



Key Moments in St. Peter's History

A series of historical highlights from the first 200 years of St. Peter – Libertytown.

Angel Hill



*Figure 1 Angels on the Gate c. 2000
Photo courtesy Jeanne Befano*

Angel Hill, which we know today as “the rectory where feline Venus Marie (and Fr. Chuck) lives”, has a long and interesting history. Land records and research by the Maryland Historical Trust suggest that the house was probably built between 1858 and 1867. Sometimes known as the “White House”; there were periods from the 1960’s through the 1990’s when it was pictured in its original brick color. The house was owned by a member of the Coale family for much of the past 200 years – but not, as it turned out, when it would have been most advantageous!

In the 1860’s, the Parish was looking to build a larger church. In order to do so, it needed more land. However, the land adjoining church property to the south was owned Mrs. Mary Ann (Yingling) Jacobs. Recently widowed, Mrs. Jacobs had purchased land identified as Lots 197 and 198 on the original plat of Liberty, for her family in 1857 for \$325 from trustees for Thomas Sappington (son-in-law of Richard Coale). Ten years later in 1867, James M. Coale, Richard’s son, purchased the property from Mrs. Jacobs for \$3,000; which according to the deed, included “a brick dwelling house and the improvements”. It is reasonable to conclude that James most likely purchased the property in order to acquire the additional land which St. Peter’s needed to build the 2nd church; because 2 years later, in 1869, James donated the northern 1/3 portion of both lots to St. Peter’s - thus providing the necessary adjacent land where the “new St. Peter’s church” and eventually the original rectory, were built.

The residence now called Angel Hill, which is located on the southern portion of the 2 lots, remained undisturbed when the 2nd church was built. There is no indication in the census records that James Coale ever lived there. But Mr. Coale’s great-niece Emma (Sappington) Trundle and family lived there, followed by Emma’s daughter, Helen (Trundle) Joy and family, and thereafter, tenants who rented from the Trundle family until 1970. In that year, parishioners J. Sebastian and Alexandrine Grabenstein, purchased the property, including portions of the adjoining lots 195 and 196 (which is now a portion of the parking lot for the 3rd and present church) from Katherine Trundle.

According to Sebastian’s daughter, Lucia (Grabenstein) Kline and son, Alexander Grabenstein, the house was in serious disrepair when it was acquired. The last tenant had an affinity for felines, housing upwards of 60 in the home – along with scores of chickens, inside and out! Sebastian and his sons Alexander and

Patrick, set out to restore the house, with the view towards it becoming a home “in town” for Sebastian and his wife Alex to live (they currently lived on a farm on the outskirts of town). The property was so overgrown that it was hard to tell there was a house, behind the trees and brush growing around the structure. In the restoration process, a fence and gate were uncovered with angels on the gate. This discovery created the inspiration by Mrs. Grabenstein, for the name by which the present rectory is known – “Angel Hill”.

The Grabensteins lived in Angel Hill for a while, but their farm remained Mrs. Grabenstein’s real love (it was also *much* quieter), so they returned to the farm. Keeping in the tradition of Angel Hill (which is to house successive generations of a family), their daughter - Lucia, along with her husband Chris and children Colleen, Chris Jr., and Joseph, moved to Angel Hill in the early years of their marriage. (See the Bicentennial case in the Narthex to see what the Kline family did to encourage “quiet” on the very busy road outside their home, after the birth of their son, Joseph!)

30 years later, in 2000, Sebastian - now a widower, determined that the property would be a welcome addition to the Parish. Pastor John Deitzenbach agreed, envisioning the house for small meetings with the hope that in the future it might house a retired priest who “could help out with Sunday Masses”! With funds obtained through the Heritage of Hope Campaign and the generous contributions of labor and materials from MANY volunteers (most of whom were parishioners), the house was once again renovated. A Christmas party in December 2001 was held for the volunteers, to celebrate the successful completion of Father’s vision.



*Figure 2 Newly renovated interior
c. December 2001*



*Figure 3 Fr. Deitzenbach thanking the
volunteers December 2001*

Then June 3, 2004 happened.

How fortunate that St. Peter’s just happened to have a “spare” rectory! When fire destroyed the 2nd church, it also damaged the original rectory. While it would take 4 years to build a new church, Angel Hill needed no prep time – it stood ready and waiting for Fr. John to move in. And on September 7, 2008, before commencing ceremonies to dedicate our current church, Archbishop O’Brien enjoyed a meal in the kitchen of Angel Hill – by then a key part of the history of our wonderful Parish.