sediment cores at two deep water locations in the vicinity of Cove Point and found first signs of excessive organic carbon and nitrogen deposition began 80 - 100 years ago. We have the Barredas (in part) to thank for some of this problem!

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The last of the Bourne's to own the northern part of **Eltonhead Manor**, Miss Dorcas G. Bourne, sold several acres of land at the tip of Cove Point to the United States government for construction of a lighthouse in 1828. Dorcas Gray Bourne was born on March 17, 1796 (O'Brien 1992, p. 219). We know from a suit brought against her in 1809 (Appendix C), that Dorcas G. Bourne and her older sister Elizabeth were the only surviving children of Jesse Bourne". Although a later deed states (Appendix D) that John Parran obtained the present LNG property from Charles Somervell Parran, a lawyer, the ultimate source of their land at **Eltonhead Manor** was through the inheritance of Dorcas Gray Bourne from her father Jesse Bourne III (see the previous chapter). It is now evident that Dorcas G. Bourne was one of the five young children who were left fatherless when Jesse Bourne III died in the severe wind gust that blew over the tavern near the Calvert Court House in 1799 (see the beginning of this Chapter). Only two years before, Jesse Bourne III had inherited the upper plantation when his father Jesse II died. The only sibling of Dorcas G. Bourne we know the name of was Elizabeth Ireland Bourne (mentioned in her grandfather, Jesse Bourn's, will drawn in 1795; see Appendix A). Elizabeth and Dorcas appear to be the only children of Jesse Bourne III still alive when a lawsuit was filed over the estate of their uncle Dr. Thomas Bourne in 1807 (Appendix A). The latter was Jesse Bourne II's eldest son and inherited the "lower plantation" at his father's death in 1797. This is most likely the **Eltonhead Manor** house, of which the paneling has been preserved in the Baltimore Museum of Art (see below).

Thomas Bourne was by all accounts an interesting figure. He was a physician who never married. While he carried on his medical practice, he also was involved in land speculation in Kentucky. At his death in 1807, by the terms of his will, his sister Eleanor Hungerford was to inherit all his personalty. The will is silent on this issue, but for some reason his brother Jesse III's surviving children (Elizabeth and Dorcas Bourne) were to inherit the real estate. It was at this point that the Bourne family bonds

which had survived for over a century, disintegrated into a lawsuit. The problem as Eleanor Bourne saw it was that after she sold the personalty of Thomas Bourne, it didn't even cover his debts much less leave her with anything for herself. Therefore she petitioned Chancery Court for a sale of some of Thomas Bourne's real estate to at least cover her outlay. This would seem reasonable at face value. There were several problems however. One was the sales of personalty (basically slave auctions) were carried out in a way that reduced bidding opportunities and enabled Eleanor and William Elt Hungerford to acquire the slaves at bargain prices. Thus the sale did not bring in enough cash to cover the outstanding debts of Dr. Bourne's estate. The second problem was that one of the people claiming debts was the Honorable William Kilty, who was also deciding the case. Although Judge Kilty made it clear in the course of the case he had an interest in the seeing the real estate (in this case the **Eltonhead Manor** house) sold to provide for his own relief, he did feel compelled to absent himself from the proceedings. Of course this again complicated matters.

In the depositions that were taken as part of the Chancery Court Proceedings (MDHR 17898, box 2290/ files 1-11), it seems that Eleanor Hungerford had been bitter about not having received more of the estate of her father Jesse Bourne II. Indeed her mother had refused to abide by the original terms of her husband's last will and requested her widow's dower. This seems to have caused a rift between her and Eleanor Hungerford which persisted into the 1800s. Apparently, Eleanor felt that her mother had colluded with Jesse Bourne III to keep her from obtaining her rightful share of Jesse Bourne II's estate. Although her brother Jesse Bourne III was now dead, she seemed to vent her anger on her two underage nieces, Elizabeth and Dorcas Bourne. It would appear that Dr. Bourne agreed with his sister in this family matter. In giving his sister all his personalty at his death, Dr. Bourne essentially sided with her in what was to become a bitter family feud. As might be expected, the case dragged on interminably. Eleanor Hungerford eventually died. We learn from the will that she drew on Sept 7, 1811 that she had seven children: