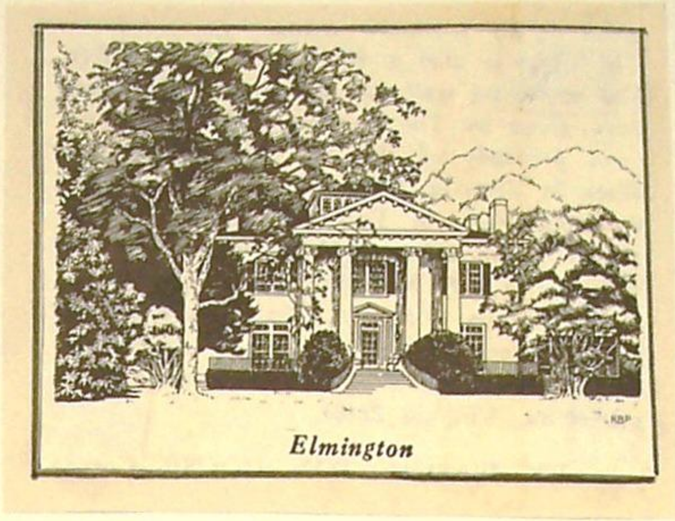


Elmington — on the North River

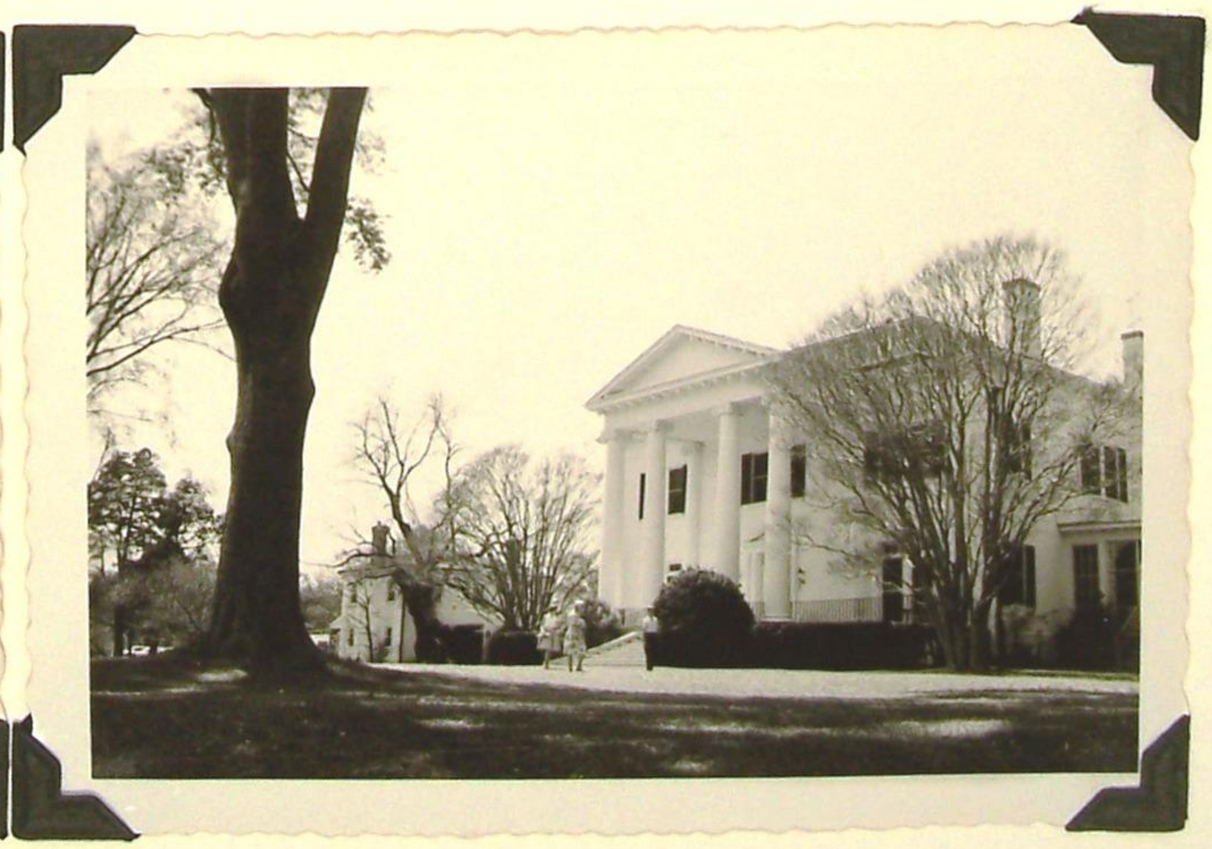
No longer standing here was a brick, Colonial house, close to the Whiting and Dabney families. It was close to the river.

The present mansion was built by John Prosser Tebb as a wedding present for his bride Rebecca Lloyd of Alexandria. It was designed by the architectural firm of Niemsee and Nielson and completed in 1850.

Later owned by the author Thomas Dixon and known as "Dixondale".

Purchased in 1941 by Mr. and Mrs. Webster F. Rhoads, Jr.

— Photos 1962 —



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The gardens at Elmington

1962

Elmington interior —

continued →

the Dabneys

Elmington continued

from A SOUTHERN PLANTER by Susan Dabney Smedes, published in 1890 by James Pott & Co., Astor Place, N.Y.

Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney of Elmington, father of Mrs. Susan Dabney Smedes who wrote A SOUTHERN PLANTER, was born at Bellevue on York River in King and Queen County, Virginia on January 4, 1798, son of Benjamin Dabney and Miss Sarah Smith.

According to A SOUTHERN PLANTER, Mr. Benjamin Dabney, a lawyer, had a habit of retiring to his study after breakfast on days he did not attend court. "His wife used to say that her orders were not to have him disturbed unless the house was afire. Promptly at three o'clock, he left his books and his business cares behind in his study, and after dressing for dinner, joined his family in the drawing-room. He was invariable in his rules of being there ten minutes before dinner was announced and he expected all in the house to conform to this. Many guests came and went at Bellevue but this was never allowed to interefere with his business. After breakfast he would say to the gentlemen, "Here are guns and horses and dogs and books; pray amuse yourself as you like best. I shall have the pleasure of meeting you at dinner. After dinner he was like a boy on a holiday, ready to join in anything that was proposed and the life of every party. He was so elegantly formed that after his death, it was said that the handsomest legs in America were gone. His death was caused by a violent cold, contracted in the discharge of his law business. At this time a young and rising lawyer, Mr. Charles Hill, was already beginning to share many of the important cases and large fees with Benjamin Dabney. This gentleman was destined to become the father of a child, who, years after, married the son of his rival Benjamin Dabney, and whom we knew as our dearest mother."

Thomas was nine years old when his mother put him under the care of her brother, Dr. John Augustine Smith, who had studied in London and Paris and was a practicing physician in New York City. When Dr. Smith was thirty-two years old, he became president of William and Mary College. Later he became president of the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons.

On June 8, 1820, Thomas Dabney married Miss Mary Adelaide Tyler, daughter of Chancellor Samuel Tyler of Williamsburg. Mrs. Dabney lived only three years and had two children, Benjamin Augustine, who died at nine years old and Samuel Tyler, who died in infancy. When Thomas Dabney had been a widower about three years, he met a King and Queen Court House ball, Miss Sophia Hill, daughter of Mr. Charles Hill. She was but sixteen and one of the most beautiful creatures that the eye ever rested on. The marriage took place at Mantua on the Mattapony River June 26, 1826.

On that day Thomas Dabney took her home to Elmington, in Gloucester. Her beauty and gentleness and modesty won the hearts of his friends. Mrs. Mann Page of Gloucester was celebrated for her beautiful hands, but after Sophia came, it was acknowledged that hers surpassed Mrs. Page's in beauty.

Mr. and Mrs. Dabney had three children: James, Charles and Virginius who lived to maturity.

In a letter from Baltimore, Maryland on June 29th 1883, Mr. Thomas Dabney wrote to a distant relative, William H. Dabney of Boston: "My father, Benjamin, who was a lawyer, removed to York River, and afterwards to North River, in Gloucester County where he died in 1806.... "Mr. Phillip Tabb of Gloucester, of whom you may have heard, when on his way to the White Sulphur Springs, fell in with a great-uncle of mine, James Dabney, (of Exchange) and they not only put up at the same inn but were put into the same room. As they were undressing Mr. Tabb did not fail to observe that he was in the company of a man of extraordinary physical power, and his curiosity prompted him to ask my uncle to be so good as to strip to his shirt, as he wished to see and feel his muscular development. This was done with a laugh and then Mr. Tabb asked him if he had ever struck a man, thinking obviously, that the man must have been killed. 'Yes', was the reply; 'I struck one, and came near being whipped for my impudence'. Of course he had to tell the story. He had occasion to make a journey of eighty to ninety miles from home (on horseback, of course), and on the way he observed a very mean cornfield -- mean from neglect, obviously, -- and having some negroes working in it (or affecting to do so). He inquired who was the overseer. Upon being told, he said to the negroes, 'Tell your overseer that I will return day after tomorrow, and will give him a whipping for not having his corn in better order.' 'Yes, mastee!' shouted the negroes in chorus, showing their teeth from ear to ear. He returned on time, and on approaching the place he observed a man sitting on the fence, facing the road. Remembering his message, he measured the man with his eyes and saw that he was no baby. He had been observed, too, and recognized as the gentleman to whom he was indebted for the message. He accordingly slipped off the fence (the negroes coming to it at the same time), and with a bow asked my uncle if he was the gentleman who had left a message for him two days ago. He acknowledged it with a laugh, and tried to turn it off with a laugh, and as a joke, but the overseer was no joker, and told him that he was to make good his promise, taking hold on his bridle and inviting him to dismount, which he had to do. All the rules of chivalry were observed. The horse was tied to a limb of a tree, and both knights (!) went at it. My uncle told Mr. Tabb that he was fairly whipped twice, and on the point of giving up but his pride came to his aid, and he held on until the overseer stopped battering him, and said he thought they had better quit, and he acknowledged the gentleman had redeemed his promise. The negroes in the meantime had mounted the fence, and shouted and laughed, as only negroes can laugh, throughout the fray. My uncle was laid up for two weeks, with his face and eyes so swollen as to make him partially blind for one week or more. He never struck a man afterwards.

Note: Dr. James Dabney, referred to above, was married to Miss Emory Tabb, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tabb of Toddsbury on North River in Gloucester. They had a son, James, who inherited Exchange, also on North River here.

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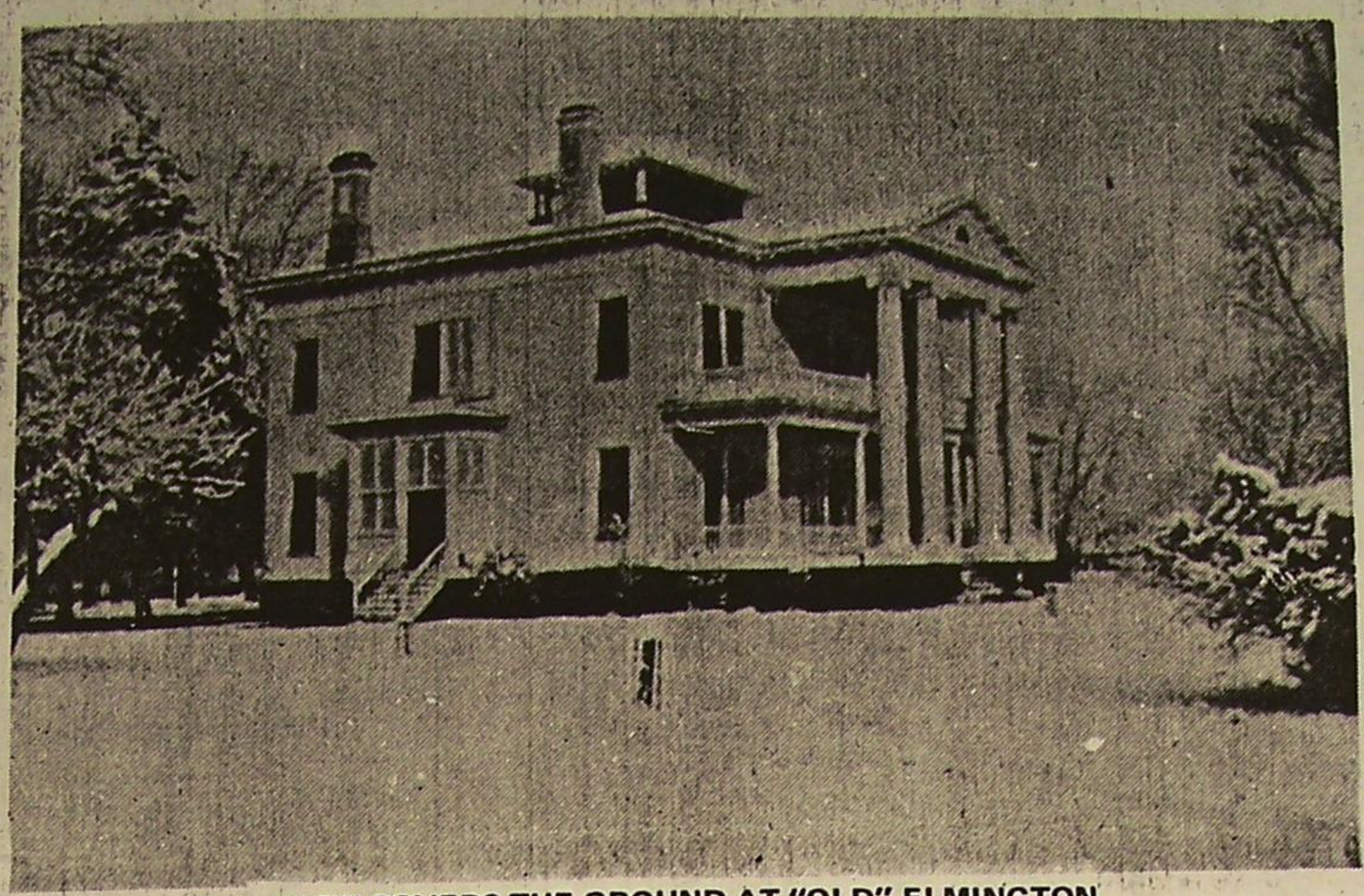
Elmington material

CHRISTMAS IN 1860

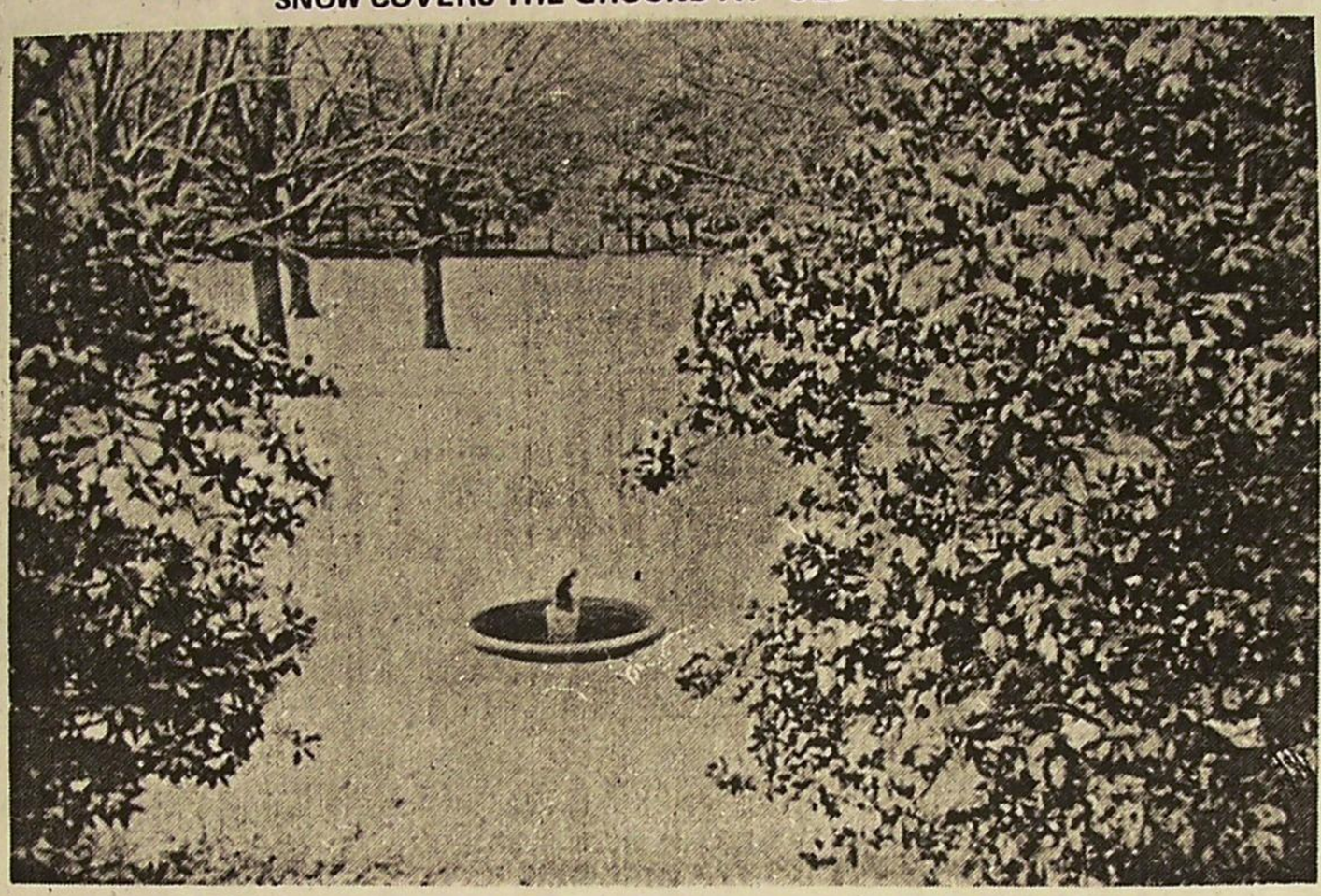
AT ELMINGTON

The following are excerpts taken from "The Story of Don Miff", edited by Virginius Dabney and published by J. B. Lippencott Company of Philadelphia in 1886.

Mr. Dabney wrote from New York in April 1886 that the story was told to him by his friend, John Bouche Whacker. Portions of the book relate to a Christmas holiday at Elmington, Gloucester County, 1860.



SNOW COVERS THE GROUND AT "OLD" ELMINGTON



LOOKING FROM SECOND STORY TOWARDS THE FRONT GATE

It was just one week before Christmas,—that of 1860, the last Christmas of the olden time,—that Emington—that Virginia—forever and forever—was to see—. But no matter, we did not know it then. The guests from Richmond were to arrive from Richmond that evening. Everything was in readiness.

The hickory logs, which alone my grandfather—and his father before him, for that matter—would burn during the holidays,—lighting the first noble pile on Christmas Eve,—the hickory logs were banked up, high and dry, in the wood house. The stall—fed ox nodded over his trough; the broad backed Southdowns, clustered together in a corner of their shed, basked in the sun and awaited a return of appetite; a remnant of sturdy porkers, left over from the November killing, that blinked at you from out their warm beds, and grunted when requested to rise, suggested sausage; while over on Charley's farm, and under Aunt Suky's able management, aldermanic turkeys, and sleek, plump pullets, and ducks, quacking low from very fatness, and geese that had ceased to to wrangel,—all throught themselves, like man before Copernicus, the centre of the universe. Then, in the little creek, too, which ebbed and flowed hard by, there lay bushels and bushels of oysters freshly taken from The River in front. These, too, were ready; while, in the cellar, suspended from hooks, there dangled, thanks to the industry of Charley and the Don, daily swelling bunches of partridges and rabbit, of woodcock and of wild fowl.

And can you not detect the odors of apples issuing even from that locked door? There are great piles of them stowed away there; and cider, I suspect, is not lacking. And above, the storeroom showed shelves weighed down, since the arrival of the last steamer, with such things as Elmington could not supply. Boxes and bags and bundles gave forth the mellow fragrance of raisens, the cheerful rattle of nuts, the pungent savor of spices,—the promise of all things dear to the heart of the Virginia housewife. On every whiff floated mince—pie, —mince pie embryonic, uncompounded; with every sniff there rose, like an exhalation before the imagination, visions of Plum—Pudding—of the Plum Pudding of Old England,—twin sister of Roast Beef,—and, with Roast Beef, inseparable attendant and indispensable bulwark of Constitutional Liberty.

It was well.

Nor in stuffed larder alone were discernible the signs of the approaching festival. Christmas was in the very air. Old Dick's mien grew hourly more imposing; his eye, beneath which now trembled no longer Zip alone, but Zip reinforced by double his own strength, hourly more severe. Aunt Phoebe, her head forreous in a new bandanna (a present from Mrs. Carter last Christmas, but which had been lain folded in her "chist" for the past year),—Aunt Phoebe, chief of the female cohort, and champion pastry—cook of the county, waddled from room to room, —serene, kindly, and puffing,—voluminous with her two hundred pounds, inspecting the work of her subordinates, and giving a finishing touch here and there. Polly, the cook, and her scullion, alone of the household, had no leisure for putting on the Christmas look, busy as they were getting dinner for the coming guests; cooks being, in point of fact, among the few people, white or black, that ever did a full day's work in Virginia in the olden time. But we have changed all that,—so let it pass.

"Dey comin'!" eagerly cried an urchin of color, who, with twenty companions of both sexes, had for the past hour had their eyes fixd on the lane—gate.

The gate was swinging on its hinges.

With one accord they all assumed the attitude of runners awaiting the signal to start. With feet planted firmly,—shall I say widely?—but no, they are men and brothers now,—with eyes bent upon the gate, but bodies leaning towards the house, they stood for a moment expectant.

The noses of a pair of horses appeared between the gate—posts.....

Greetings over, our party dispersed to dress for dinner. The new arrivals were seven or eight in number: Mr. and Mrs. Carter and their daughter Alice, — Alice with the merry—glancing hazel eyes; then Mary Rolfe, demure, reserved, full of subdued enthusiasm, the antithesis of Alice, but "adoring" her—girls will talk so— and adored by her in turn; then the teller of this tale, making five.

In addition, there were two or three young ladies,—all very charming,—but as they were not destined to play any marked part in out drama, why describe, or even name them?

Only two of our guests had ever spent Christmas at Elmington,— Mr. and Mrs. Carter. Mrs. Carter was a kind of far—off Virginia cousin of ours, and it was an understood thing between her and my grandfather that she should come down to Elmington every Christmas and matronize his household; else a houseful of girls, whom he exceedingly enjoyed having around him, would have been less attainable. And a merrier soul, and one who knew better how to make young people enjoy themselves, could hardly have been found. Mr. Carter, an excellent, silent, sober man of business, could rarely spend more than a week with us; but his jovial spouse never gave us less than a month of her charming chaperoning; and, on one occasion, I remember, the unceasing entreaties of the young people constrained her to prolong her visit and theirs, from week to week until two full months had elasped. The net result, direct and indirect, of that particular campaign was four marriages, if I recollect aright,— so that Elmington had an established reputation, among the girls, as a lucky place; of which my grandfather was not a little proud.

"Young ladies," said he, walking up to Alice and Mary, and putting his arms around their waists, as they stood at a window, after dinner, admiring the moonbeams dancing on the waves,—"young ladies, do you know Elmington is a very dangerous place?"

"How dangerous?" asked Mary.

"Shipwrecks?" suggested Alice, nodding towards The River with a smile.

"Yes," replied he, stooping down and kissing them both with impartial cordiality,—shipwrecks of the hearts."

CHRISTMAS EVE had come, and, as usual, the holidays had been officially ushered in by the noble fire of hickory logs. A deep mass of ruddy coals was glowing upon the vast hearth of the Hall. Upon these had been cast a hamper of chosen oysters. The guests (it was the way at Elmington) were expected to rake them out, every man for himself and his sweetheart, which gave a delightful informality to the proceedings. As soon as the roasting was well under weigh, two enormous, ancestral bowls, one of eggnog, the other of apple—toddy, were bought in. Later, there was to be dancing. A dozen or so of our neighbors and friends were in the habit of dropping in on us, on these occasions, to help make us merry.....

GLO-QUIPS - April 23, 1986

DIXON OWNED "ELMINGTON"

"El mington Manor" as it appeared during the time which Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Dixon resided

The following is an excerpt from the book, THE LIFE WORTH LIVING - A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE by Thomas Dixon, Jr. published in May, 1905. Thomas Dixon, Jr. also wrote THE CLANSMAN and THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS while residing at his estate "El mington" in Gloucester. The two novels were combined into the most famous and controversial films of all time- 1914's "The Birth of a Nation". The first cinematic epic traced the lives of a Northern and Southern family through the years of the Civil War and Reconstruction. It was directed by D.W. Griffith and featured such stars at Lillian Gish, Henry B. Walthall and Miriam Cooper. Movie-goers paid an unheard-of two dollars a ticket to see the film which earned Metro Pictures $1 million for its' distribution.

"IN OLD TIDEWATER VIRGINIA'

We moved to Tidewater Virginia, the home of Captain John Smith, the oldest settlement in America and yet the most primitive, the most beautiful and least known spot in our continent- a bit of wild nature slumbering beside the pathway of the rushing life of the Atlantic seaboard.

Here we realized the first dream of life, a stately Colonial home two hundred years old, called Elmington Manor, situated on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. Its ivory pillars flash their welcome from both sides of the house through the shadows of huge trees that shade its wide lawn.

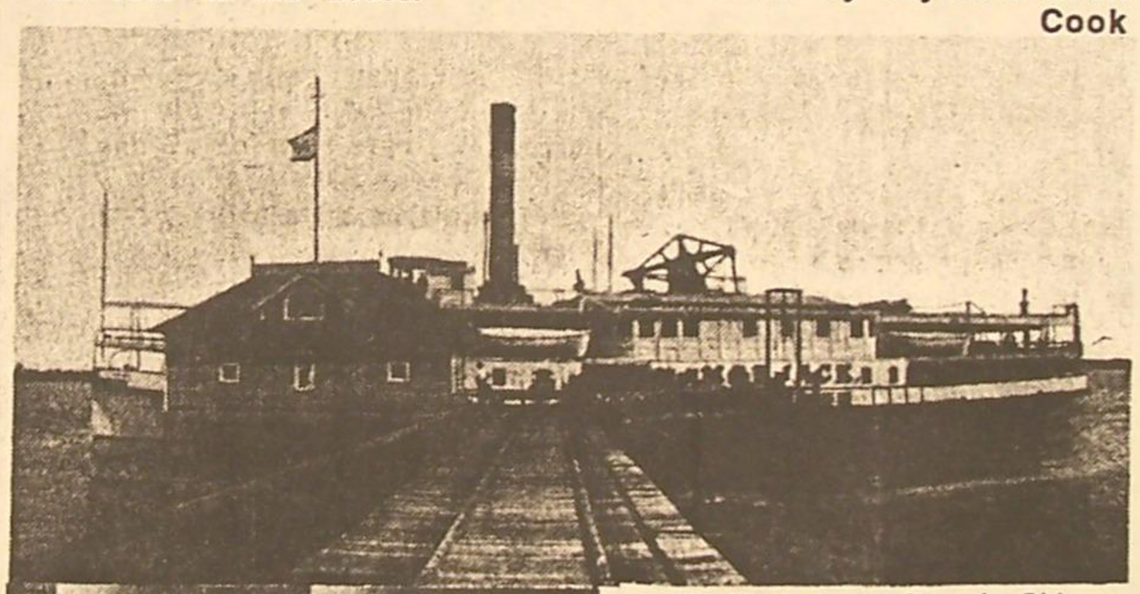
The farm has five hundred acres, three hundred and fifty under cultivation and one hundred and fifty in woods. We keep eleven horses, six cows, a dozen sheep, four bird-dogs, chickens, ducks and turkeys. We have a two-acre garden with greenhouse for winter vegetables, an acre of strawberries, an acre of raspberries and dewberries and two acres of grapes; and old orchard and a young one with all the fruits of the temperate climate; and a mile water front with full riparian rights.

The Old Dominion steamer has an artistic little pier on the upper end of the lawn, which gives us daily mail and traffic with Old Point and Norfolk and the outside world. There are no railroads in the three counties, Gloucester, Mathews, and Middlesex. We live in Gloucester, and around us on the beautiful landlocked arm of the Chesapeake called North River we see from our porch fourteen water-front homes. These three counties are intersected by a network of tide rivers and creeks, like the veins of a leaf, making it a veritable rural Venice.

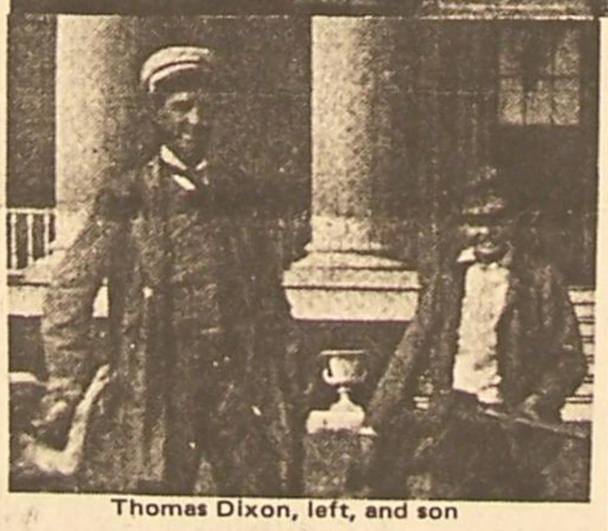
Back two miles in the high hills rise cool streams of fresh water to turn our millwheels and pour their new life into the sea, giving us the finest oysters in the world. We have twenty-five acres of these oyster grounds in front of our home.

The fields are full of quail. They nest in the garden and orchard and sometimes mix with the chickens; while in unbroken reaches of three thousand acres of forest roam flocks of wild turkeys whose ancestors furnished food and sport for Powhatan, Pocahontas and Captain Smith.

"The place was named 'El mington' from its giant elms. On the lawn now are three hundred and ninety trees, comprising thirty-seven varieties. About half of them are the evergreens, holly, pine, cedar and magnolia. Among them are are water oaks four feet in diameter, lifting their immense limbs clothed in shimmering green far above the roof of the house."



Old Mobjack steamer from the Old Dominion line docked on Dixon Dale pier



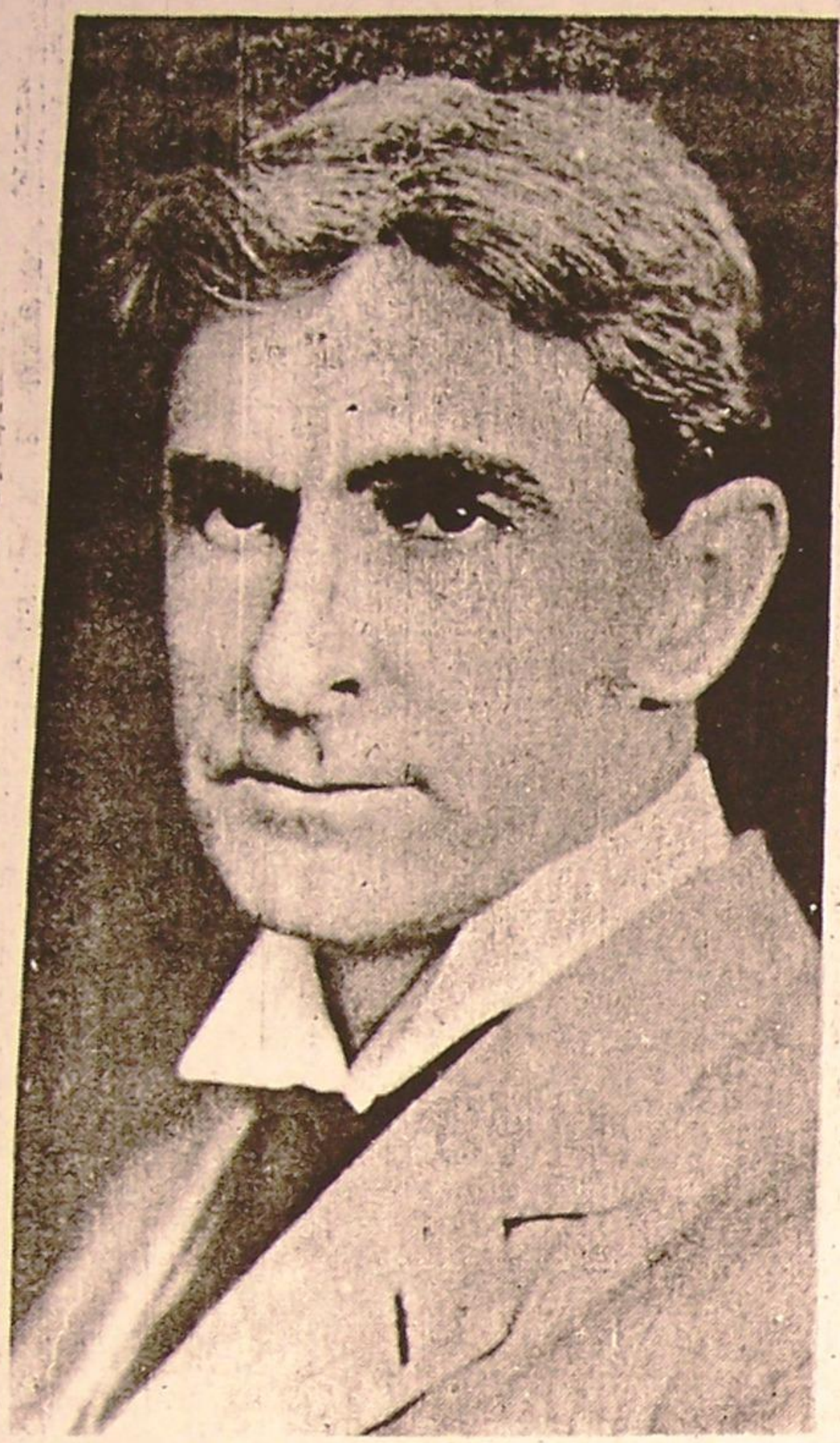
Thomas Dixon, left, and son

"Reared in poverty during the South's Reconstruction, he had only two years of formal schooling before entering college at fifteen. He became a state legislator before he was old enough to vote, then studied law but practiced only a short time before turning his restless talent to another field...ministry. He abandoned the ministry for the Chautauqua lecture circuit...five million heard him lecture. At the height of of his career his name was in every newspaper in the land..he made two fortunes and he died almost penniless.

"From the beginning of his residence at Cape Charles, Dixon's eye had been taken by a great mansion across the bay in Gloucester...The idea of owning "Elmington Manor" as the estate was called, was a dream that Dixon had hoped someday to see fulfilled... not long before the Spanish-American War, however, Dixon's income from his lectures had made him moderately wealthy...so in the fall of 1897, Dixon bought the new home and entered upon an extensive remodeling and decorating program...upon completing the outside remodeling, Dixon commissioned Wanamaker's of Philadelphia to furnish and decorate the interior." (later in 1905) "Once Dixon had decided to move back to New York, Elmington Manor no longer held the charm of previous years. The many qualities of privacy and spaciousness that had drawn him so strongly to the estate now appeared dull and uninteresting. The long months spent there as a novelist seemed to drag on interminably. 'When the first boyish exhilaration passes- the inheritance of childhood's memories- a feeling of sadness creeps over me. The house seems immense, and cold, though I feel the warm air pouring through the register and a wood fire roars and crackles in the open fireplace. I am mistaken. The room is not cold, and a greater fear be in my heart. Even the glow of a wood fire may not reach the soul's hiding place.' ...As he later recalled, the fascination that lured him back to the city would not be denied, 'I see the city's lambent flame, the light that never grows dim, the life that never sleeps..I hear the music of the orchestra, the tumult and the shout of Broadway on gala nights of grand opera, the voices of my favourites singing as never before-and I am glad.'"

from the book, "Fire from the Flint" by Raymond Allen Cook

THOMAS DIXON



EDITOR'S NOTE - The following article appeared in American Heritage issue of October 1980. Mr. Dixon lived at "Elmington" in Gloucester County when he wrote The Clansman. He preached often at First Presbyterian Church here and travelled in a sulky from his home on North River to the church in Gloucester Court House, according to the late Eugene Streagle of Flat Iron.

"He had the short, heavy-set neck of the lower order of animals. His skin was coal black, his lips so thick they curled both ways up and down with crooked blood-marks across them. His nose was flat, and its enormous nostrils seemed in perpetual dilation. The sinister bead eyes, with brown splotches in their whites, were set wide apart and gleamed ape-like under his scant brows."

This rabid description of a black trooper on duty in the state that had until recently held him in slavery is a typical vignette from the 1905 best seller *The Clansman*. Its author, Thomas Dixon, said, "I had a message and I wrote it as vividly and simply as I knew how." And people listened. The novel sold well over a million copies and went on to become D. W. Griffith's film epic *The Birth of a Nation*. The message was simple enough: it was, as Booker T. Washington angrily summed it up, "that to educate the Negro is to increase his powers for mischief."

In 1899 he left the ministry for the lecture circuit and toured the country until, in 1901, he happened to attend a performance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Outraged by this attack on his beloved Dixie, he sat down to write a novel that would set the record straight. Doubleday, Page and Company accepted the product of this fervor, *The Leopard's Spots*, within forty-eight hours after he submitted it. Set in the postwar South of Dixon's boyhood, the book is a polemic against what its author saw as the black's blind and ceaseless ambition to mate with white people, filled with such speeches as: "One drop of your blood in my family could push it backward three thousand years in history. . . . I would kill her [my daughter] with my own hand, rather than see her sink in your arms into the black waters of a Negroid life!"

The book caused a furor—one critic called it "the most bigoted of American novels"—but its combination of melodrama and venom made it an immediate success. Dixon, now envisioning a trilogy of novels about the Reconstruction era, went on to churn out *The Clansman* in thirty days. In a time of increasing Jim Crow legislation, this clanging paean to white supremacy served as a rallying point for race hatred. Dixon turned it into a play, and fulfilled an old ambition by acting in it for a season. It was a popular success, but even in the South it sparked rage wherever it played. Pronouncing it a "nightmare," the governor of Alabama said: "Undertaking to teach Southern white people something of the horrors of social equality is absolutely useless. They are already taught. The situations and suggestions are disgusting beyond expression. It is bad, top, bottom and sides, and it hurts."

Similar protests were voiced on a grander scale after Griffith released his famous 1915 film, but throughout Dixon blandly maintained that he was a staunch friend of the black. (One black critic replied that this "profession of friendship is, I confess, too subtle a process for the African intellect.") Dixon insisted that he only wished to spare the Negro the horrors of the war of extermination that was inevitable if "this thing, half devil and half child" were allowed to remain in America. "We must," he said, "remove the negro or we will have to fight him."

In a chapter dignified by the title "Racial Philosophy in Dixon's Novels," his biographer, Raymond A. Cook, points out that the man felt perfectly cordial to other minority groups—he liked Jews, Catholics, and, inexplicably, was particularly fond of Turks. To him, the spectral foe of his youth, the imaginary night riders that the small boy had awaited behind his shotgun, was the only true enemy. And the only true heroes were the saviors of his boyhood: although his books helped bring about the rebirth of the KKK in the 1920's, Dixon denounced this "renegade" Klan as a band of ruffians and opportunists, unworthy of the lofty traditions of the original.

During the decade he devoted his efforts to making cautionary movies in his own studio—he was convinced he could outdo Griffith—and, when that fell through, to buying Florida land and building an artists' colony in the North Carolina mountains. He lost heavily; in a few years he was broke. In 1939 a cerebral hemorrhage left Dixon a semi-invalid, but his hot, intemperate mind continued to function. He stuck to his writing, and was still on the barricades a few months after his stroke, when he finished the last of his twenty books, *The Flaming Sword*. In it, black Communists take over America and found the Soviet Republic of the United States. Dixon must have been bitter by this time; it is the only one of his race-struggle books that does not end with the re-establishment of white hegemony. He had high hopes for the novel, but his vogue had passed. One Southern critic saw the book as a relic, deserving "news treatment rather than literary criticism." It didn't sell.

Dixon died in 1946. Sixty years earlier he had written a poem to his fiancée which included the lines, "A hell of restlessness, I have drained, drained."

Dixon must have come early to his obsessive racism. Born in North Carolina in 1864, the son of a Baptist minister, he grew up in the lean, violent Reconstruction years, made the more brutal for him by constant beatings from his father. Once, while he was still a small child, his uncle warned him that five thousand black marauders were massing to sweep through the country; he picked up a shotgun and stood ready to defend his home. Against this phantom horde, the boy came to see the hooded horsemen of the Ku Klux Klan as "knights of old, riding for their country, their women and their God." When he entered Wake Forest College at the age of fifteen, he wrote his first story—a saga of the birth of the Klan. His college record was strong enough to win him a scholarship in political science at Johns Hopkins University, but on his twentieth birthday the restless young man left school and headed for New York and an acting career that lasted until a theatrical manager skipped town with three hundred dollars of his money. Glumly, Dixon returned to North Carolina, entered law school, and, within the year, ran for the state legislature and won by a landslide. He did well in politics and law, but both professions soon paled: "the whole system of law trials, the more I thought of it, seemed little short of a crime," he said, and the politician was nothing more than "the prostitute of the masses."

He brooded about his calling with his wife, Harriet, and finally found a career during a walk along the beach. "I descended from the sand dune a different man. A light was shining in my heart that would not go out." He entered the ministry.

He turned out to be as able at preaching as he was at politics and law. Ordained in the Baptist Church in 1886, he was soon called to an important pastorate in New York City. There he drew crowds with increasingly sensational speeches against feminism, populism, and black rights. Perversely for a self-described "reactionary individualist," he also spoke with strength and pity on the plight of New York's poor. He was, he said, "full of fire and pizen," and he gave a lively enough sermon to build a fortune on the public-speaking platform. Before long, he was able to buy a five-hundred-acre estate overlooking Chesapeake Bay and a yacht, the *Dixie*.

GLO-QUIPS, December 9, 1981

"And we got it all in exchange for a few feet of scorched mud, and a cement cat-yard 19 x 20."

The waters are full of fish, and our baby boy can catch enough for dinner within a hundred yards of the house any day from the first of May till the first of November. In the winter the wild ducks, geese and brant give the sport of kings.

We keep a pen full of diamond-back terapin as we keep a pen of pigs, and fatten them on crabs. Crabs and clams are so plentiful that they are considered a very plebeian diet. We keep a maphtha launch, two small sailboats, three rowboats and a schooner yacht.

I had always desired a home that had some association with history and yet one on which I might stamp the imprint of my own mind. Elmington Manor fulfilled both these desires. The house, when we bought the estate, was simply a square brick structure finished with Portland cement and painted brown. It is beautifully situated on a peninsula lawn of fifteen acres, From the land side the avenue drive stretches away from the gate though giant trees two miles to the hills and the country road. On the water side it looks majestically out to sea over a sunny stretch of greensward dotted with holly and flowering shrubs.

Its roots are deep set in Colonial history. Its broad acres were a Crown grant two hundred years ago. A short drive to the south is the village of Yorktown, the scene of the siege and surrender of Lord Cornwallis to Washington and our French allies. On this side the York River stands towering old Rosewell, the most palatial country establishment in America when built the the Pages. Near Rosewell is the ancient chimney of the Indian emperor, Powhatan. This chimney was built for Powhatan under the direction of Captain John Smith's colonists. Across the York but a few miles from us are old Williamsburg and Jamestown.

The house was built by Dr. John Prosser Tabb, fifty-seven years ago, at that time the richest and most influential man in the county. Its walls contain the brick from the old house built in the earliest Colonial days.

These walls are three feet thick. The house is three and a half stories high and contains thirty-two rooms. The hall is twenty feet wide, and thirty-five feet deep; and from its rear circular wall the winding mahogany stair sweeps gracefully up three stories into the gallery of the observatory.

There is not a shoddy piece of work in it from cellar to attic. The mahogany rails and spindles are the finest finished handwork, the window and door sills are of massive Italian marble, and the hard pine floors so evenly and smoothly laid they will hold water. The floors are laid on oak sleepers set ten inches apart, and are black-plastered and sand-ballasted.

Hundreds of slaves aided the skilled workmen in its erection. Its straight, massive, square lines gave me the opportunity to carry out my dream of a Colonial home. It only required the addition on both sides of the Greek facades with the pillars, and it was done.

We had men at work on the construction of these columns who never saw a locomotive,- men of family who own their own homes.

I put in a system of waterworks, with windmill for power, four bathrooms, and a complete system of sewerage into tidewater. An acetylene gas plant give us finer lights than electricity and for less cost than city gas. We rummaged through the junk shops of New York and dragged out a complete set of massive brass chandeliers, all over fifty years old in pattern, had them cleaned at the factory, and they look as if they have been built into the house originally.

Twelve rooms have open grate fires, and sufficient heat for all the spaces secured by placing two tubular hot-air furnaces in the basement. Our winters are usually so mild that roses blossom in the flower-garden in December.

I had dreamed this complete from the moment I saw the house. The actual doing of the thing was a revelation and a liberal education. I figured on $3,000 for the job of painting, decorating, water, heat, and modern conveniences.

The plumbing alone cost $2,350! And I got good value for the money. The bills aggregated $7,500

But when it was done, it was a joy to look at it. The effect was massive and dignified, and yet homelike and inviting. We had something to show for our money, and, what was a great deal better, we had something that would stand the test of time. Its great hall and grand old rooms with their lofty ceilings give meaning and dignity to daily life, and their memories link us fellowship and sympathy to a mighty past.

And we got it all for nineteen feet of scorched mud in New York.

Life at "Elmington" in 1826

Taken from A Southern Planter, the life of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Dabney, written by their daughter, Susan Dabney Smedes, and originally published in Glo-Quips on January 26, 1966.

The life at Elmington was the ideal life of a Virginia gentleman. Elmington was situated on an arm of the Chesapeake Bay, the North River, in the county of Gloucester, that has so often been called the garden spot of Virginia.

The house was of red brick, quaint and old-fashioned in design. It was built very near the water's edge. The lapping of the waves of the incoming tide was a sweet lullaby to the quiet scene, as the eye rested on the greensward of the lawn, or took in the bend of the river that made a broad sweep just below the Elmington garden. The North River is half a mile wide. On the other shore could be seen the groves and fields and gardens of the neighboring country-seats. The low grounds on the river-shore extend back a distance of a mile and three-quarters, and lie like a green carpet, dotted here and there with grand old forest-trees, and corn, wheat, rye and tobacco fields. Far as the eye can reach stretches this fair view around Elmington. And far over, beyond field and grove and creek, rises the line of soft, round hills that mark the highlands of Gloucester.

On the land side, the Elmington house was approached through the fields by a lane a mile and three-quarters long. It was broad enough to admit three carriage drives. Many of the lanes in Gloucester lie between avenues of cedar trees, and the fields in most of the estates are divided by cedar-hedges. It was so on the Elmington lands.

About four miles inland from the North River, in a quiet spot, surrounded by venerable oak and pine and walnut and other native trees, stands old Ware Church. It was built in Colonial times, and its age unknown. It is nearly square in form, and altogether unlike the present style of church architecture in this country. But its ancient walls are churchly, and the look of unchangeableness is soothing to the spirit in this world of unrest. This was the parish church the mother-country in the extravagant style required by their station. These brought to their home in the New World the customs and manners of the Old. The tone of society has always been truly English in Lower Virginia, the "tidewater country", as the people love to call it. Everybody kept open house entertaining was a matter of course, anything and everything was made the occasion of a dinner-party. The country - seats were strung along the banks of the North River in a way to favot this. A signal raised on one could be seen for several miles up and down the river. If one of the colored fishermen, whose sole occupation was to catch fish for the table at the Great House, as they called their master's residence, succeeded in catching a sheep's-head, his orders were to run up a signal-flag. This was an invitation to dinner to every gentleman in the neighborhood. If a rabbit was caught the same rule was observed. Rabbits were not common, which seemed to be the pretex for this, for they were not really esteemed as a dainty dish. A rabbit was served up rather as a trophy of the hunt than as a part of the feast intended to be eaten. But the sheep's-head in those waters were not uncommon, and one was taken by the fisherman of one house or another nearly every day. At five minutes before the time for dinner the gentlemen would ride up, or come by boat to the door of the house that had the signal flying. If any one was unable to attend, his servant rode up promptly with a note of regrets. Punctuality in the observance of all the rules of courtesy and good breeding seemed inherent in the men and women in Gloucester society. In his Mississippi life, Mr. Dabney was often annoyed by the different manners of his neighbors out there, very few of whom thought it necessary to send regrets or apologies when his invitations could not be accepted.

Bishop Moore would go two or three miles out of his way in order to spend a day or two at Elmington. One night at about ten o'clock in the midst of a snowstorm, he drove up. A game of whist was going on in the dining-room. Mr. Dabney, Elmington for a week of absolute quiet and rest. Upon the invitation being sent, he came, and his wishes were respected in the true Virginia manner of letting the guests of the house be happy and comfortable in their own way. He sat all day over his papers, no one being allowed to intrude on his privacy. Every evening, when he came down to dinner, he found a company invited to dine with him.

Augustine Dabney had married Miss Elizabeth Smith of Fredericksburg, and lived in Gloucester, back in the country some miles from the North River. Thomas's nearest neighbor and most valued friend was his father's half-brother , Dr. James Dabney. Living on adjoining estates, their homes were barely a stone's throw apart, and not many hours of the day passed without intercourse between the two houses. The uncle and nephew were congenial in many ways, and Sophia revered and loved Dr. Dabney like a father. Thomas's aptitude for medicine and surgery was at times so helpful to Dr. Dabney, that he fell into a way of calling on him frequently to assist him. He used to say that Thomas's soft hand and acute sense of touch enabled his at times to diagnose a case that would baffle a practitioner of considerable experience who was not possessed of these natural advantages. He always had him at hand in his surgical cases if possible, and thus, under this uncle, were renewed the lessons given by Dr. Smith. Dr. Dabney was a man made of no common clay. His hospitality was on so princely a scale that he made no charge for medical services to any stranger visiting his county, thus making the whole county of Gloucester his home. Although for many years a widower, with only two children, both sons, the arrangements of his home were set with a view to a large household. Everything was on a scale liberal even for Gloucester.

A lady now sixty-eight years of age writes thus of Dr. James Dabney: "He stood very high in his profession. He was a widower from my earliest recollection. He had a housekeeper and fine servants, and entertained people by the score for months at a time. Even lades used to stay there from cities."

His home, the Exchange, was seldom without its guests of a day, or a week, or many months. The ample fortune of the host justified the elegant hospitality of the house.

He had expended the whole of his patrimony during his five years at the medical school in Edinburgh. On his arrival in America, after graduating in medicine, he was obliged to borrow five hundred dollars in order to open his office as a practitioner of medicine at Gloucester Court House. It was not long before his ability brought him into a large practice, not only in Gloucester County, but he was called to Richmond, Norfolk, and other places as consulting physician.

In the midst of Dr. Dabney's busy professional life his friends and neighbors called on him to represent his country in the Virginia legislature. This he refused to do, alleging that he had no time for political work. But they were so persistent that he finally yielded. He stipulated, however, that he would not make one electioneering visit or ask for a single vote. In this he remained firm, and even went so far as to absent himself from the polls on the day of election. He was elected by a large majority, and he served the term out. His county people tried hard to induce him to allow his name to appear a second time as a candidate for the Legislature. But he was not to be moved from his resolution of devoting himself henceforth to his profession.

The strong character of Dr. James Dabney made its impress on Thomas. Doubtless he had inherited some of the traits with the blood of this large-souled uncle.

Dr. Dabney's views about his own interment were very simple. He required his son James a promise to carry then out on his death, and his last wishes were respected. He was placed in a plain pine coffin, and no stone was set up to mark his grave. A brick, wall saves it from desecration. Like his uncle, Thomas had a repugnance for costly and showy funeral trappings. He carried out these views in his own household. He always expressed a desire to be buried himself as he buried his loved ones, in a plain pine coffin. "That I may return as quickly as possible to the original elements in the bosom of the earth. This taste was in accordance with the simplicity of character of the two men. They did nothing for show during their lifetime, and did not desire anything done for show over their ashes.

In colonial days a robe of silk was spun and woven for the

continued to page 28

CARTER

Lumber "Down to Earth Home Improvements"

ELMINGTON
continued from page 27

Merrie Monarch in Gloucester County, and in the garret of the Exchange the silk-worms spun the silk for two complete suits for General Washington. In color they were gray. Thomas Dabney remembered seeing the silk-worms up there when a child, and his aunt Anderson, who presented these suits to General Washington, used to occasionally give him a cocoon for a plaything.

Thomas Dabney was interested in all that was going on in Virginia. He rode to Richmond frequently. When it was known that Watkins Leigh, or R. C. Schott, or the Stannards, or any other of the distinguished men of that day, were to engage in a debate, he was pretty sure to be there to hear them. Thomas was present at the famous dinner at Yorktown given in honor of the nation's guest, the Marquis de Lafayette. At the table he was placed next to George Washington Lafayette, who occupied the seat next to his father. It was in the month of October, and there was a small dish of red Antwerp raspberries sent by Mrs. Tayloe of Mount Airy. They came from her hot-houses and were set before General Lafayette. The courteous gentleman leaned across his son and offered the berries to Thomas. He took two.

The story is still told in Gloucester of Thomas's capture of a man by the name of Crusoe, living in the lower part of the county. This man had acted for some years in open defiance of the oyster law. No sheriff had arrested him. He openly boasted that none should. Thomas had lately been elected to this office and he determined to make an attempt to capture Crusoe. Summoning a posse of three of his neighbors, he proceeded in a boat down the river to Crusoe's schooner, that was lying out in the York River. The schooner was well built and in stanch condition, while the boat which held Thomas and his friends was a wretched water-logged craft. As they drew near Crusoe's schooner the sheriff called out to him to surrender. The only reply made to the summons was to cover the little boat of the sheriff and his party with an enormous old swivel-gun, and to warn them with an oath not to advance any nearer. Thomas held a consultation with his friends, telling them that they must decide whether they were willing to approach the schooner under such circumstances. It was decided that it would be foolhardy to attempt to board a well-equipped boat when they were in a crazy thing that could not be managed in an emergency. So they went back home, leaving Crusoe master of the field for the time.

A Certain Night

Ascertaining that Crusoe was in his house on a certain night, it was resolved to capture him there. Accordingly another posse was summoned, and Thomas and his four men rode to the man's house, a distance of about twelve miles. They surrounded the house, and the sheriff knocked at the door and demanded instant surrender. Crusoe's wife put her head out of the window upstairs and said that her husband was in bed; that if Mr. Dabney, would come upstairs alone and unarmed he would give himself up. The posse objected to these conditions and said that Mr. Dabney should at least be accompanied by one of them, or should wear his arms. But he called to the woman that he was ready and willing to come up on Crusoe's terms.

She came down then and unbarred the door, and he followed her up to the man's room. He gave himself up at once, and, at the sheriff's bidding, prepared to mount a horse and go with him as his prisoner. He was greatly dejected at the prospect of being thrown into prison to await his trail, and was very sulky as they rode along. The path did not stop till they had reached Elmington.

When dinner-time came Thomas ordered dinner to be served to him, but he refused to eat. He had not tasted food the whole day. Thomas said to him, "Mr. Crusoe, would you like to go back to your wife tonight?" The man looked up quickly, his whole countenance changing. "I mean to put you on your honor," the sheriff continued. "You know that it is against the law for me to release you without bail. I will be your surety that you will be at Gloucester Court-House to pay the hundred dollars' fine in two weeks."

The man was moved, and shed tears. The sheriff lent him his own horse to ride home. On the appointed day he was at the court-house with the hundred dollars in his hand. His gratitude to the man who had trusted him, one who had been an outlaw for years, made a changed man of him. He was ever after a law-abiding citizen, and was Thomas's stanch friend as long as he lived.

Crusoe passed away years ago, but his son, himself an aged man now, lives to tell the story of Mr. Dabney's trust of his father. This son asked Mr. James Dabney of the Exchange if he was a relative of the former sheriff, and on hearing that they were cousins, expressed his own gratitude and his father's for the confidence placed in him in the time of trouble. The fifty odd years that have passed since that time seem not to have obliterated it from the memory of the Crusoe family.

At the time when the negro rising known as the Southhampton Insurrection was threatened, Thomas received from Governor Floyd a commission of colonel of militia. He and his men kept their horses saddled and bridled in the stable every night for three weeks, ready for any alarm or emergency. He was an accomplished horseman, and sat his mettlesome, blooded stallion like a part of himself. A boy in the neighborhood, whom his father asked if he would like to go to the court house to see Colonel Dabney's soldiers drill, said in reply that he would rather see Colonel Dabney on his horse at the head of regiment than all the soldiers. This boy, now a gray-headed man in Baltimore, delights yet in talking of those days. "When the drum and the fife struck up," he says, "that was the time that we boys had the fun. Colonel Dabney's horse sprang into the air and seemed hardly to touch the ground and we wondered how he kept his seat."

On the night when it was understood that the negroes uprising was to take place he called his own negroes up and put his wife under their charge, as his duty called him away from her. His charge to them was that not only was she to be protected by them, but she was not even to be alarmed; and if harm befell a hair of her head, they should be held accountable for it. The negroes were faithful, and guarded the house all night long, and with so much tact and genuine affection that when Thomas Dabney returned to his home the next day, his wife was amazed to hear from his lips the story of the peril that she, along with every white womarr in Gloucester, had passed through during the night.

It is a singular circumstance that, with the exception of the negroes on the Elmington place, not a negro man was to be found in Gloucester County on that night by the patrol. It was supposed that the daring spirits had gone to join in the uprising, while the timid ones had hidden themselves in the woods.

About the year 1835 a great many Virginians were induced to remove with their families to the far South. For several reasons Thomas began to consider the expediency of moving out to the then new country. He was considered one of the most successful wheat and tobacco farmers in this part of the State. But the expensive style of living in Gloucester began to be a source of serious anxiety. He knew that with a young and growing family to educate and provide for the difficulty would be greater each year. He felt also the increasing difficulty of giving to his negroes the amount of nourishing food that he considered necessary for laboring people. In view of these facts, he made up his mind that he must leave his home in Virginia for a new one in the cotton-planting States.

Many and great were the regrets when it became known that Thomas Dabney had determined to leave Gloucester.

The farewell dinner given to him at the court-house was perhaps the most notable ever given within the limits of the county. A copy of the Richmond Enquirer, bearing date of September 22, 1835, contains the published accounting of the proceedings of the day.

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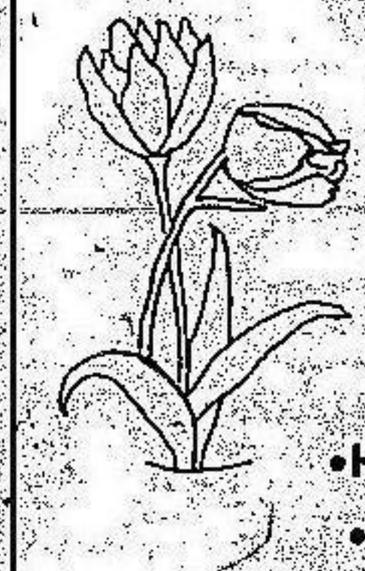

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* This page was added because it was missing in the original.

Photo c. late 19th century by Robert A. Lancaster, Jr.

Goshen - on the Ware River

An early Tomkies family home. It was purchased by William Kennon Perrin in 1844 and has been continously occupied by this family since that time.

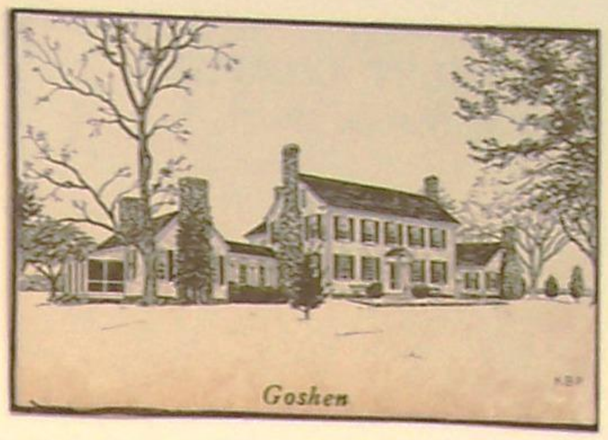
The rear two story wing was added in the late 1850's and the side wings in 1926

Owned in 1966 by Mr. & Mrs. Charles Frederick Lyman. (Mrs Lyman's mother was a Perrin)

Goshen - the name means Land of light.

— From the garden - April 1966

Pastoral view in 1950's - photo by Howell Walker



— Photos 1966 —

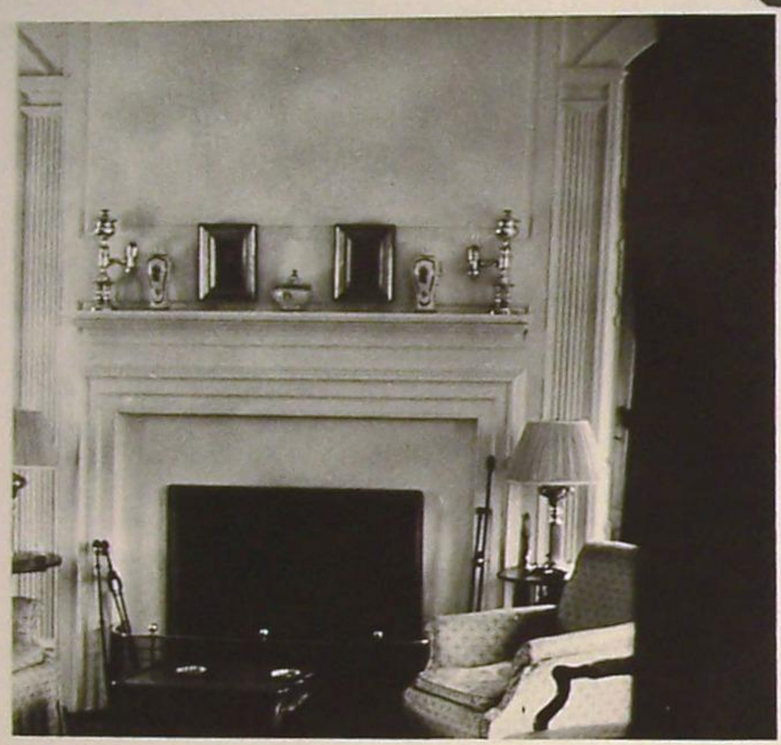
Goshen continued —

line of domestic outbuildings

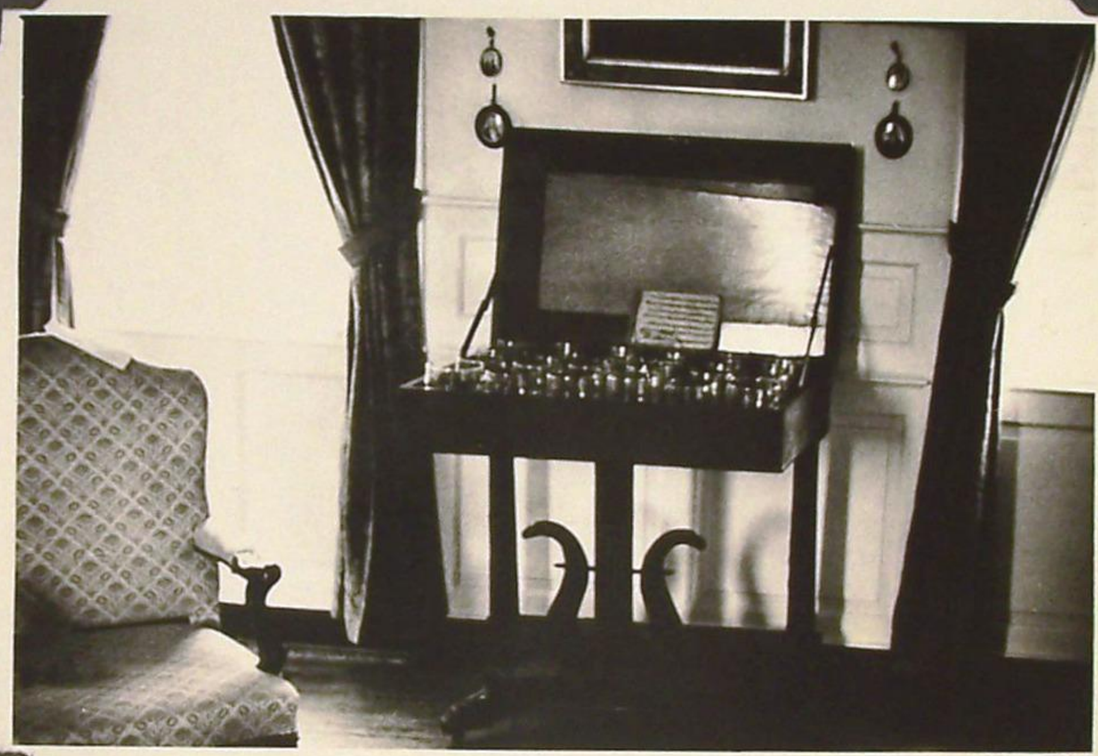
rear view from the bank of the Ware River —

continued →

Goshen continued ——— Photos 1966



Drawing room – lamps on the mantel are whale oil lamps



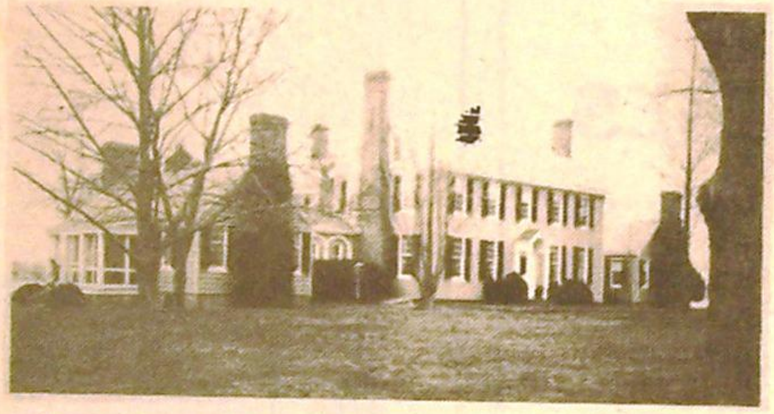
In the drawing room is this Glassspiel. It consists of 24 goblets of various diameter and when rubbed on the rims with wet fingers they produce musical tones! It belonged to Mrs. Lyman's great-great grandmother Mrs. John Tabb. Miss Eleanor Perrin, aunt of Mrs Lyman, plays it beautifully.

There are portraits here by Sully, Raeburn and Hubbard.

Dining room – more whale oil lamps on the mantel.

GOSHEN

Colonial Plantation overlooking the Ware River from circa 1760. Includes 254 acres of farm and woodland.



Extensive river frontage with long pier and boat house. Shown by appointment.

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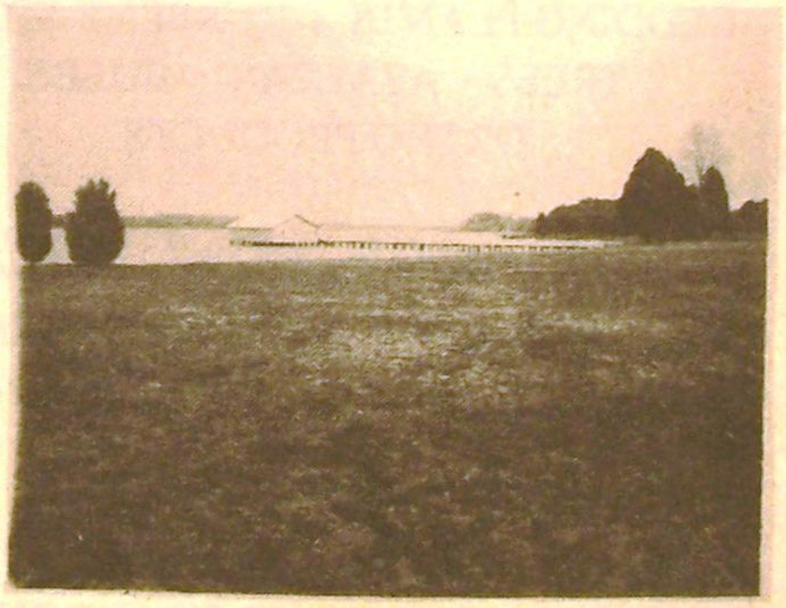

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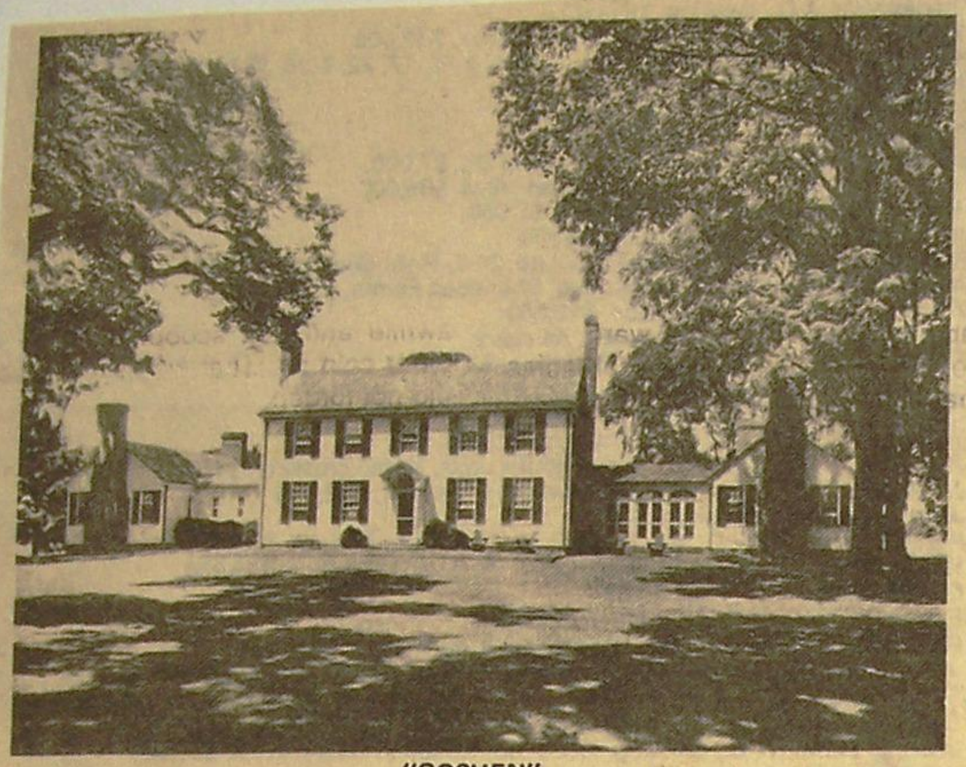
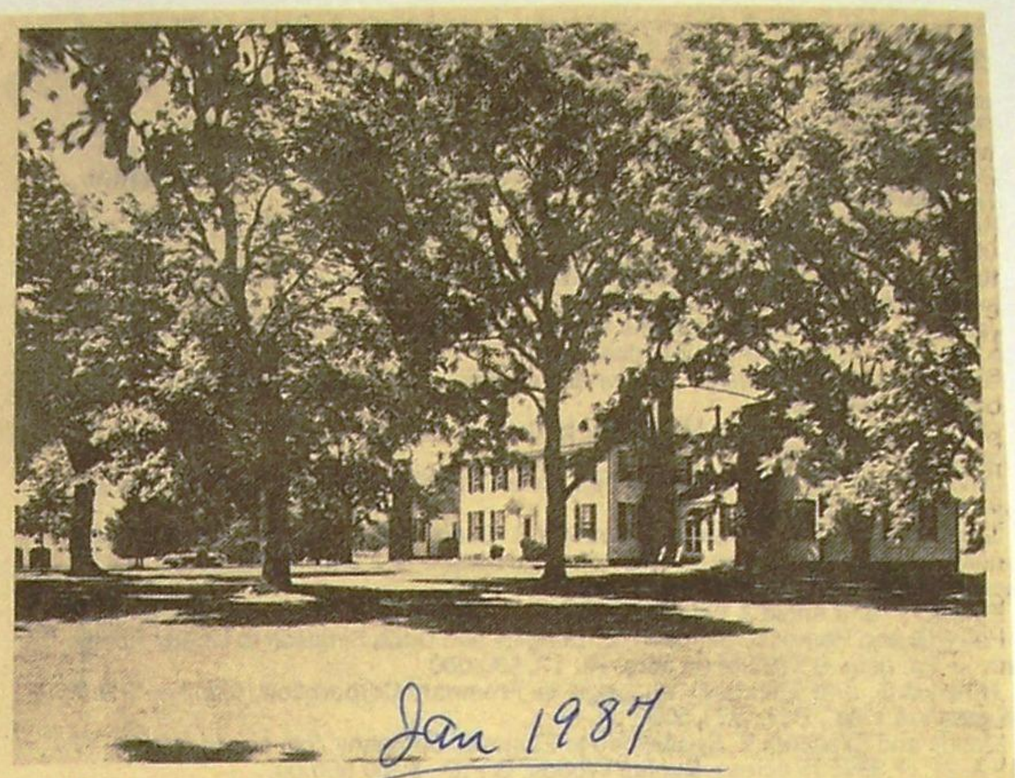


"GOSHEN"

"Goshen", historic Ware River estate in Gloucester County at Zanoni, has been sold for $1,125,500 in three parcels to Edwin A. Joseph,unmarried, of Newport News. Mr. Joseph is president of Great Atlantic, a realty



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development company, and is reported to be "the wealthiest person" in Newport News. It is reported that he will make his home at "Goshen", where he plans extensive renovation for restoration.

Mr. Joseph also purchased "The Cove", which adjoins "Goshen", from Dr. Edward S.Bear, internist of Gloucester, for $800,000. "Goshen" has been in the Perrin family for almost two hundred years. The sellers, Elizabeth MacKubin Lyman and Charles F. Lyman inherited the property from her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Geoge Mackubin, Sr. Mrs. Mackubin was a member of the Perrin family.

Sadly, after 168 years, Goshen has passed out of the family.

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Whitehall

on the Ware River

Originally the seat of the Willis family. Francis Willis may have built the first part of the house.

Mary Willis married Dr. Samuel Powell Byrd, great-grandson of William Byrd of "Westover". Dr. Byrd enlarged the house and built an office north of the house.

Whitehall descended to Richard Corbin Byrd who married a granddaughter of John Marshall.

— The approach —

West (entrance) facade

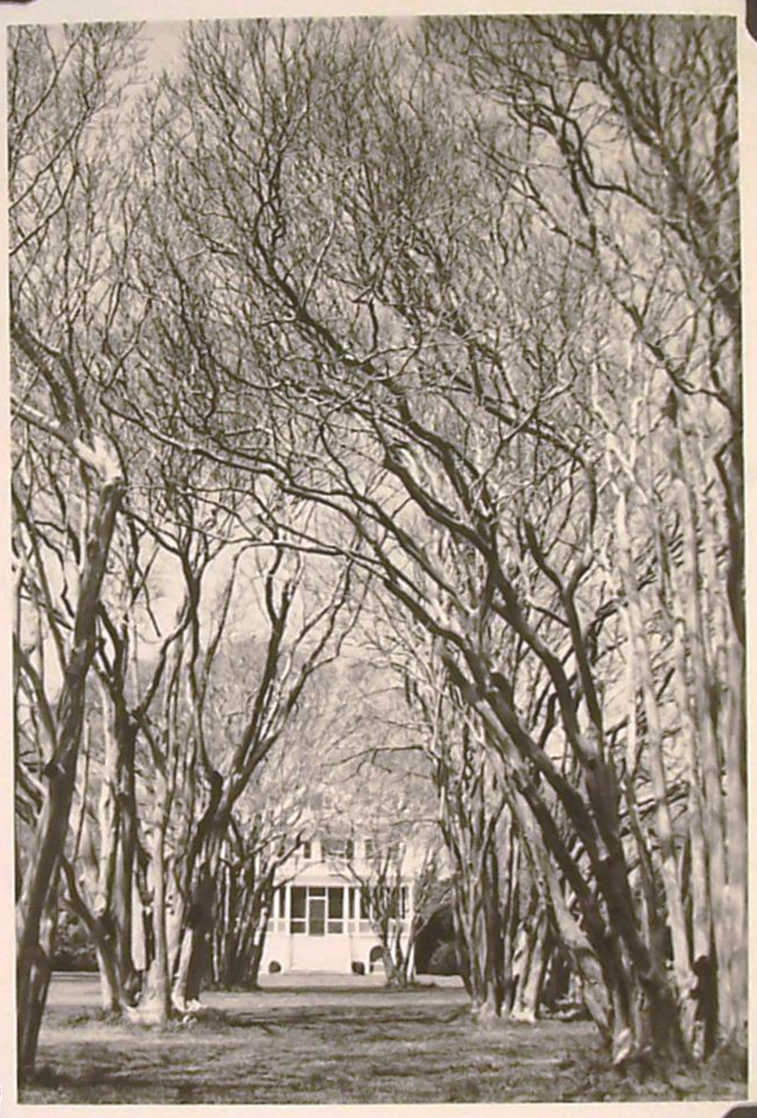
West (entrance) facade

continued →

East (River) facade - Photo c. 1900 by Robert A. Lancaster, Jr.

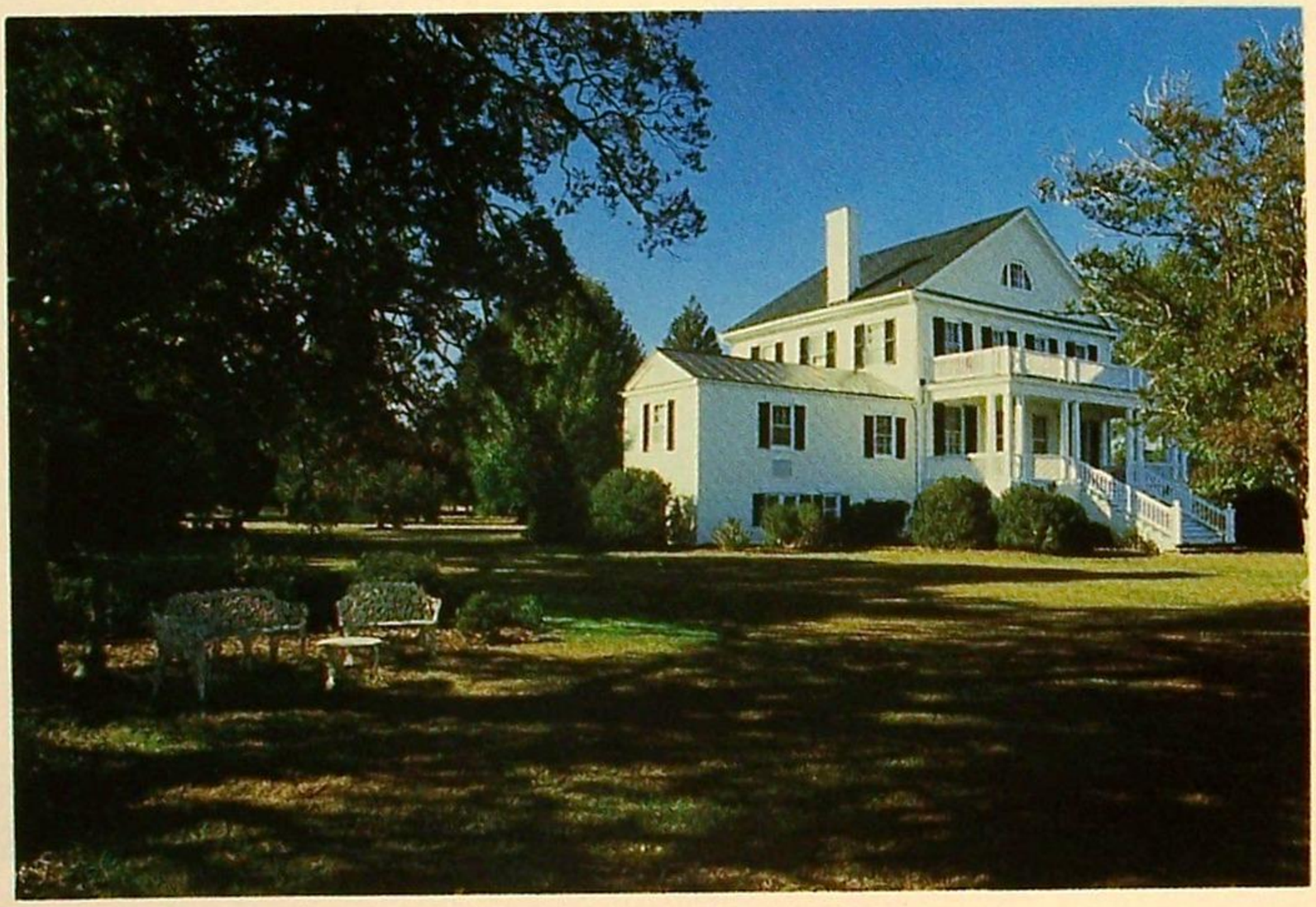
Litchfall continued -

- view from northeast -



View from east through allee of crepe myrtle

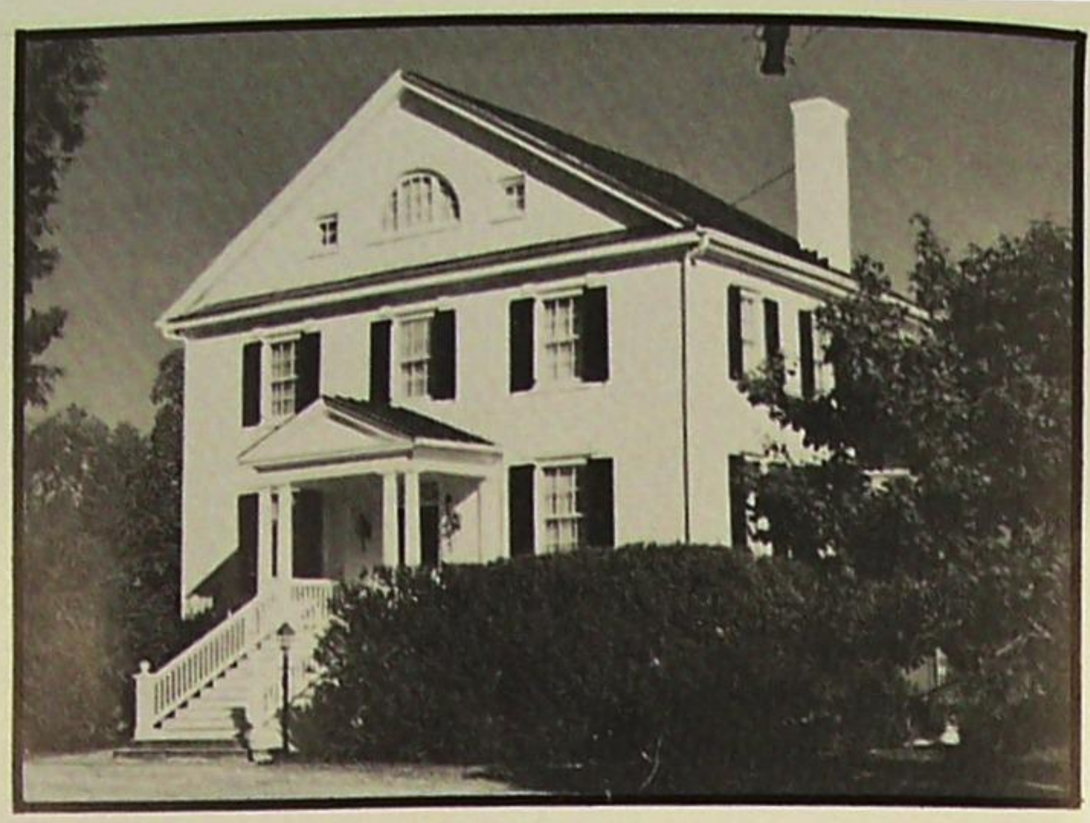
— views of the garden and lawn —



White Hall

Virginia Landmarks Register ♦ National Register of Historic Places

White Hall



White Hall Plantation, noted on both the State and National Historical Registers, is prominent in an area renowned for its historical homes and fine waterfront properties. Sequestered near the end of a quiet country lane in Gloucester County, Virginia, approached by a long drive lined with cedar, and surrounded by 19 acres of lovely buildings and grounds, the manor house is well positioned overlooking the Ware River.

Time has lent a stateliness to this home enhanced by the magnolias and crepe myrtles, many of which are over two hundred years old. The exterior is solid brick, fired on the premises. The interior is full of period detailing such as old wide pine flooring, door locks and other hardware, and hand fashioned woodwork. Subsequent owners have done their part to make the property all the more enjoyable, the present owners having updated many of the modern conveniences in their restoration. Amenities, such as the pool, guest cottage, Dr. Byrd's old office, and the modern squash court further the potential of this property.

White Hall is five miles from the picturesque county seat, Gloucester Courthouse, only minutes from the historic peninsula of Virginia (bounded by the James and the York Rivers), and the noted areas of Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown.

The location of White Hall insures complete enjoyment of all the water sports, such as sailing, power boating, water skiing, and swimming. The Chesapeake Bay area has long been known for fishing and hunting, with an abundance of fish, crabs, oysters, clams, and a diversity of water fowl and other game.

White Hall Plantation presents a rare combination of a period home with sufficient acreage to insure privacy in an excellent area with homes of similar character and prestige. The property has complete access to the Ware River, the Mobjack and Chesapeake Bays, and all the pleasures associated with the water, and easy access to the Newport News-Hampton Roads area for education, entertainment, cultural experiences, and a variety of shopping opportunities.

1986

Although the information contained herein is believed to be accurate, it is not so warranted, nor is it otherwise guaranteed.

White Hall circa 1690

A Historical Sketch

The patent for the land on which White Hall is situated was granted in 1666 to Colonel Francis Willis, a member of the Governor's Council. Colonel Willis was called back to England in 1676 never to return to Virginia, leaving his land holdings in Virginia to his nephew, Francis, the son of Henry Willis. It was the second Francis Willis who was the probable builder of the first part of White Hall, the present east section (the kitchen and family room). This was originally a one story house with earthen floored English basement constructed about 1690. The western section of the house, with beams running east and west, was probably built in the 18th century, as was the north wing. All of the framing that is showing is clearly marked as being pit sawn and hand hewn by adze and broad axe.

About 1850, White Hall, which had fallen into disrepair, was restored and improved by Dr. Samuel Powell Byrd. Dr. Byrd removed the north wing entirely and added porches on the east and west side of the main house. He also built a small cottage to the left of the house which he used as an office.

In 1927, Mr. Harry Hall of New York purchased White Hall and removed the porches. Upon his death in the 1930's, White Hall was sold to Mr. John Hays of Richmond, who restored the house to the way it looked during Dr. Byrd's time, changing only the porch on the river side, making it somewhat larger.

The Plantation was purchased by Mr. George Cunningham after World War II. He improved the farm and made it into an Angus breeding operation.

The present owners are maintaining the residence beautifully and have upgraded the physical plant to include such conveniences as new baths, kitchen fixtures, and water source heat pumps for heating and cooling.

TABLE OF FACTS

MANOR HOUSE: Four story, brick, laid in common bond, slate and standing seam metal roof. Four bedrooms, four baths, large porch facing east to the Ware River.
HEATING AND COOLING: Three new, highly efficient, water to air heat pumps.
WATER: Several deep wells with excellent quality and flow.

POOL/GUEST COTTAGE: Two story, 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths, kitchen and living room. The screened porch has a lovely view of the lawn, swimming pool and the Ware River.
OFFICE/SQUASH COURT: Both recently restored.
GARAGE: 4 car with storage space overhead.
OTHER AMENITIES: Greenhouse, potting shed, and smokehouse.

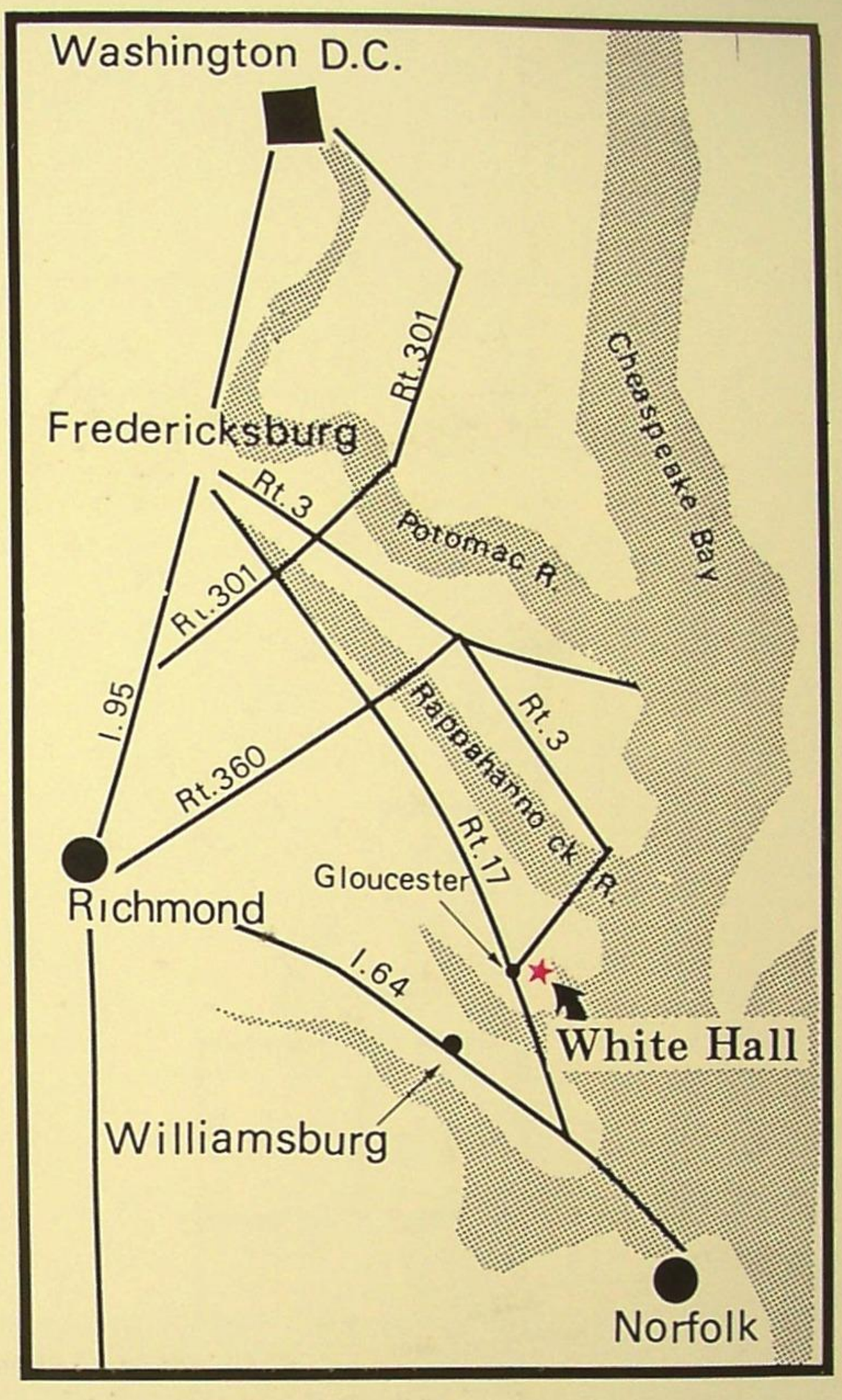
PROPERTY: 19+- acres, essentially all open, the Manor House grounds are noted for their magnificent magnolia and crepe myrtle trees which are among the largest to be found in Virginia.

WATER FRONTAGE: 800+- feet, on the Ware River, just off the Mobjack and Chesapeake Bays, deep water 100 feet from shore.

LOCATION: Historic Gloucester County of Tidewater, Virginia, five miles from Gloucester Courthouse, on Route 668, only 30 miles from Williamsburg. Convenient to three airports: Newport News, Norfolk, and Richmond.

PRICE: $825,000; or with 14 acres (excluding swimming pool and pool house) $625,000. Also available, adjacent 68 acres, along the Ware River and adjoining cove, with large cottage, barn, corn crib, stables, and pier to deep water; separate sale at $595,000

Only the 14 acre parcel is now available for $625,000.



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FARM AND ESTATE BROKERS
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1986

Glo-Quips 2/8/78

Snows Came -- All White at "White Hall"

First came the high winds followed the next week by a snow storm which dropped about 5 inches in the counties of Gloucester and Mathews. "White Hall' is a Colonial estate on Ware River at Zanoni in Gloucester County.

Gloucester—White Hall

Letter to Editor

1973

Pasadena, Cal.

My Dear Mr. DeHardit,

I have had made an enlarged photostat of "White-Hall", which I cut from a Glo-Quips picture past year, in order to make a needlepoint of it for a glass tea tray.

As children, we spent every summer at Whitehall with our grandparents, the Richard Corbin Byrds. I want this work to be as authentic as possible, and as I remember Whitehall, which is like your picture. I know from my family records that William Powell Byrd (1776) went there after his marriage to Susannah Lewis in 1798. However, I remember grandma saying the house was pre revolution, built of ballast brick by a Mr. Willis, and later owned by a Corbin, Wilson's Creek being a corruption of Willis' Creek. I would like to approximate the building date; this will be an heirloom for my children's children. If you should have any data, or photo, or can tell me where to apply, I should be most grateful. I want to defray any cost.

If you remember my visit to your office to find out data on Ann Sparke who married Churchill Gordon in Gloucester in 1761, that may recall me to you. At your suggestion, I went to the Huntington Library but found only that 2 Sparkes came to Lynnhaven with Adam Thoroughgood in 1631 and a James Sparke from London came to Va. in 1635, but I could get no further connection although I feel this is my Sparke. I did not intend to write a tome, so thank you for your attention and patience.

Sincerely,
Sally Tazewell Waller Luce

P.S. I love Glo-Quips; it recalls many happy times to me who am now an old lady.

** "White Hall" estate on the Ware River has been sold to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Banks of Atlanta, Georgia, by Mr. and Mrs. Gene Conner for $590 thousand. Mr. Banks will probably succeed David Peeples of Ordinary as head of Ferguson Enterprises.

Glo-Quips 25 Feb. 1987

continued →

Whitehall material

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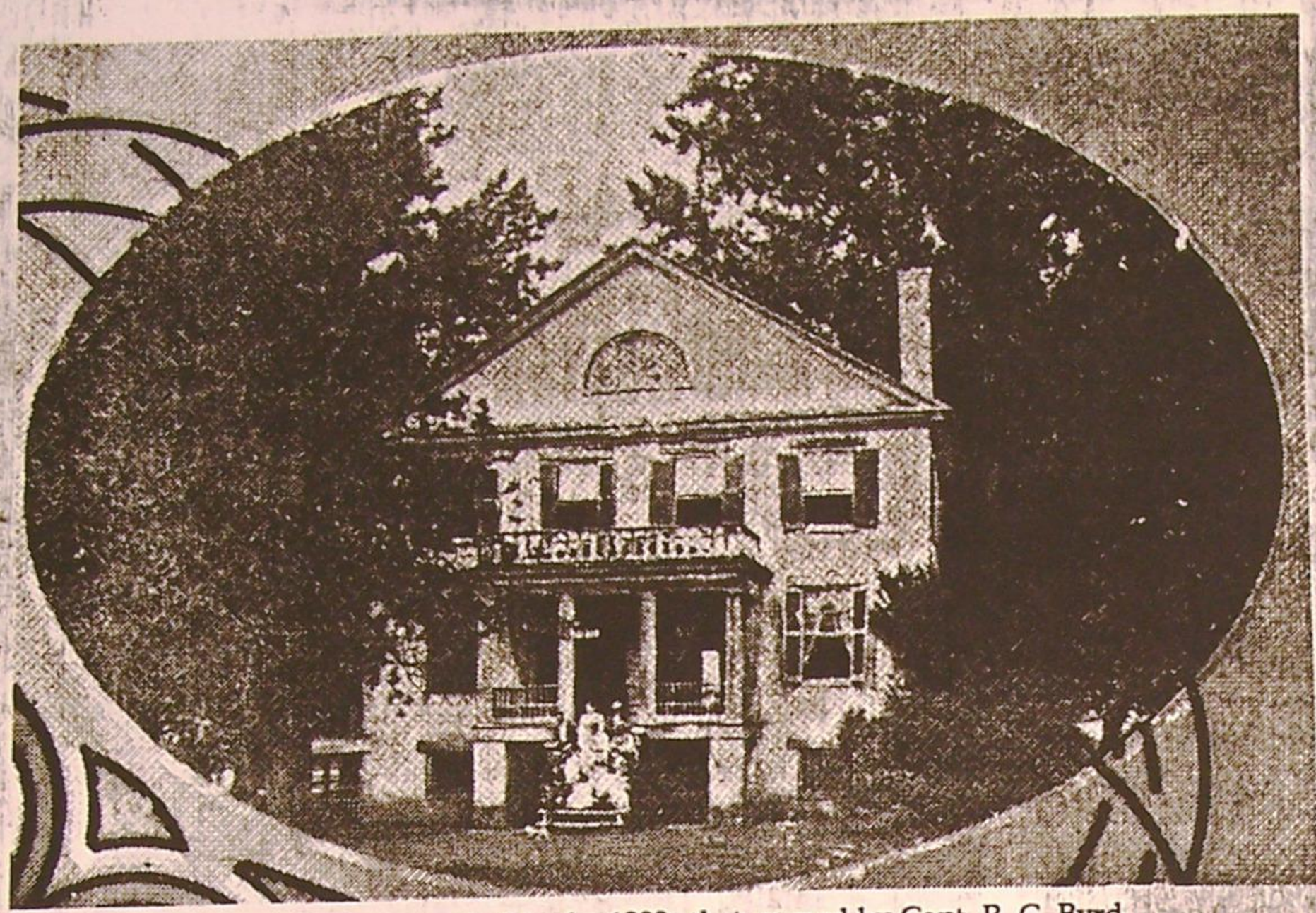
'WHITE HALL'



White Hall photographed in the 1880s then owned by Capt. R. C. Byrd.

White Hall as it looks today with the new additions

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Banks, owners of "White Hall" recently opened their home for the benefit of the Gloucester Garden Club on Sunday, December 12 from 4 to 8 p.m. The "Christmastime at White Hall" had a special significance because of the recent completion of two new wings onto the existing house which was built in 1815.

Dr. Samuel Powell and Mary Willis Byrd built the colonial type house with its huge chimneys and broad porches. The mansion stands three stories high with a basement. Mrs. Byrd was a descendent of the Willis family, from whom the property was passed through for several generations.

The first Willis to own the property, approximately two hundred and fifty acres was Francis Willis. He was a native of Oxford, England, a member of the First Burgesses, member of the Council and died in London leaving his property, named "Edge Ware" to his nephew. Ann Willis, the wife of Francis, is buried in Ware Church under the chancel.

It is not known when the name was changed from "Edge Ware" to "White Hall" but in 1752, the *Education in Colonial Virginia* stated, "Francis Willis of White Hall in company with many other distinguished Virginians, attended the school in Gloucester County of Rev. William Yates, Minister of Abingdon Parish."

In September 19, 1793, a contract signed by Francis Willis, (he is believed to be fourth generation) bargained with "Nathan Jacobs, of the County of Frederick, distiller," to make good whiskey on the place at White Hall. Mr. Willis demanded the whiskey be "merchantable and of sufficient proof." For repayment, Willis allowed Jacobs a holiday of twelve days, four times a years and to have "two able hands" to assist him. He also promised to give him room and board. It is believed that this was the same man who rode horseback to Mount Vernon to visit George Washington for several days.

About December 4, 1797, Willis died and left a large fortune and nine children.

Shown in the dining room is Tyler Harris of Wicomico is flanked by Rev. and Mrs. Howard Mueller of South Carolina, former minster of Abingdon Episcopal Church.

Mrs. Gay Butler King of Gloucester carries her daughter, Caroline as they tour the new addition at White Hall.

During the Open House, Miss CeCe Brown of Glouceste kept warm beside a heater while selling boxwood wreaths and much more in the tent outside the home .

Mrs. Arthur White of Gloucester served as a hostess in the new family room during the open house.

A THANKSGIVING AT A GLOUCESTER PLANTATION - "White Hall"

Written by a young lady from the Los Angeles, California, area who recently visited the Squires family at "White Hall" in Gloucester County at Zanoni.

"College is the key to tomorrow, the road that leads to the future, and basks in the sunlight of success . . ." Thus spake the educators . . thus "re-spake" the parents, and it is so. College is a broadening, a ballooning of scope and experience. But as to the direction. FORWARD . . . I am dubious. For, under the auspices of College, I was recently treated to a journey into the PAST . . . a past of America that reeked of history not yet tampered by the fickle first of progress. I accompanied my roommate to her family home in Gloucester, a post-card plantation planted historically along the Ware River in the tidewater counties of Virginia.

There is much to be said of the small town sincere in its smallness . . . friendly people, fresh air, time to begin and finish things. But all this, of course, has already been said. The real personal beauty that I found in Gloucester stemmed in part from all of the above, but it flowered in the singular fact that Gloucester is a small town exactly unlike any other. It has its own sights . . . white and bronze and marigold (in the fall). . . as houses and plantations and barns and stables rest artistically in a frame of skybound trees. On a clear night it appears as though these trees stand like slender, straight candles, each tipped with the flame of a solitary star. Gloucester smells, too. . . of barbecuing leaves . . and of mist . . and occasionally on a downwind day, of the stench from the paper mills. The "stench" is not really offensive, though, at least it wasn't to me, the visitor, because it is genuine and it belongs there. . . and it is only when a smell becomes misunderstood and misplaced from where it belongs that it becomes an odor (for that matter smog might not be bad at all were it to stay in Hell where it belongs).

It is not easy for the visitor to Virginia to adequately size up the place, and to slip each of these pieces of experience into the wholeness of a memory. It was especially hard for me because I am nearsighted, with an inborn tendency toward getting lost, and with an accompanying deficiency in remembering names or directions. I did not see Virginia in any order or regimen, just some of her places and faces at random. . . and these I will never forget.

Disembarking with my friend in Richmond, I sailed into a sea of southerners. These southerners, I found, in general were gracious, ostentatious and SLOW. Slow, not especially in the physical sense. . . but, a well-ordered slow pace that compels a man to do just what he needs to, and nothing more.

I found ambition, but more of a down to earth drive than that which I was used to. Conversations, seasoned with snatches of drawl, concentrated on the themes of family and Thanksgiving . . . Giving was in the air, I don't know about thanks. One cleaning man, though, was accompanying his wall washing with a heated discussion on Nixon. I looked around to see who he was arguing with . . . no one . . . himself. . . I guessed. That's the trouble with politics these days. . . it's all just too one sided!

My friend's mother and brother arrived shortly, and they then drove me through a maze of trees, and highways, and truck stops, and docks all shrouded in night . . until I reached the reality of the White Hall Plantation in Gloucester. Once there I realized the seeping feeling of holiday and family . . . a most ungeographical sensation of family seeing that mine was nearly a United States away. I had stepped into a world of tradition, and pewter, and people New York bred who had emigrated southerly from a house in the city to this home in the country.

Perhaps it is the lure of the beach in me . . . but I was most attracted by the water, and clear as thought in my mind is the image of the Ware River, washing the back yards and flooding the nearby marshes. One evening, close to sunset, while I was out in a small motorboat, following the finger of the creek. . . I released the choke and paused for a while to watch the sun fall in lines upon the water. The movement of the boat had stretched the lines into bands and zigzags of color that floated like streamers on the surface of the lake. I then raced home with the sun . . and I lost. I walked up the path towards the house, in blackness, noticing that the lights along the shore with their reflections resembled a row of inverted exclamation points. What a way to end that day!!! . . . . . .

Now it is nearly Christmas, and I am no longer in Gloucester. But every then and now for the rest of my life, at times like this, I will sit back and sort through the facts, and foods, and faces, of that glorious spot. I will attempt to separate the events from the inspirations, but I really can't, for they are so alike . . . all of them a boundless factory of dreams.

Thanksgiving, or any day, in Gloucester is priceless!

---Danita E. Harrold (Dec. '71)

I was awed by the magnitude and the spread of the estate with its various components. . . the barn, the greenhouse, the gazebo, and the white picket fence so endless it strode through the infinity of the distant forests. Like big words, though, this all became a customary part of my visual vocabulary quite easily. In other words, I became used to it. But one thing I never tired of watching was this 20th century family functioning within the bounds of the antique, museum-like, atmosphere of the dwelling. People sat on deacon benches watching football games on TV and they dreamed on Robert Fulton's bed. But that's history, as we try tediously to make a monument useful.

During the course of my visit, we toured Williamsburg, a colonial setting at the far end of the Colonial Parkway. Williamsburg was fascinating, perhaps a little crowded and commercial, but very uncluttered. The only clutter was organic. . . and I had the grandest time strolling down Duke of Gloucester Street, stomping in the leaves, and tossing pistacio nut shells over my left shoulder. The lights came out, and people went in, as night neared. The shops now bolted, emanated a friendly incadescence, as we followed the black road with the white-basted lines . around and through classic shopping centers. I have frequented many a shopping center in my day, but never one so situated for window shopping. I visioned myself as a Norman Rockwell caricature with nose plastered against glass panes and eyes wide. . . a little too dramatic a representation, perhaps, but spontaneous just the same.

Glo-Quips
1/12/72

Level Green

on the Ware River

Robins family estate, the land was a grant to John Robins in 1672.

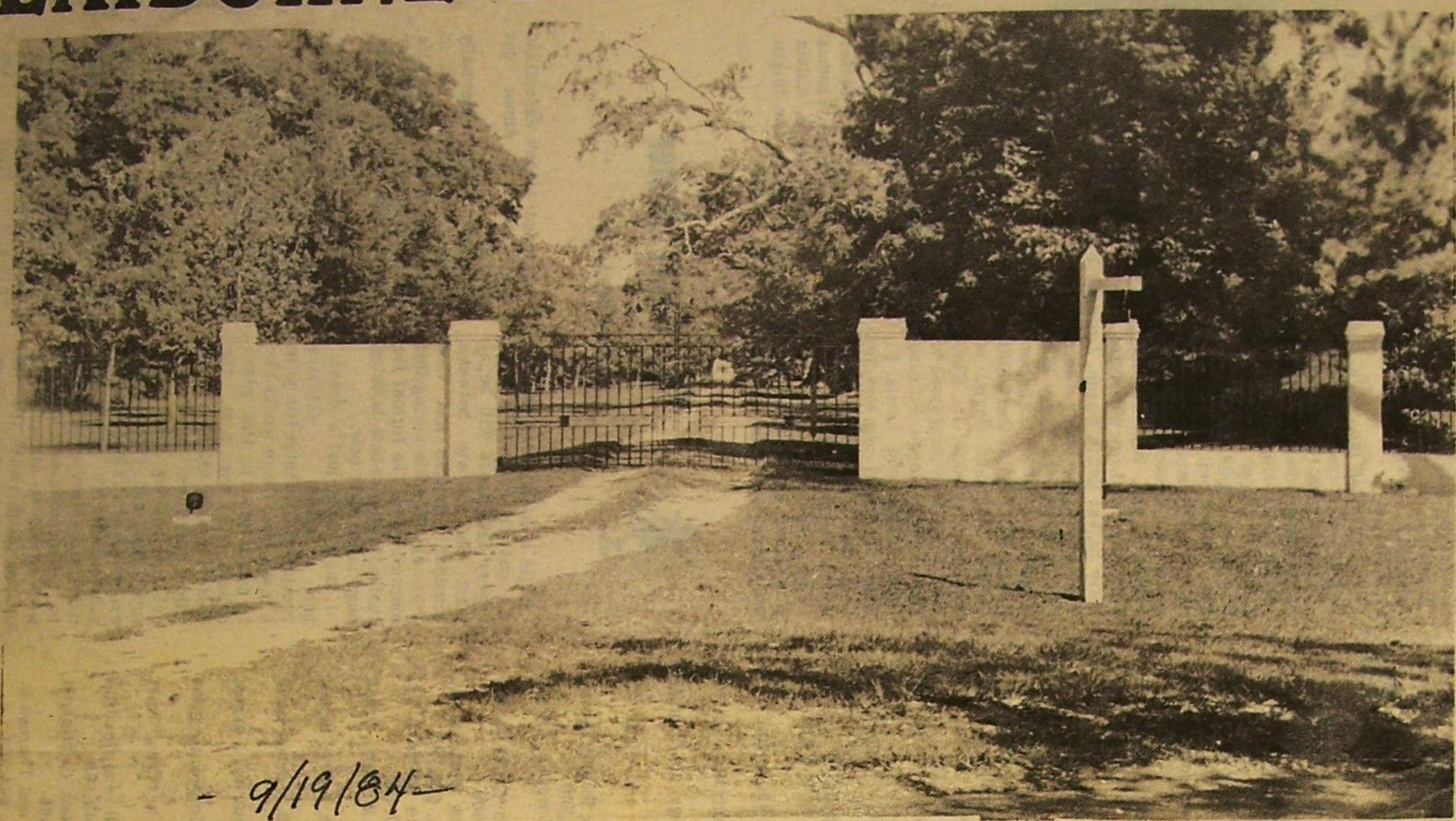
An early 18th century house has had numerous additions.

Presently the home of E. Claiborne Robins, Jr.

— Photos 1967 —

continued →

CLAIBORNE ROBINS LIVES HERE



- 9/19/84 -

The closed gates at "Level Green", home of E. Claiborne Robins, Jr., at Selden in Robins Neck, bring to mind the event in 1933 when H. N. Baruch shut th e gates at his home, "White Marsh Plantation".

"Level Green", the home of Mr. Robins, president of A. H. Robins Company, Inc., of Richmond, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, is closed to the public, while Mr. Baruch barred the gates to his home to prevent his wife's return from the inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Mr. Robins' company has made national news many times this year while being sued by users of the Dalkon Shield, an intrauterine birth control device.

U. S. District Judge Miles Lord of Minneapolis accused Mr. Robins and officials of A. H. Robins Company of putting profits above the health of women who used the device. Judge Lord said more than 9,000 women have made claims against Robins and there are more than 3,000 cases pending in the nation's courts. About 2 million women in the early 1970s used the shield which was taken off the market in 1974.

U. S. Senator Paul Trible considered legislation in Congress to limit punitive damages against Robins and other companies, but he later changed his proposal.

Claiborne Robins has purchased acreage surrounding his Gloucester County home since he bought Level Green some years ago. This year, he got deed to property owned at Selden by former Gloucester County treasurer, C. David Burke.

The gates at "Level Green" are electronically controlled and activated only after voice communication is made to the main house about half mile distance.

Neighbors to "Level Green" believe the owners and guests at the Ware River residence arrive and depart mostly by helicopters.

As president of A. H. Robins, Claiborne Robins is paid a salary of $233,561 per year.

"LEVEL GREEN" WAS OLD ROBINS FAMILY ESTATE IN GLOUCESTER

Level Green continued

"Level Green" - aerial photo by James Hicks

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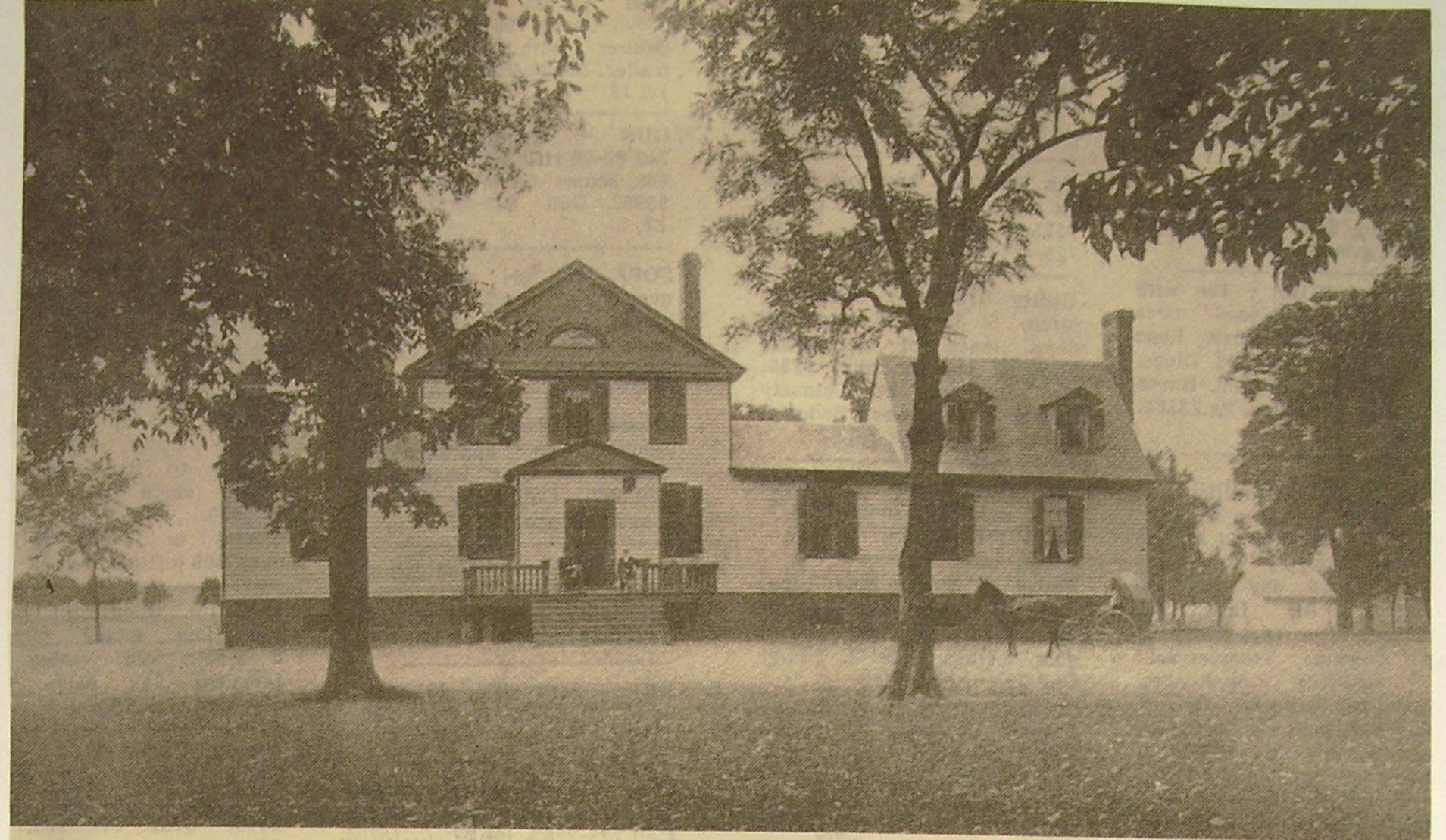
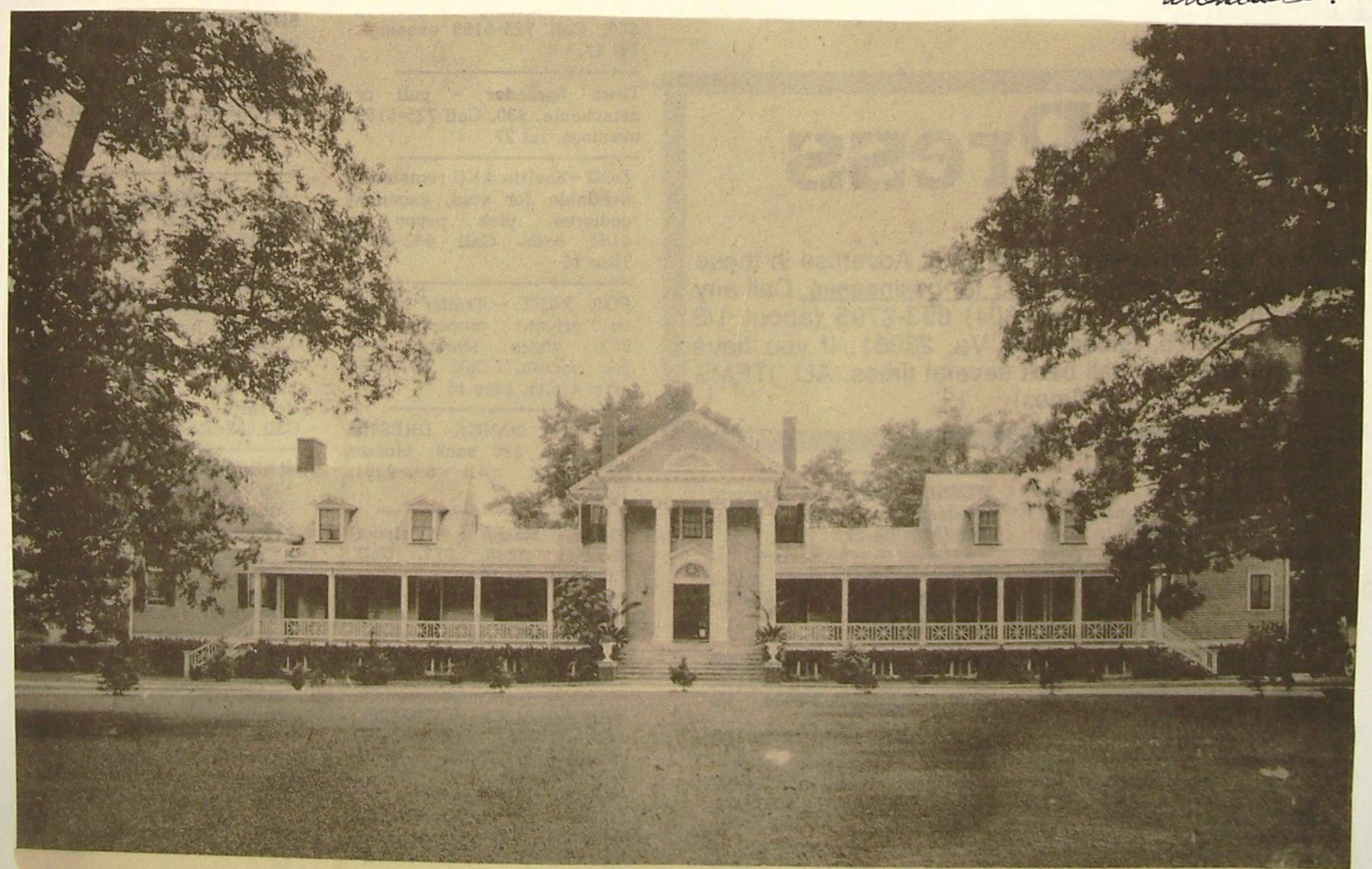


"Eagle Point" in 1891

Eagle Point - Commands four miles of shore front on the Severn River.

The central portion was built c. 1798 by Col. John Lewis. The western wing was added c. 1840 by John Randolph Bryan. In 1902 the house was greatly enlarged by Joseph Bryan (See below).

In the 1920's Eagle Point was owned by H. M. Baruch, son of world famous Dr. Simon Baruch and brother of Hatteman Bernard Baruch. Hartwig Baruch also owned "White Marsh" at this time. His son, Hartwig N. Baruch, Jr, was born at Eagle Point with Dr. H. A Tabb in attendance.



"EaglePoint" in 1925

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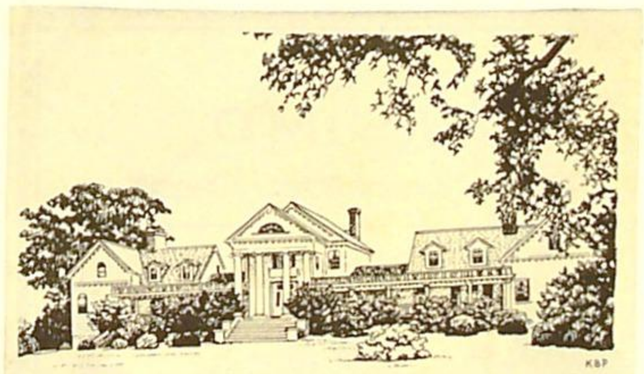
GONE ARE THE DAYS – There will probably never return the time when labor and servants were plentiful and there was no problem maintaining the estates in Gloucester and Mathews Counties. This old photograph shows "Eagle Point" during the 1920's when owned by the Baruch family of New York City. The Bryan family of Richmond lived here for many years and the family burial ground is located on an island nearby. This estate overlooks Severn River in Robins Neck near Naxera.



Eagle Point Plantation—Gloucester

154B

Carrithers buys "Eagle Point"

Glo-Quips
27 July 1995

For someone who has the reputation of owning more single-family homes than anyone else in the nation, "Eagle Point" must have looked good to Charles M. Carrithers, owner of Carrithers Reality of Newport News.

He bought "Eagle Point" and "Servernby Farm", 404 acres of property situated on the Severn River in Gloucester County from Cooke & Andrews Investments, Inc., a California Corp., for $1,200,000. Participating in the sale were Jeanne Hockaday, Broker, and James Diggs, agent, for Coldwell Banker Virginia Country Real Estate, Inc. as well as Ruby Daye, Agent of Carrithers Realty. Mr. Diggs has been negotiating the sale for almost a year.

"Eagle Point", then called "Vue de L'Eau", was built around 1798 by Col. John Lewis. About 1840 the western wing was added by John Randolph Bryan. Around 1862 W. B. Withers added a back verandah and in 1902 extensive changes were made by Joseph Bryan.

To give an idea of what it took to run "Eagle Point" before the Civil War, Mr. Bryan in his book, "Joseph Bryan, His Times, His Family, His Friends" published in 1935 gave a list of the house and yard servants and their duties from 1845 to 1865.

"Daddy John" Tazewell. Gardener, Cut wood for house fires, bee man, etc.

"Mammy Sarah" Tazewell (John's wife). Head nurse in charge of children and house girls, etc.

Abram Carter. Dining-room servant. A general utility man; was very versatile. Cook, painter, carpenter, boat-builder, etc.

Lucy Carter, Abram's wife. House girl and lady's maid.

Fanny Dixon, Zeke's wife. Seamstress, dressmaker, daughter of Sarah.

Evelina. Undernurse. Daughter of Sarah. Later head nurse, cook, etc.

Lucinda. Housegirl and lady's maid. Died young.

"Mammy Becky" Robertson. Head cook.

"Uncle Cuffy" Robertson, Becky's husband. In charge of hogs, orchard, "drop shot gang", jobber, etc.

Polly Stubbs. Second cook, daughter of Becky.

Patty. Milker, dairy and fowls, help-wash woman.

Suchy Page. Wash woman.

Sally Page. Under wash woman.

Oliver Page. Shoemaker, fisherman, harness, etc.

Winchester Tazewell. Groom and carriage driver.

Ruby Daye, center, agent for Carrithers Realty with Jeanne Hockaday, broker, and James Diggs, agent with Coldwell Banker Virginia Country Real Estate, Inc. in front of the handmade beveled glass leaded door at "Eagle Point".

"Eagle Point"

Continued from first page

Winston Tazewell. Second carriage driver.

Elijah Cook. Carpenter, smith and boat builder.

"Daddy Frank" "Emeritus" basketmaker, gardener.

"China." Seamstress

David Robertson (Saint's boy)

Sterling Robertson (Joe's boy)

Charlie Stubbs. (Ran's boy.)

Charles Stubbs. (Ran's boy)

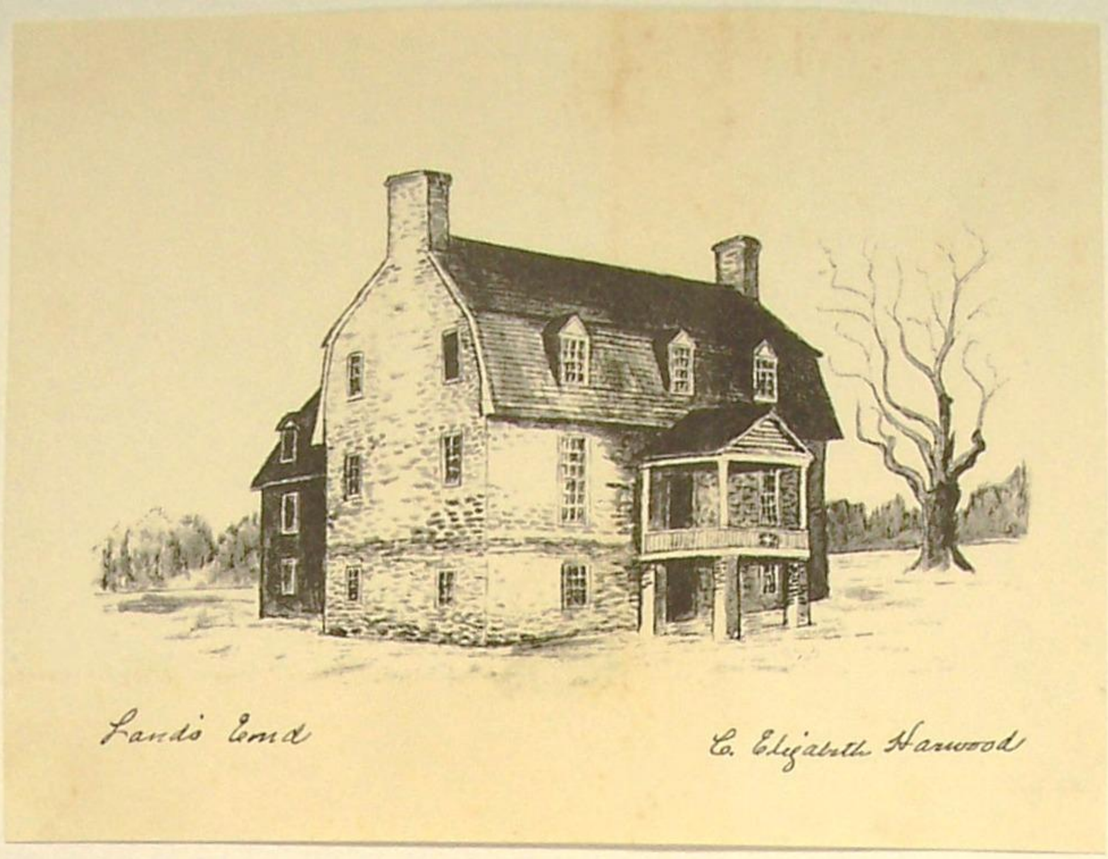
These three boys, about the age of their young masters, were "scullions", "Batter cake runners", house boys and later took the place of older men past service.

Mr. Carrithers will not need all these people to run the farm today!. But, he plans to repair the house and property and is considering moving to Gloucester. He wants to clear around the magnolia trees along the driveway and restore the farm to its original grandeur.

He is developing ideas for the use of the house, the farm and extended acres. In the plans is the possibility of dividing some of the acreage into five acre lots. He has been approached with the idea of a golf course and is negotiating with some people from Northern Virginia who have Morgan horses to run the equestrian stables. He is very interested in establishing a horse farm.

"Eagle Point" is very fortunate to have Mr. Carrithers interested in this fine old plantation and Gloucester County is equally fortunate.

154C

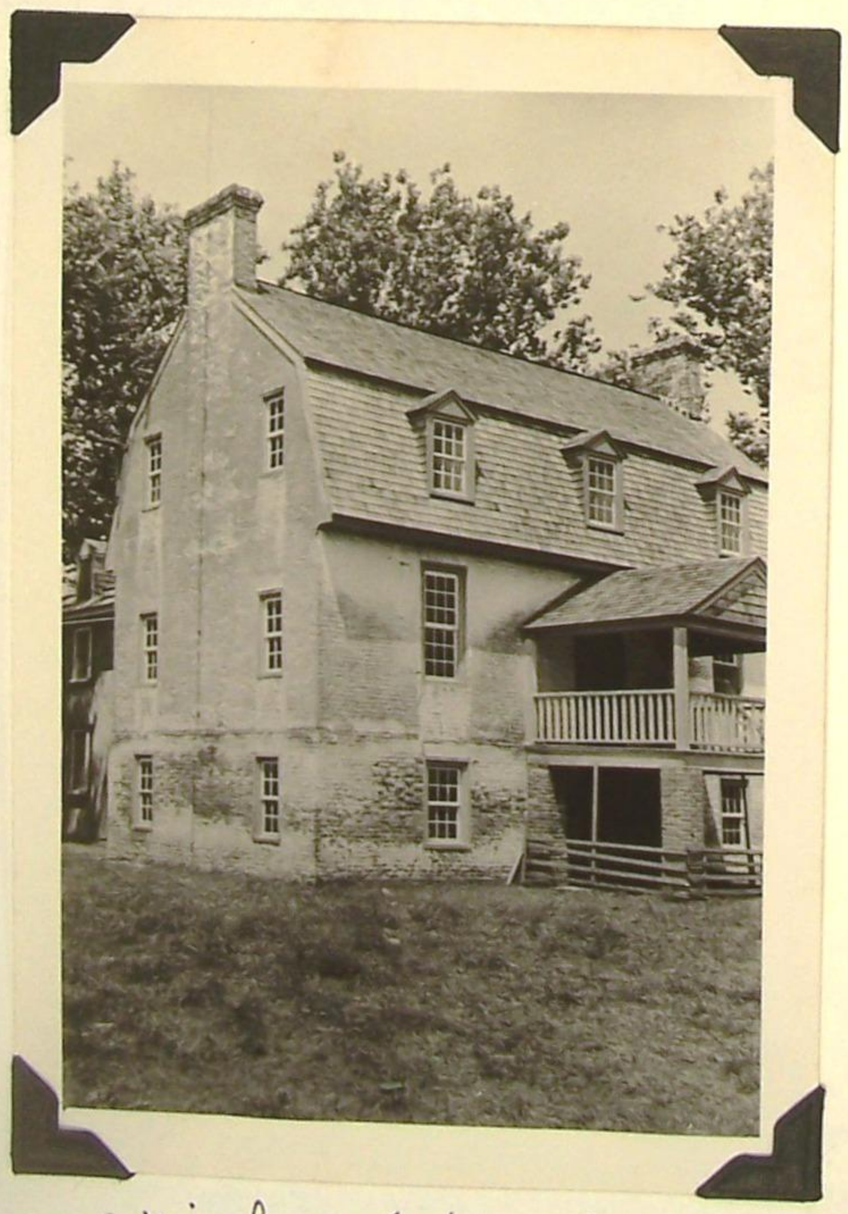


Lands End on the Severn River

Built c. 1796-1800 by Capt. John Sinclair. In the late 1840's the place was sold to Capt. Richard P. Jones. It became the home of his youngest son Judge Warner Throckmorton Jones.

Restored by the Lanciano family, the present owners since 1969.

Photo - 1930's



view from Southwest

South (River) facade

Photos 1940 by Delos H. Smith

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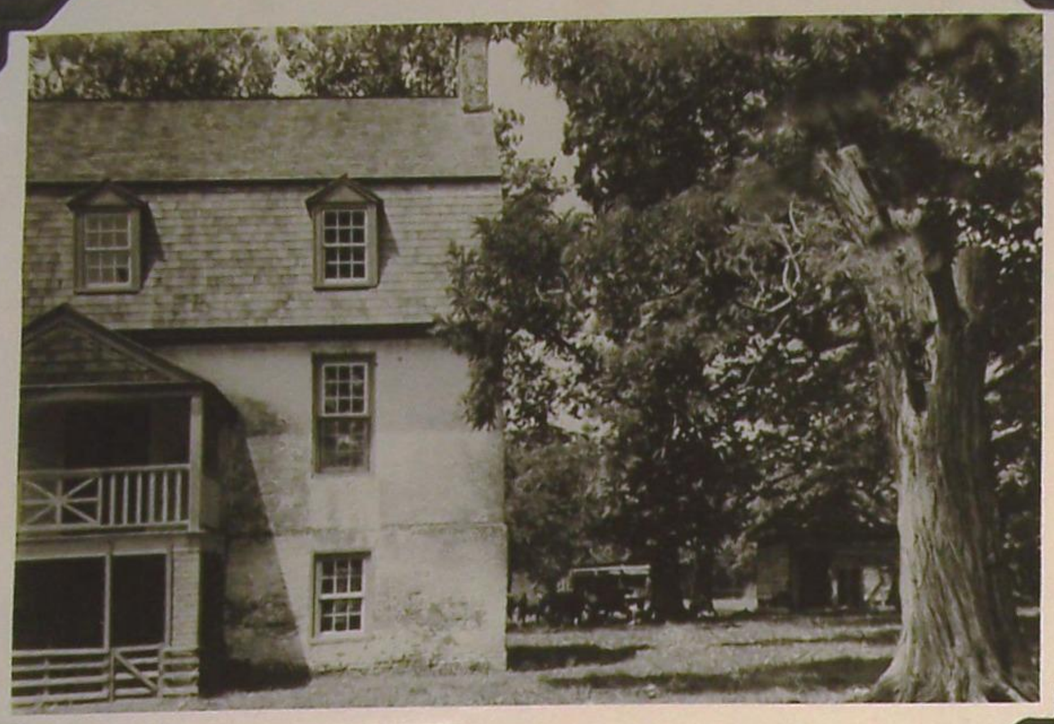


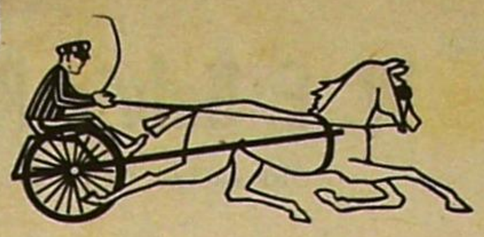
Photo 1940 by
Delos H. Smith

- Remains of the dairy -

Lands End continued

Photo 1970's
after restoration by
the Lanciano family

excerpts from "Legends of Land's End"



Judge Warner Throckmorton Jones

EXCERPT FROM LEGENDS OF LANDS END by Claude O. Lanciano, Jr.

Judge Warner Throckmorton Jones, the younger son of Capt. Richard Jones, was a resident of Lands End for the second half of the 19th century. When his brother Richard married and moved to Lands End from Lowland Cottage, Warner was already a practicing attorney. He is said to have inherited a kind and amicable disposition which he cultivated by education and refined association. He attended William and Mary College and had been admitted to the bar quite young.

Early in his practice Warner Jones' endowments of courtesy and generosity won the confidence and esteem of the public. He was soon appointed commissioner in chancery for the Circuit Court of Gloucester County, a position he held for more than 30 years. He had a reputation for being painstaking, thorough, and reliable. He was devoted to duty and faithful to every trust, the highest type of Virginia gentleman.

In recognition of his intelligence, fidelity, and industry, he was repeatedly elected by the people of Gloucester to the House of Delegates. Gloucester had become accustomed to having a Jones in the legislature. His father had served there between 1806 and 1819. Brother Richard followed in 1845 to 1847. Warner was a member of that body during the trying period of the Confederacy.

Warner Jones was a veteran of the Mexican War and had been active in the militia between the wars. Then as a Confederate Army officer he had commanded for a time the 21st (Gloucester) regiment of the Tidewater Division under General William Booth Taliaferro, his second cousin. He attained the rank of colonel.

In 1874 Colonel Jones was elected judge of the Gloucester County Court by the General Assembly. He served his community in that capacity until 1881. Following the reconstruction period, in 1886 he was again elected to the bench as the Democratic party was restored to power.

Judge Jones, unlike his two sisters, Harriet and Lucy Anne, and brother, Richard, never married. Neither did he ever leave the home place for more than brief periods except in necessity. His strong attachment to Lands End and the bachelor life may in part have been in manifestation of his concern for Richard's family after his brother's death. The trust was reciprocated for Richard in 1874 had both Warner and William Taliaferro, his lifelong friend as well as relation, appointed trustees for the Lands End property which then contained 668 acres.

Richard, two years older than Warner, upon his death left a widow and four children. The judge felt an obligation to this family born of kinship. Although the family's need came late in his life he reacted with characteristic unselfishness.

Judge Jones held court each week in Gloucester Court House. Court was kept in session on Successive days but only so long as was necesarry to dispense with current business. This was usually not more than two or three days a week. While court was being held the judge "stayed" at the Botetourt Hotel where his horse was also stabled. As soon as court was adjourned for the week the judge headed for Lands End. He might have spared himself the then long travel on dusty or muddy roads by making his home at Gloucester Court House, the village named for the county seat at its center. Instead he remained there only until his calendar was clear, then he returned home. In doing so he assisted the family of his lost brother materially and in every other way he could.

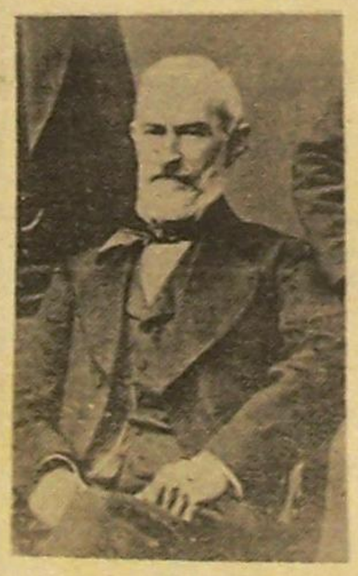
He made the long trip home in his buggy in fair weather and foul. Along the way he was recognized by old and young. A small man, he always dressed with conspicuous dignity. He was immaculate and for a man, unusally neat. His trousers were kept sharply pressed and he always wore a freshly starched shirt and collar. His vest was draped with a gold chain which terminated in his vest middle pockets with watch and fob.

Once he arrived home he unharnessed his horse, cooled and watered the animal like a good cavalry officer. Next he backed the buggy into the shelter of the shed roof on the west side of the house. The ritual was nearly always the same. When he entered the house his nephews and nieces would beseech him to let them open his bag, hoping to find trinkets purchased for them or a bonbon selection acquired during his latest visit to the Court House. They were not often disappointed.

On one of his trips home the distinguished jurist arrived at Naxera after nightfall. As he turned his carriage into the corduroy road over the marsh at the head of Whittaker Creek he was only a little surprised to find the tide was running over the road. He was not unaccustomed to that and knew the road like the back of his hand. Still in the dark it was a bit trying. About half-way across the marsh, where the tide runs in a deep channel, he must have misjudged the road limits. The horse toppled into the flooded marsh followed by the buggy carriage. The horse couldn't make it out of the trench and the judge was afraid it would drown if not assisted. Judge Jones quickly left the relative safety of the marooned carriage and took to the marsh. When he got to the bridle he held the neighing horse's head up in order to calm and save the beast. He succeeded in this but the buggy floated to the tide jeopardizing his tenuous position. Fortunately he was close enough to Marlfield, his neighbor's home that his shouts for help were heard and assistance dispatched for his rescue.

When the judge finally arrived at Lands End that night he didn't have to water or cool the horse. As for his honor, the judge was a soggy muddy sight most unlike his usual appearance but he was especially welcome after his exhausting ordeal.

The judge closed out his life on the bench ably administering justice with clemency, courtesy, and impartiality. In his last walk across the yard at Lands End he had the company and the hand of his seven year old nephew, Cecil Page. He died in 1890 after a protracted confinement. Some records including his tombstone indicate he died in 1891.



Judge Warner Jones of Land's End

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CECIL WRAY PAGE, SR., GREAT-NEPHEW OF JUDGE JONES

A testimonial of Judge Jones' unusual virtue and years of meritorious work was placed upon the public ledger by the Court over which he had presided with eminence. In a long life he had served family, county, state, and country with distinction. Only once in memory had he gone adrift and on wheels at that!

William Taliaferro was one of the few who could match the judge's record. He survived his comrade in arms as trustee of Lands End. In October 1897 creditors of the Richard Jones family petitioned the court for the sale of 518 of its acres, leaving the home place and 150 acres intact. This was in accord with the pledge Dick had given them in 1874 for liquidation of his debts.

As trustee, William Taliaferro was directed by court decree to advertise and arrange for the sale. The retired major-general had seen his share of slaughter and grief in both the Mexican and the Civil War but apparently found it particularly distateful to act in this situation. He had known Dick Jones as a brother. The land to be sold represented the source of bread on the table for his family.

As both an Army officer and a long-term officer of the court all of the general's training had been in the paramount importance of obedience to all lawful orders. How strange it is that in this instance he not only failed to act but refused to comply with the Court's directive. The order was executed instead by a Court appointed special commissioner.

In contrast to a life noted for discipline and obedience it is indeed unfathomable that even in deference to his friends that General Taliaferro failed to carry out the Court decree issued him. In a manner of speaking he too had gone adrift on wheels.

Lands End

continued

WATERFRONT

LANDS END

Built in 1796 by Capt. John Sinclair, Revolutionary War hero and alleged pirate, "Lands End" retains its unpretentious charm derived from its solid structural detail, varied interior proportions and well-preserved woodwork.

The brick walls are laid in Flemish bond with an oyster shell mortar, and extend below grade. The dormers have a somewhat nautical framing, perhaps the work of Capt. Sinclair's shipwrights. There are fireplaces in each of the original rooms and all save one have original mantles. Most of the trim, door panels and floors are of pine.

In 1840, Capt. Sinclair's son-in-law replaced the rear portico with a one story parlor to accommodate suitors of his seven daughters. The roof of this room was raised in 1930, doubling the house space. Subsequent steps connecting the different levels give a novel split-level appearance. An enlargement of the wing begun in the 1930's was completed during a 1970 renovation and painstaking restoration of the original rooms.

While providing modern comforts, "Lands End" survives as an example of one of Virginia's finest unspoiled houses and has been listed as a Virginia Historic Landmark and is in the National Register of Historic Places.

"Lands End" is situated on 29 waterfront acres and is offered at $395,000.

Dec. 1981

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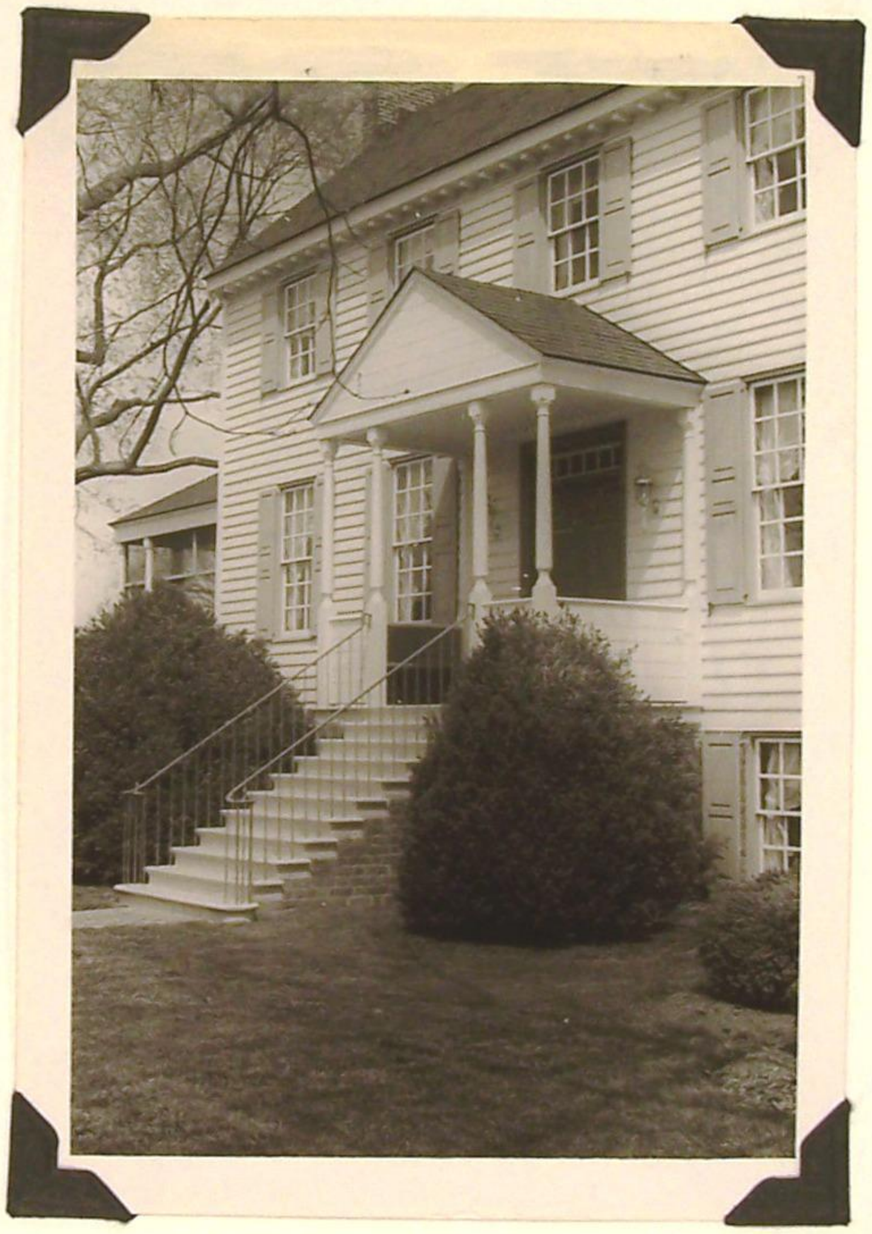
Pleasant Point on Vaughan's Creek
Built c. 1810 by John Backhouse.
Restored with additions in 1964 by the Peebles family who call the place "Lisburne".

– Photos 1968 –

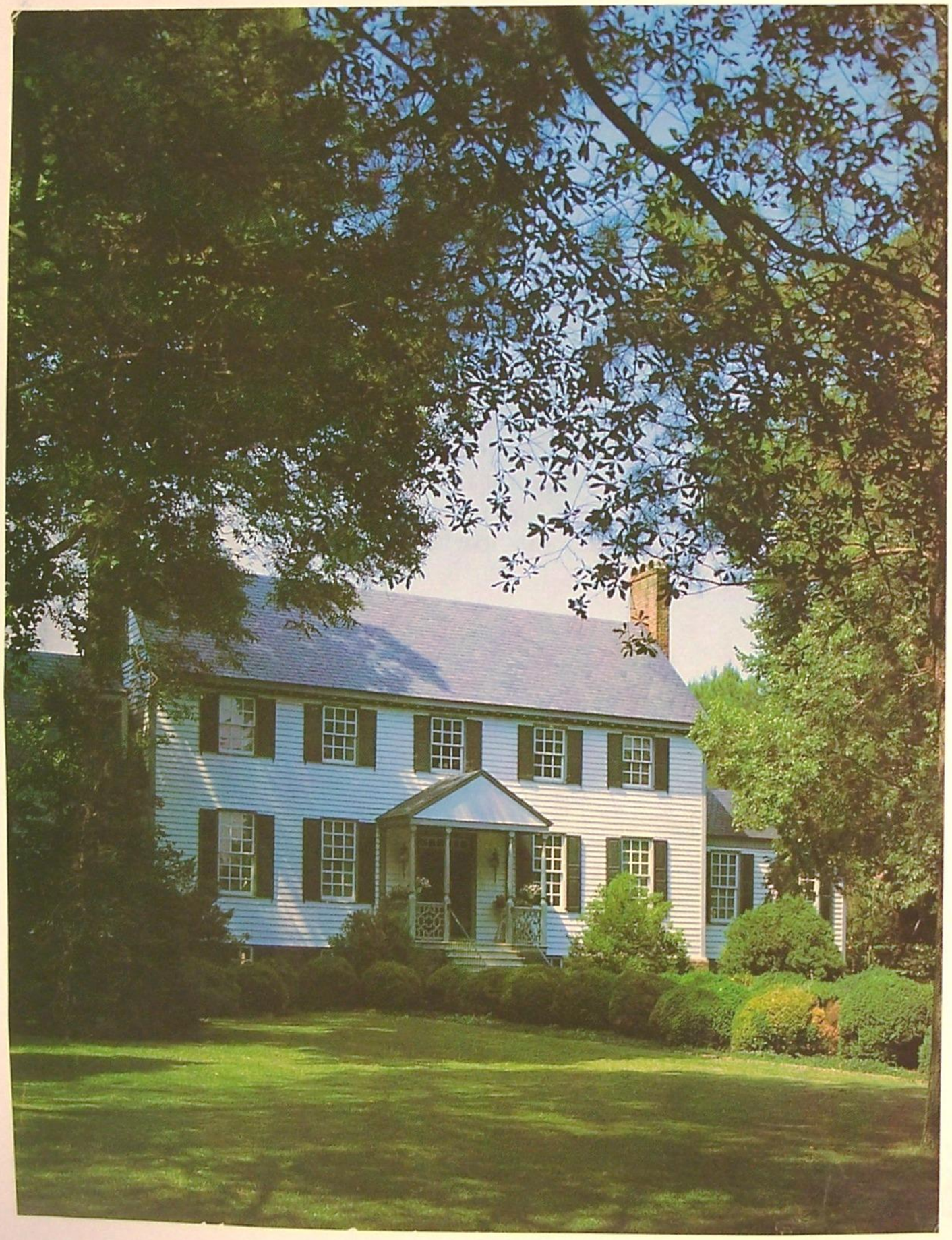


view from the newly planted garden

—Photos 1968—

Garden facade

Pleasant Point continued

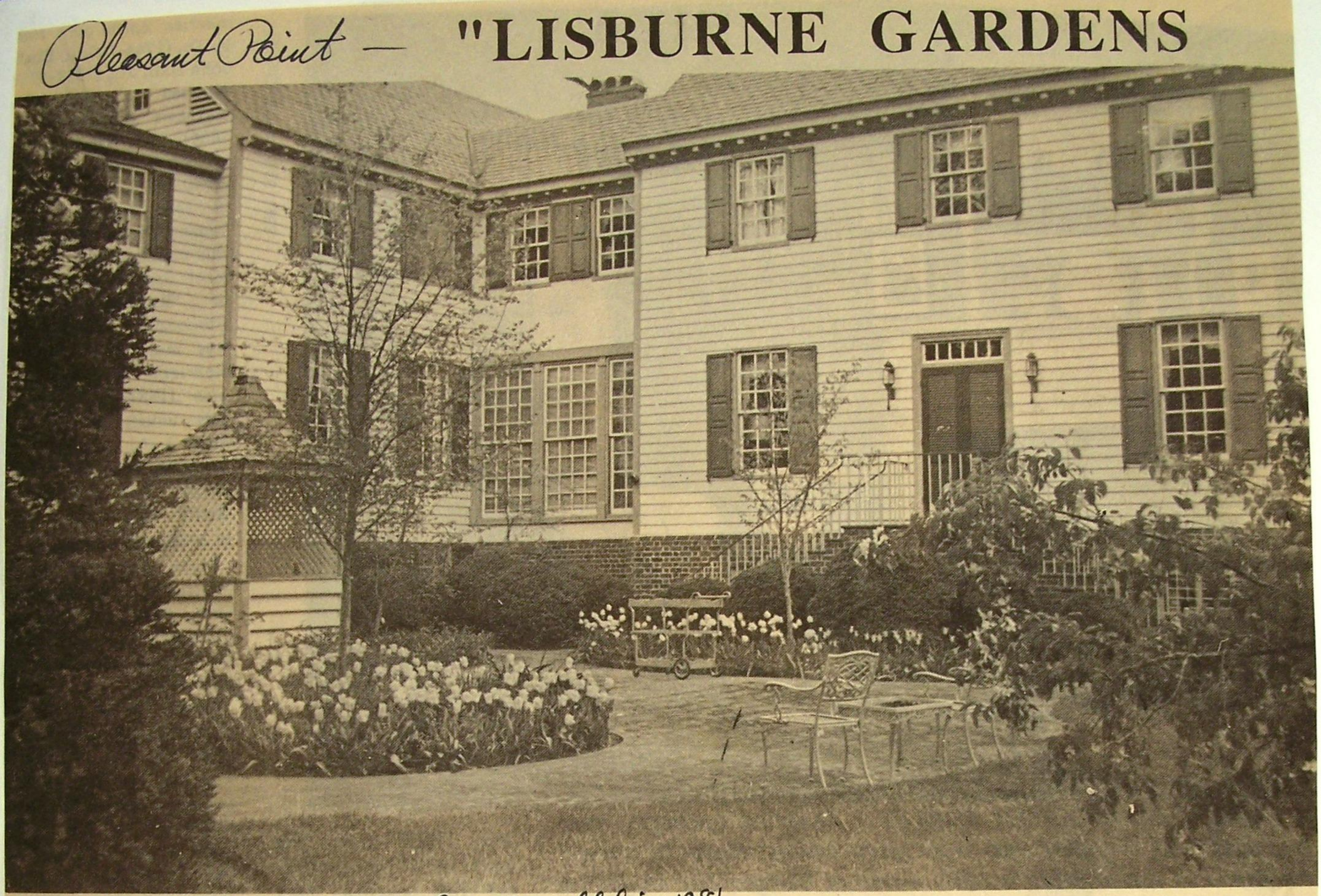


remains of the ice house

more additions and buildings were erected in 1981 – see next page —

continued →

Pleasant Point — "LISBURNE GARDENS

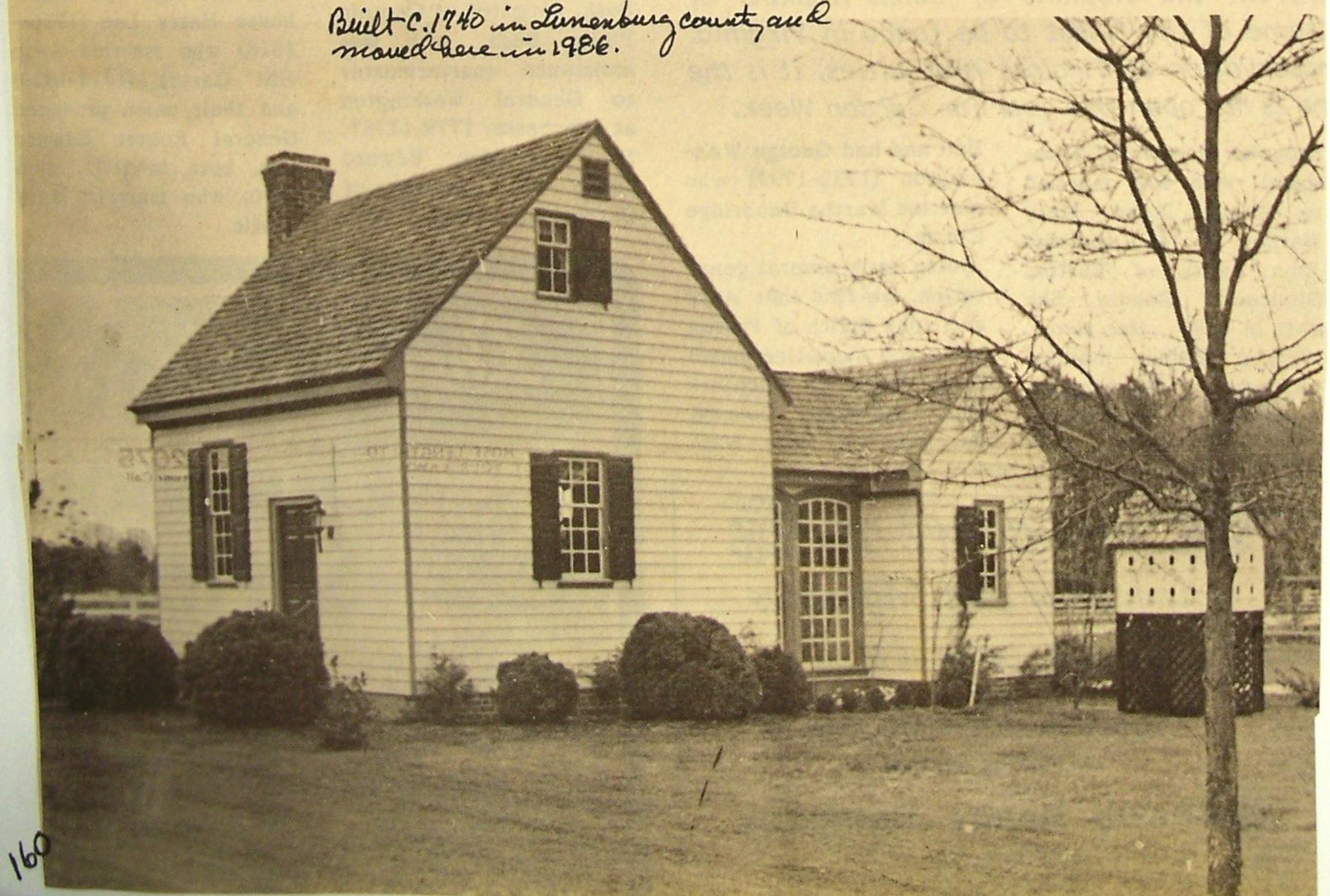


— Rear wing added in 1981 —

Glo-Quips
4/20/88

& GUEST COTTAGE"

Built c. 1740 in Lunenburg county and moved here in 1986.



160

Pleasant Point
(Lisburne)
Material

161

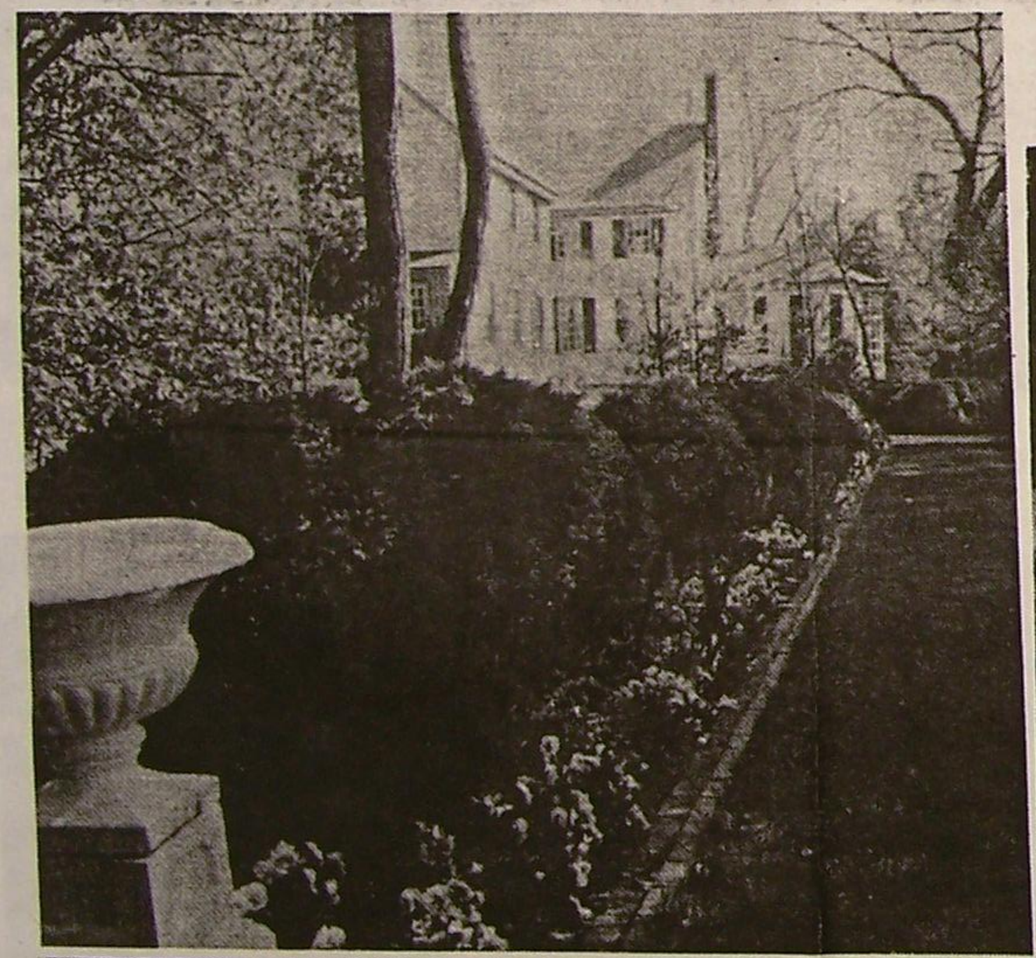
Lisburne Estate and Extensive Gardens

LISBURNE - *South on Route 17 from Long Bridge Ordinary for 7 miles, left on Route 636, bear right at fork on Route 656 and continue to entrance on left.*

Surrounded by crepe myrtles, elms, sycamores and boxwoods, this lovely estate includes 290 acres of landscaped gardens and farmland. Originally known as "Pleasant Point," the name was changed to "Lisburne" in reference to a royal land grant to the owner's family in Massachusetts. The Federal frame house dates from around 1810, and additions have been made to blend with the antiquity of the original. The furnishings are a magnificent collection of American and English antiques of Queen Anne, Chippendale and Hepplewhite styles.

A profusion of azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias and daffodils may be seen in the extensive gardens around the house which stretch to Vaughan's Creek. In an effort to reproduce a garden of the early 19th century, the owners have used plants and trees native to this area or brought from England at that time. Hollies, English boxwoods, peonies, iris, daylilies, hawthornes, tulip poplars and live oaks are featured throughout the garden. Mr. and Mrs. David L. Peebles, owners.

"LISBURNE"



Ducks and geese enjoy Vaughan's Creek

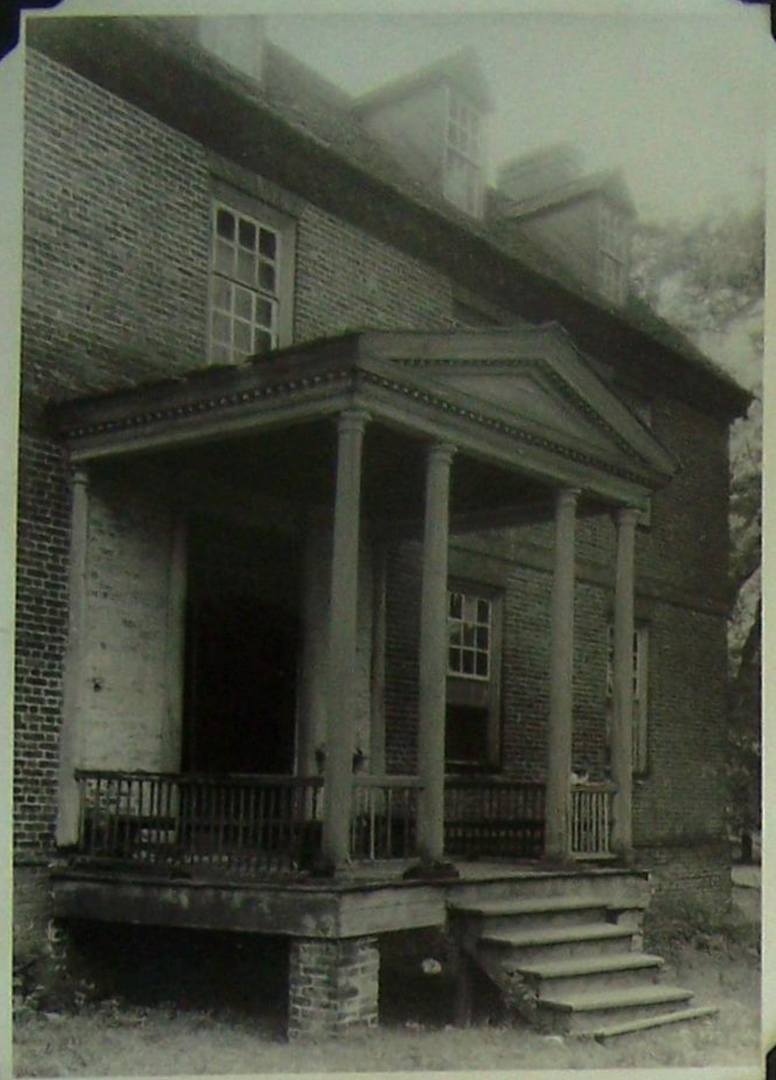
"Lisburne"

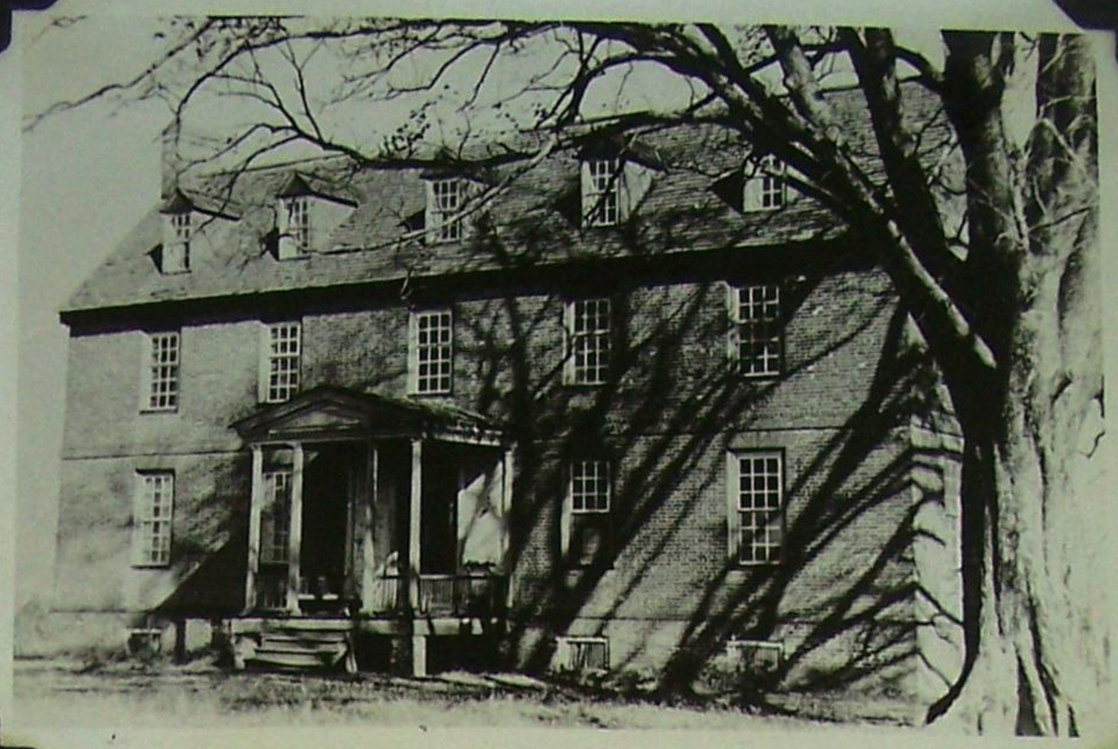
The beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. David Peebles was decorated by the Ware River Circle of King's Daughters for their annual Christmas tea.

Lisburne, the home of Mr. and Mrs. David Peebles has served as a gathering place for friends and families for over twenty years. In 1972, the Peebles hosted a party for Mrs. Homer Pitts and her family. Mrs. Pearl Pitts and her late husband, Homer formerly owned the residence.

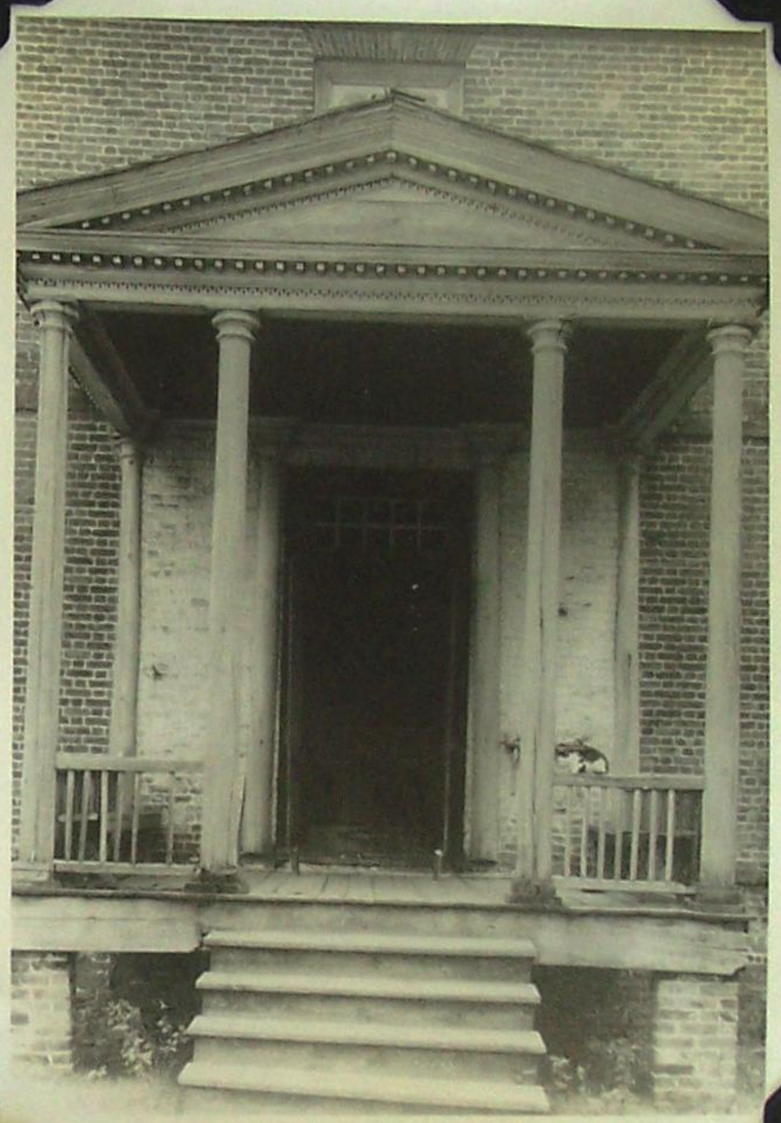
As observed from the old pictures above, time has made a few changes since the '72 event. Shown in two of the photos is Tyler Harris, a cousin of Mrs. Pitts. Attending the Tuesday event, she commented how the King's Daughters' hostesses were so accomodating and she felt like she had "come home."

The Ware Circle of the King's Daughters were in charge of decorating the home. They painstakingly researched their history to have authentic decorations. Mrs. Barbara Roane, a





Photos 1930's by Frances Benjamin Johnston

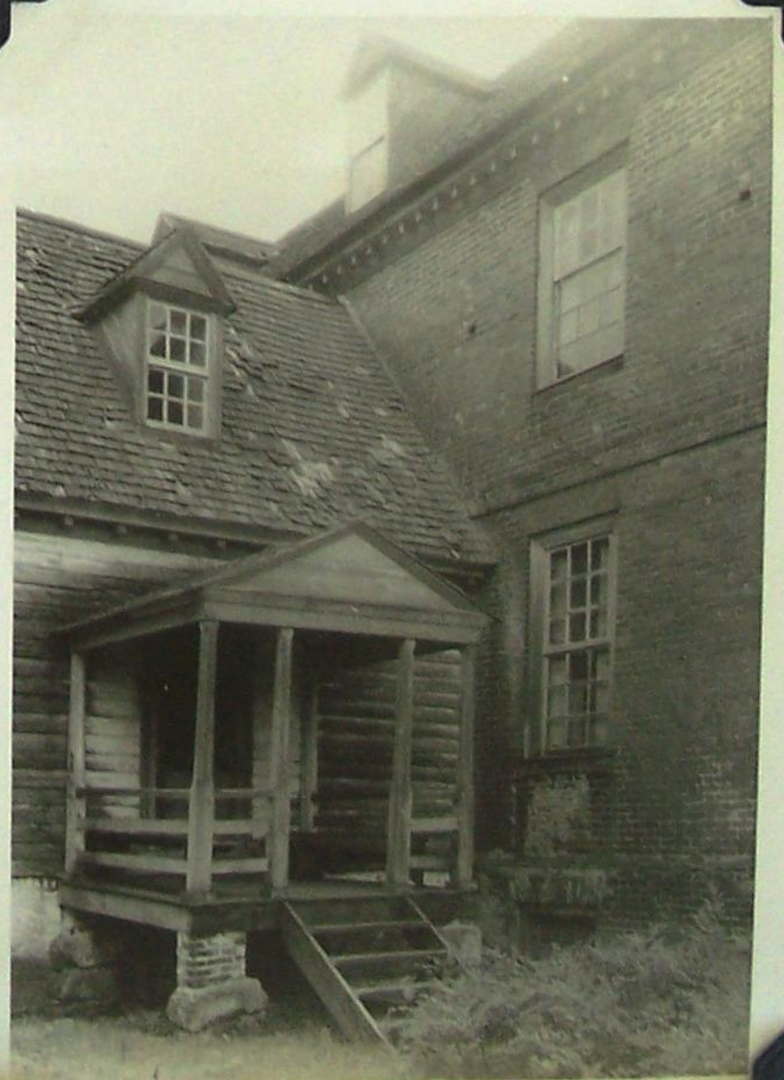


Little England - at the lower tip of Gloucester County where Sarah's Creek empties into the York River.

A frame house was erected here c.1680 for Thomas Perrin.

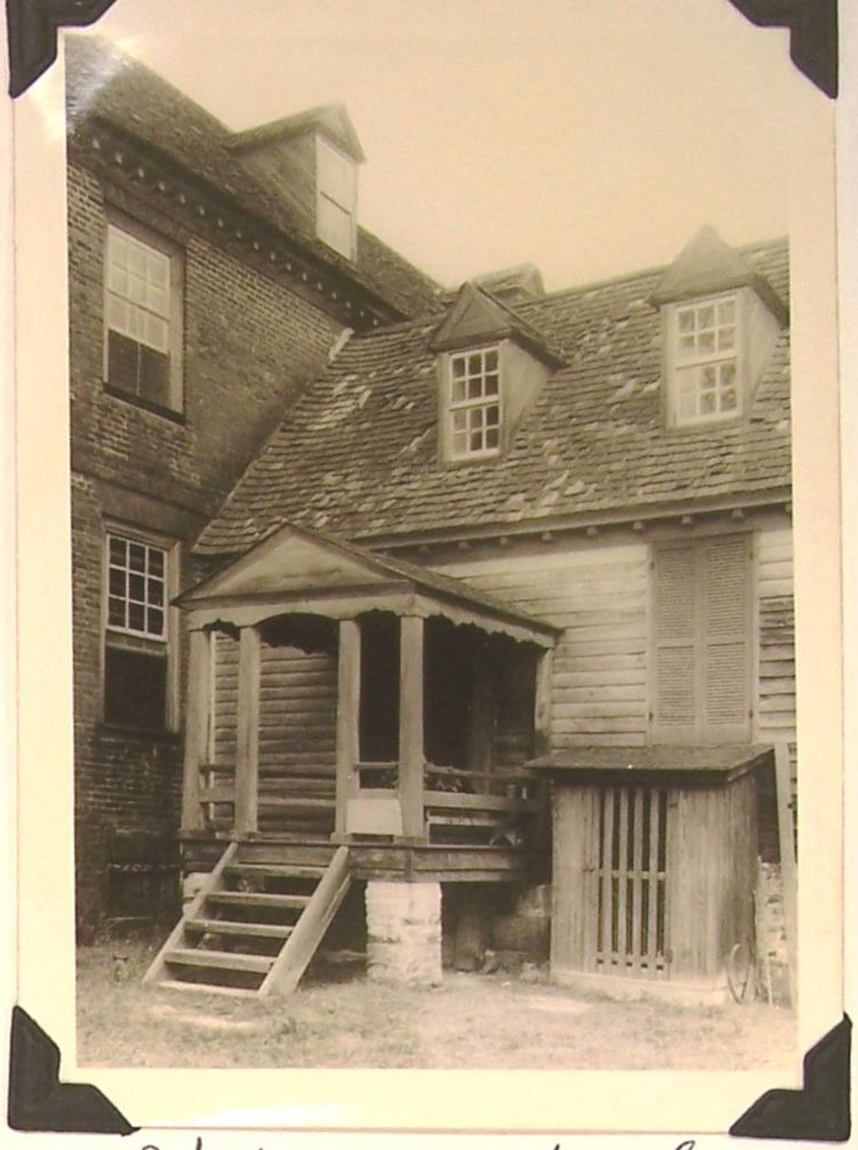
The brick mansion was begun in 1716 by Capt. John Perrin. For several generations Little England remained in the Perrin family.

Restored in recent years by the Theodore Pratt family.



The frame c. 1680 house has been attached to the north facade of the mansion adjoining. note the difference in the brick work of the gable - it is likely the mansion originally had a hipped roof and the gables were rebuilt at some time.

– view from northeast –



Detail of east porch and facade of the c.1680 house

Little England continued

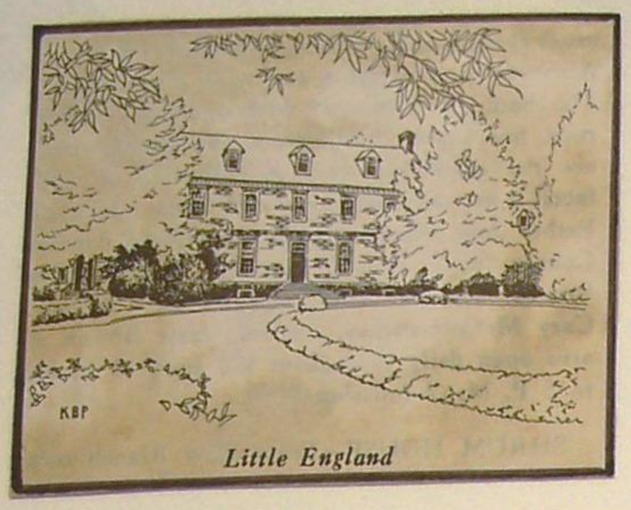
Photos 1930's by Frances Benjamin Johnston

– north facade –

– interior – (dining room)

"The hall and stair. The stair is very similar to that at Harewood", Jefferson County (West) Virginia even to the fluted newel post. (c.1756)

Continued



The approach — Photo 1970

Little England continued
— After Restoration —

North or Land facade — Photo 1967
The frame wing has been removed and is now attached to the west end of the mansion.

Land facade (North) — Photo 1970

Detail of land facade entrance — photo 1970
by Milton Waff

South or River facade — Photos 1970 —

South facade Photo by Waff

Little England continued

South facade Photo 1967

South entrance Photo 1970 by Weff

c.1680 house in its new position

new east wing Photo by Waff

— Photos 1970 —

continued →

Photo 1950's by Frank Dementi

Photo 1970 by Milton Waff

The Gardens at Little England

— Photos 1970 by Milton Waff —

— Acres of Jonquils — 1970

- Main staircase -

Photo 1970 by Waff

Little England
Interiors after restoration

— Drawing room —

***Approximately forty boxwood plants were given to Gloucester County recently by Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Pratt of "Little England", Bena. The shrubs are being planted on County property around Gloucester Court House, under supervision of Hugh McPhearson, gardner of Little England at no cost to the County.

Dec 1975

Stair in wing

Detail of stair in wing

Photos 1970 by Milton Waff

continued →

Little England
material

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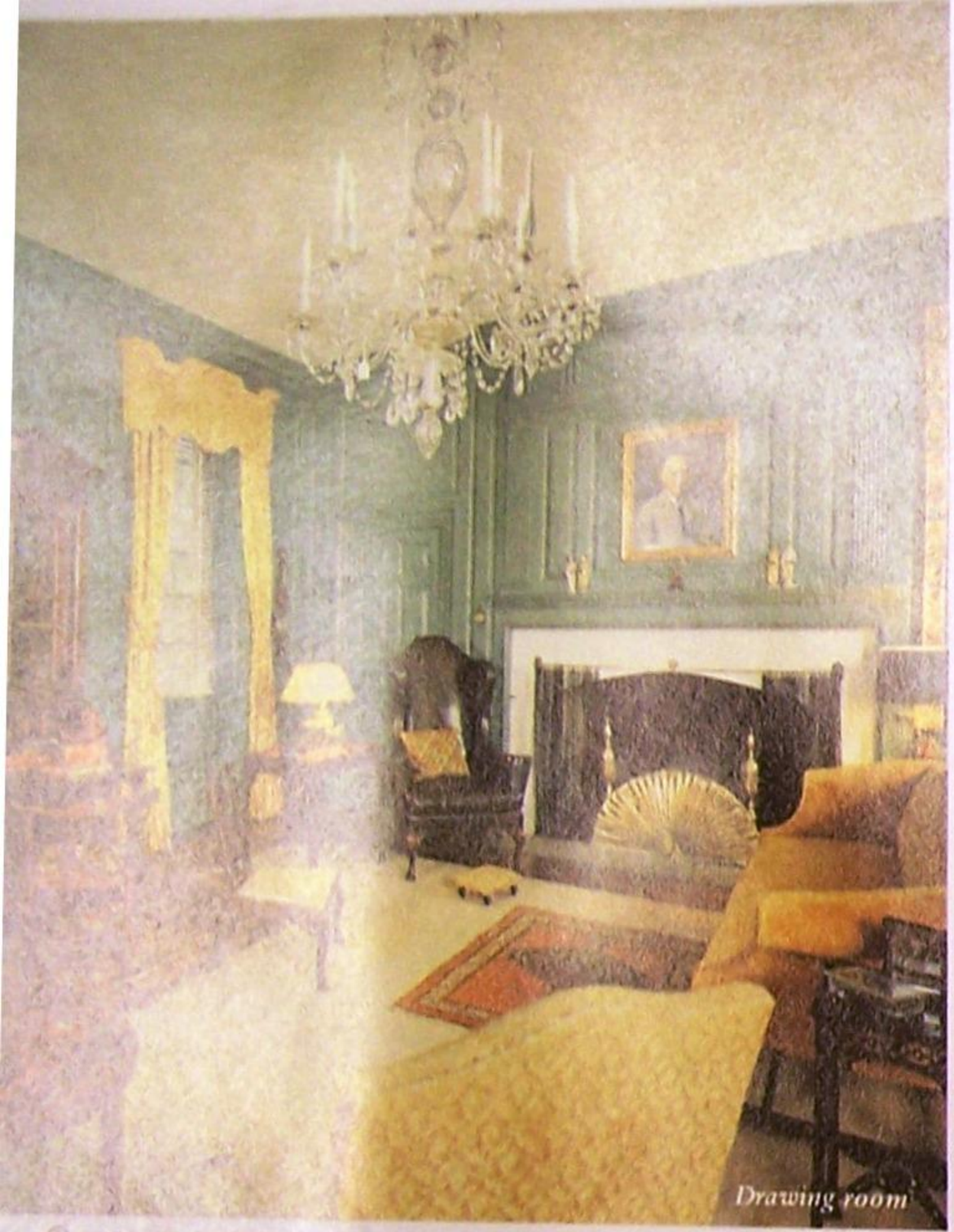
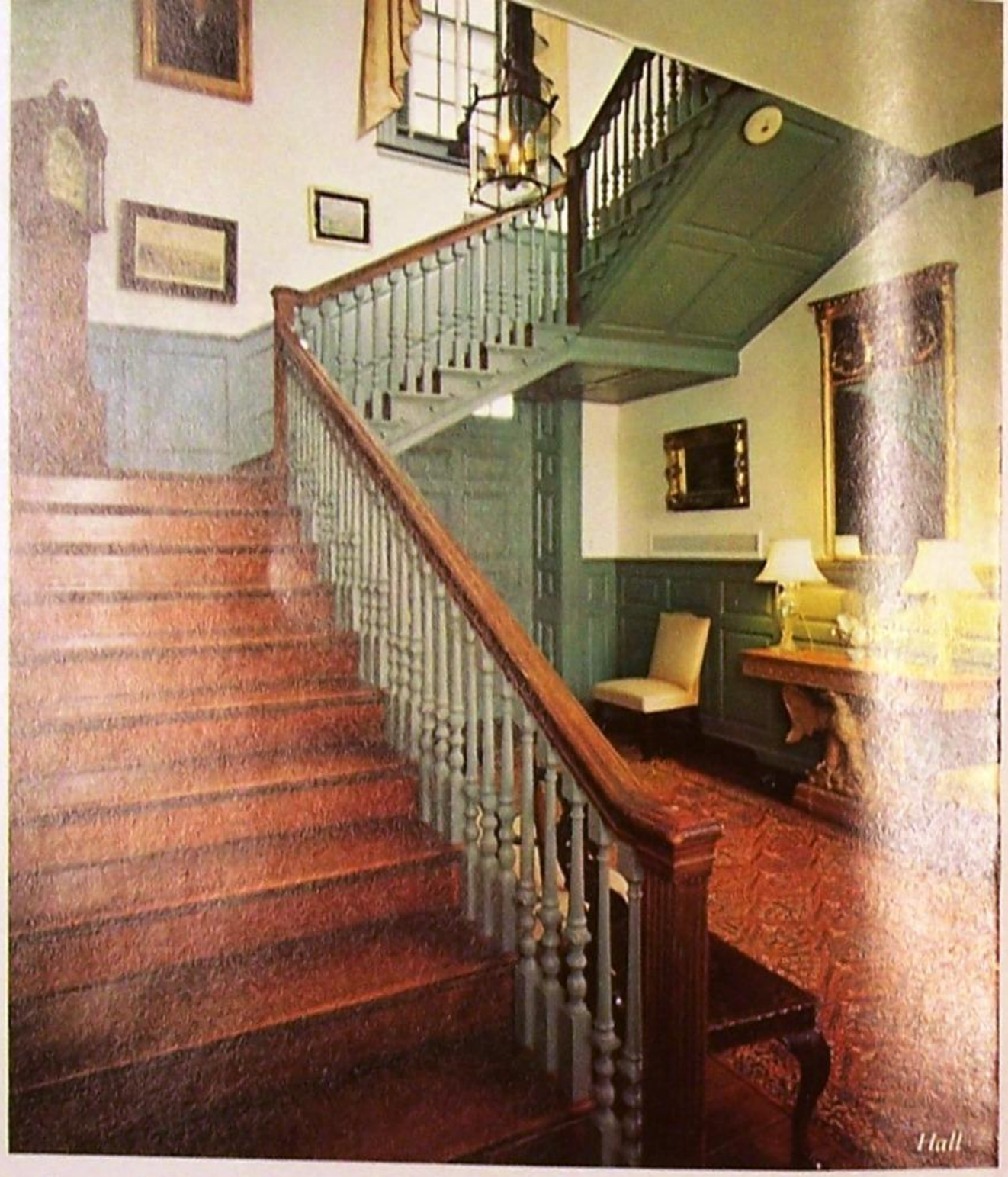
"Little England"
Gloucester County, Virginia



Drawing room



Hall

© 1978, Sotheby Parke Bernet International Realty Corporation

One of the finest pre-revolutionary plantation houses in Virginia

The 63-acre estate known as Little England stands at the end of a narrow point of land bounded on the north by Sarah's Creek and on the south by the York River, with approximately one mile of continuous waterfrontage and beach. On this site in 1716, Captain John Perrin built the beautifully proportioned 2½-story Georgian brick house which stands today, one of Virginia's least altered and best preserved colonial plantation houses. Its form, its brickwork laid in Flemish bond, and its interior paneling are classic examples of mid-Georgian design and craftsmanship. The house was carefully restored by its present owners in 1939 and is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and on the National Register of Historic Places. At the time of the restoration, a one-story colonial frame wing was moved to the north end of the house and converted into a modern kitchen, and in 1954 a frame south wing was added and, though in keeping with the character of the house, was carefully screened by planting so as not to detract from the original part of the house. Fully modernized, Little England still retains the elegance and simplicity of a colonial Virginia estate house. Since 1939, this superb riverside setting has been enhanced by handsome landscaping and the addition of extensive formal gardens now famous throughout the state.

The interior of Little England contains fourteen rooms with some of the finest examples of colonial paneling in Virginia. The fully paneled drawing room features a chimneypiece consisting of a full Doric entablature supported on fluted Doric pilasters set on the mantel shelf. The rest of the principal rooms are half paneled, but have fully paneled fireplace walls. In the spacious central stairhall, a classic Georgian staircase ascends to the third floor, with two bedrooms on each of the upper floors. The 1954 addition of the south wing added a large heated sunporch, three additional bedrooms, and a fine library.

On the grounds are a brick pool house and large outdoor pool, as well as a two-story, four-bedroom guest house. Besides the formal gardens, Little England has approximately 15 acres of lawn and an equal acreage in pine, pecan and apple trees. For many years, bulbs from the Little England Daffodil Farm were sold and shipped throughout the United States. A three-bedroom manager's house, two-bedroom gardener's residence, barns, stables, a sheep barn, smokehouse and other structures make Little England a fully operative estate.

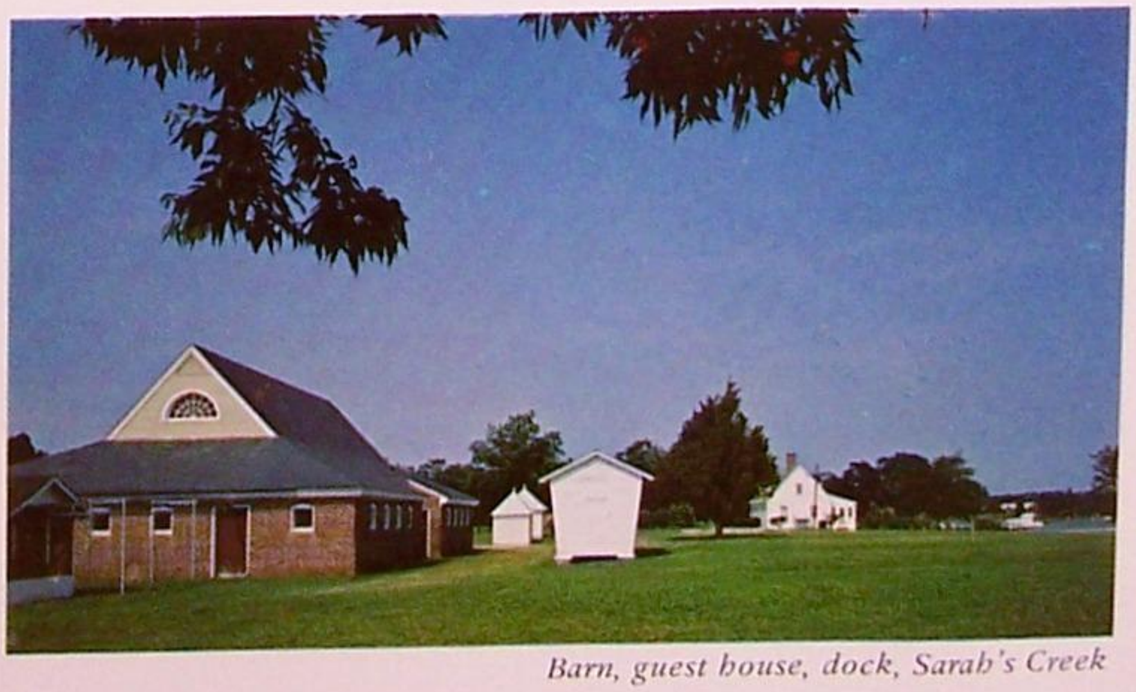
Photography by N. Jane Iseley

Dining room

Riverfront facade

South facade

Pool and pool house, York River



Barn, guest house, dock, Sarah's Creek

TABLE OF FACTS

LOCATION: Gloucester County, Virginia, off U.S. Route 17 (York River Bridge), 10 minutes to Yorktown, half hour to Williamsburg (Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens Theme Park), College of William and Mary, one hour to Norfolk or Richmond, two and a half hours to Washington, D.C. Airports: Newport News, half hour; Richmond, 45 minutes; private field, 15 minutes. Fine schools within 20 miles. Shopping at Williamsburg and shopping centers on Rte. 17. Fine country and golf clubs nearby.

PROPERTY: Approximately 62 acres with a mile of shoreline on York River and Sarah's Creek. Extensive landscaping and boxwood garden. Pecan and apple orchards, outside lighting, several parking areas, circular gravel entrance drive, 1½-acre pond, 2 deep-water docks.

RESIDENCE: 14-room Georgian dating from 1716, early (1680) structure moved to house as kitchen wing on north, and 1954 addition of frame south wing. 10,600 sq. ft. Carefully restored 1939 under guidance of Charles Willing, architect of Philadelphia. Slate roof; oil-fired heat; oil-fired hot water; window unit air-conditioning. Elevator in south wing. Sonic intrusion alarm for entire building. Prior to acquisition of the house by the present owners, the interior had not been painted since the 18th century and the original, well-preserved colors were carefully copied by Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. and used extensively in the Williamsburg restoration. Although the paint has been renewed on the interior of Little England, the original color scheme has been retained.

First Floor: Center hall (15' x 19'), waterfront to landfront, in center bay of main section has classic Georgian staircase and paneled wainscot; to north is DINING ROOM (18' x 19'), with paneled wainscot, fireplace with over-mantel paneling; beyond in north wing is KITCHEN with gas range, 2 refrigerators, 2 double sinks, dishwasher, adjoining butler's pantry. To south of stair hall is fully paneled DRAWING ROOM (23' x 19'), including chimneypiece paneling. The 1954 south wing addition, down 3 steps, has T-shaped hall with land and waterfront entrances, paneled wainscot and stairway. To landfront are kitchenette and powder room, through a corridor is BEDROOM (16' x 18') with 2 bathrooms; to the waterfront is LIBRARY (16' x 17') with paneled fireplace wall, the other three walls with bookcases over cabinets and wet bar. At south end of wing is heated SUNPORCH (15' x 34').

Second Floor: Main section has 2 BEDROOMS (19' x 20' and 19' x 16'), each with bathroom and fitted closets, paneled over-mantels and fully paneled side walls. The south wing has 2 BEDROOMS (16' x 18' and 16' x 19') and 2 bathrooms.

Third Floor: (In main section) 2 BEDROOMS (16' x 20' and 16' x 21') and one bathroom.

Basement: Partial, under south wing. Burnham oil-fired hot water furnace with winter/summer hook-up.

OUTBUILDINGS:

Pool and Pool House: Pool (20' x 50'). Brick pool house (20' x 52'), with sitting room with fireplace, kitchenette, 2 dressing rooms, each with bathroom. Filter house and old bathhouse nearby. **Guest House:** Living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, porch. 2 bedrooms upstairs and 2 downstairs. **Manager's House:** Living room, dinette, kitchen, 2 bedrooms, 1½ baths, family room, enclosed porch. Garage. **Gardener's House:** Living room, den, kitchen, 2 bedrooms, bathrooms, porch, utility room; garage. Four-bay **garage** (24' x 44'), **office** and **shop** (16' x 32' + 14' x 19'), **smokehouse** (12' x 12'), **laundry** (12' x 31').

Farm Buildings: Barn (50' x 80'), pumphouse (10' x 10'), storage building (7' x 8'), cornerib (8' x 8'), stables (24' x 36'), sheep building (25' x 50'), lumber storage (24' x 64'), farm office (28' x 34'), Quonset hut (20' x 24'), bulb storage (27' x 79' + 20' x 24'), pump and tank house (8' x 8'), storage (10' x 27'), oil locker (6' x 6'), five wells.

REAL ESTATE TAXES: $6,500 (est.) for 1978.
Inspection by appointment only.

2-127807 *Offering subject to errors, omissions, prior sale, change of price or withdrawal without notice.*

Offered at $1,275,000 (1978)

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AN OLD SOLDIER 1865-1925

Glo-Quips 2/21/79

SERGEANT-MAJOR GEORGE MERDINGER LIVED AT BENA ON YORK RIVER
The property where he and his wife lived was formerly a portion of "Little England"

AN OLD SOLDIER . . . 1865-1925
By Walter Klohr

Old-timers in lower Gloucester County may remember him as a very agreeable gent, of Teutonic appearance with an ever-so-slight accent, who walked the shore from Gun Point at the entrance to Sarah's Creek to Gloucester Point to get the mail, twice weekly, winter or summer.

He was Sergeant-Major George Merdinger, retired, who lived in a modest frame house, next to where I now reside on the York River. And he was my uncle by marriage, having married my mother's sister Lydia in 1903.

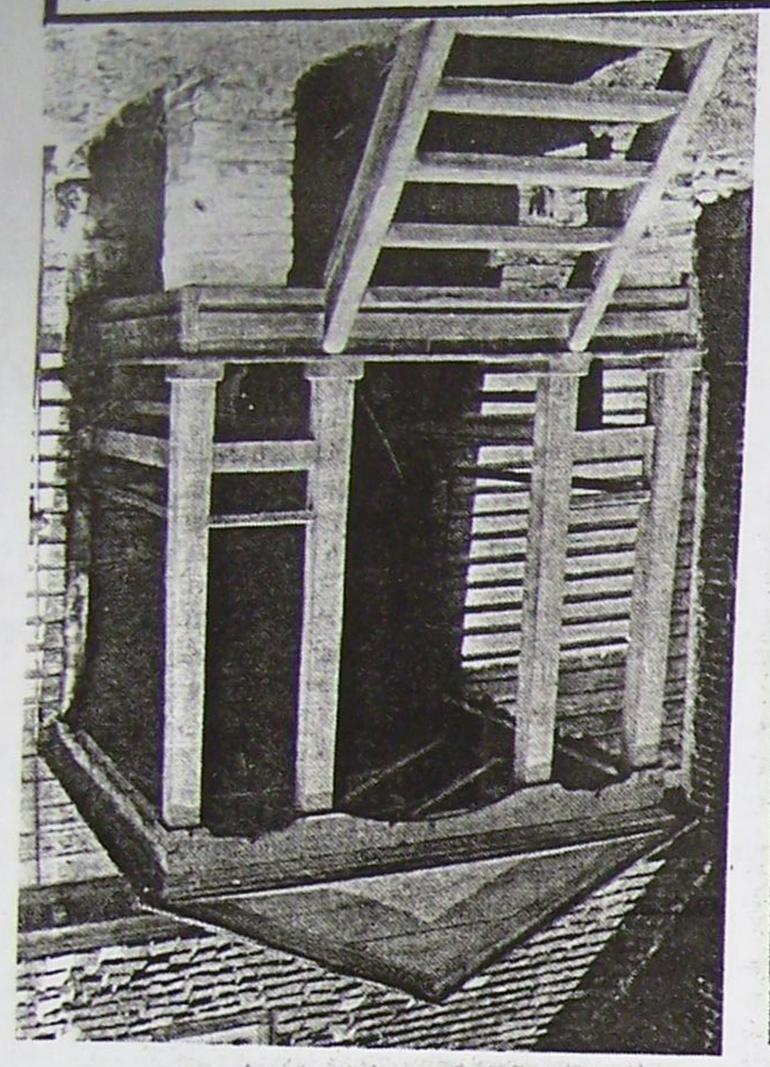
It was Uncle George who introduced me to fishing, when as a young boy, I came to Gloucester for the summers. He had a green wooden skiff which he rowed out into the river to the fishing grounds, and to me all this was pure delight. What boy could have wanted more? Another thing: he never boasted of his army exploits. Occasionally, some amusing anectedote of Army life in Cuba, or Mexico or the Phillipines.

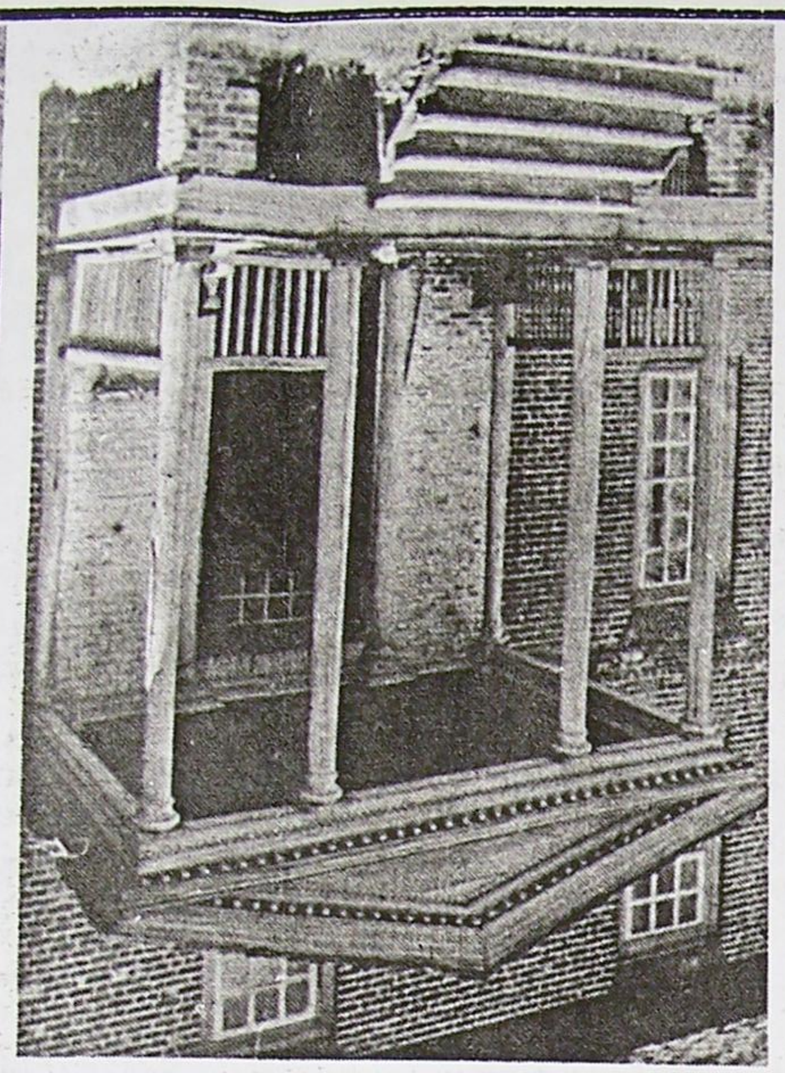
Now, just recently comes a letter from a LTC Gleim of Arlington, Va. who is digging up information from the Army files of National Archives. It seems that Certificates of Merit will be awarded to soldiers who were in the battle of Santiago. He was awarded the Army Indian Wars Campaign badge, which I didn't know about. As I said, he never boasted.

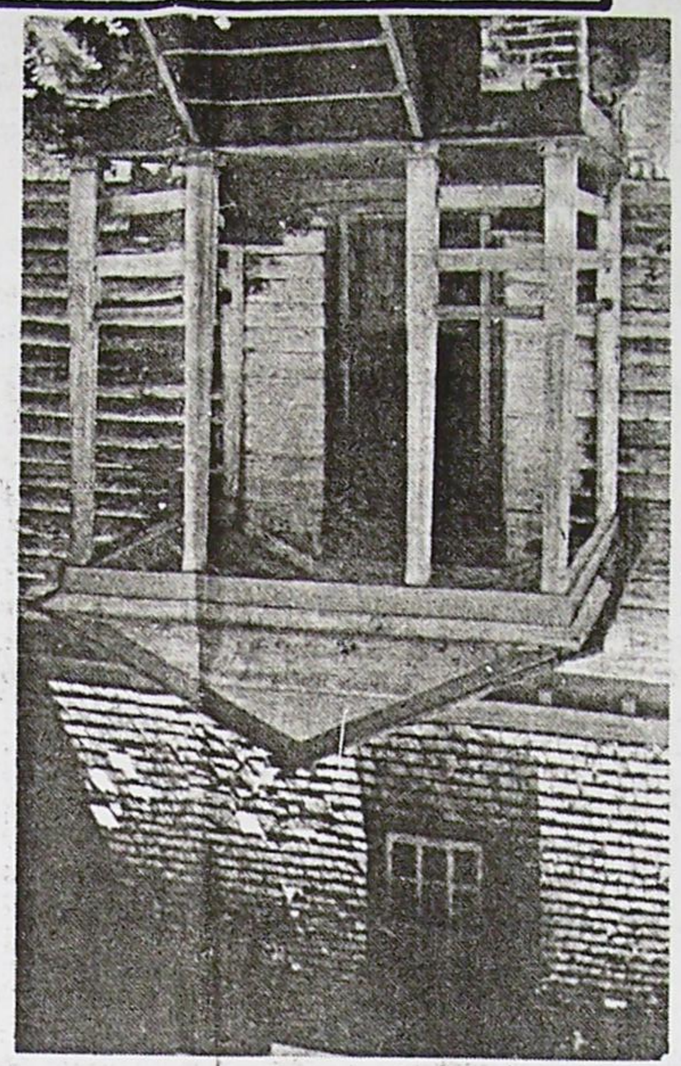
He is buried in the Little England private burying ground next to his beloved Lydia. A victim of cancer of the liver. . .

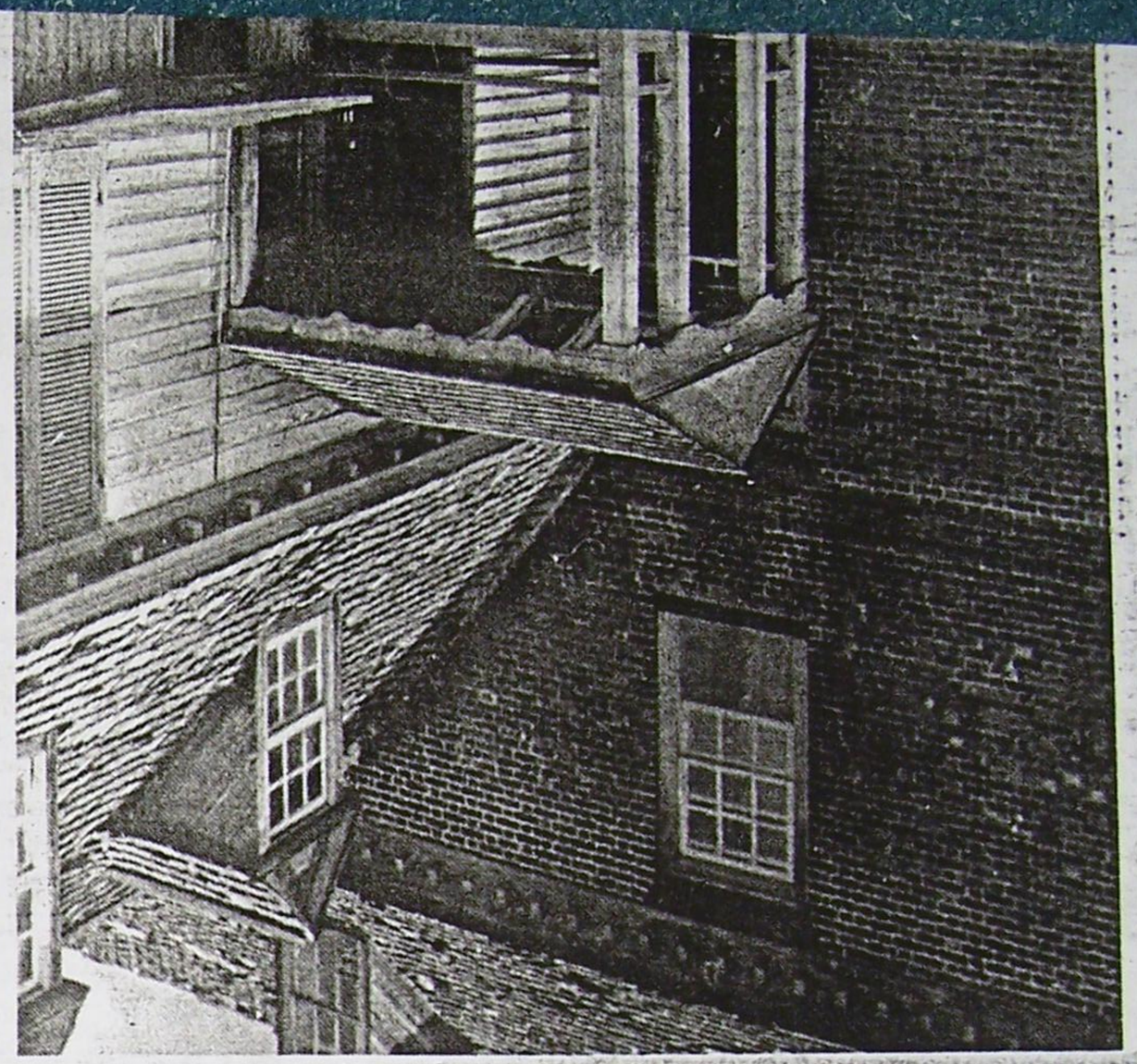
. . . Old soldiers must eventually fade away . . .

"LITTLE ENGLAND" LOOKED LIKE THIS WHEN SOLDIER COURTED WIFE HERE.
Sergeant-Major and Mrs. Merdinger are buried in family graveyard on this estate at Bena.

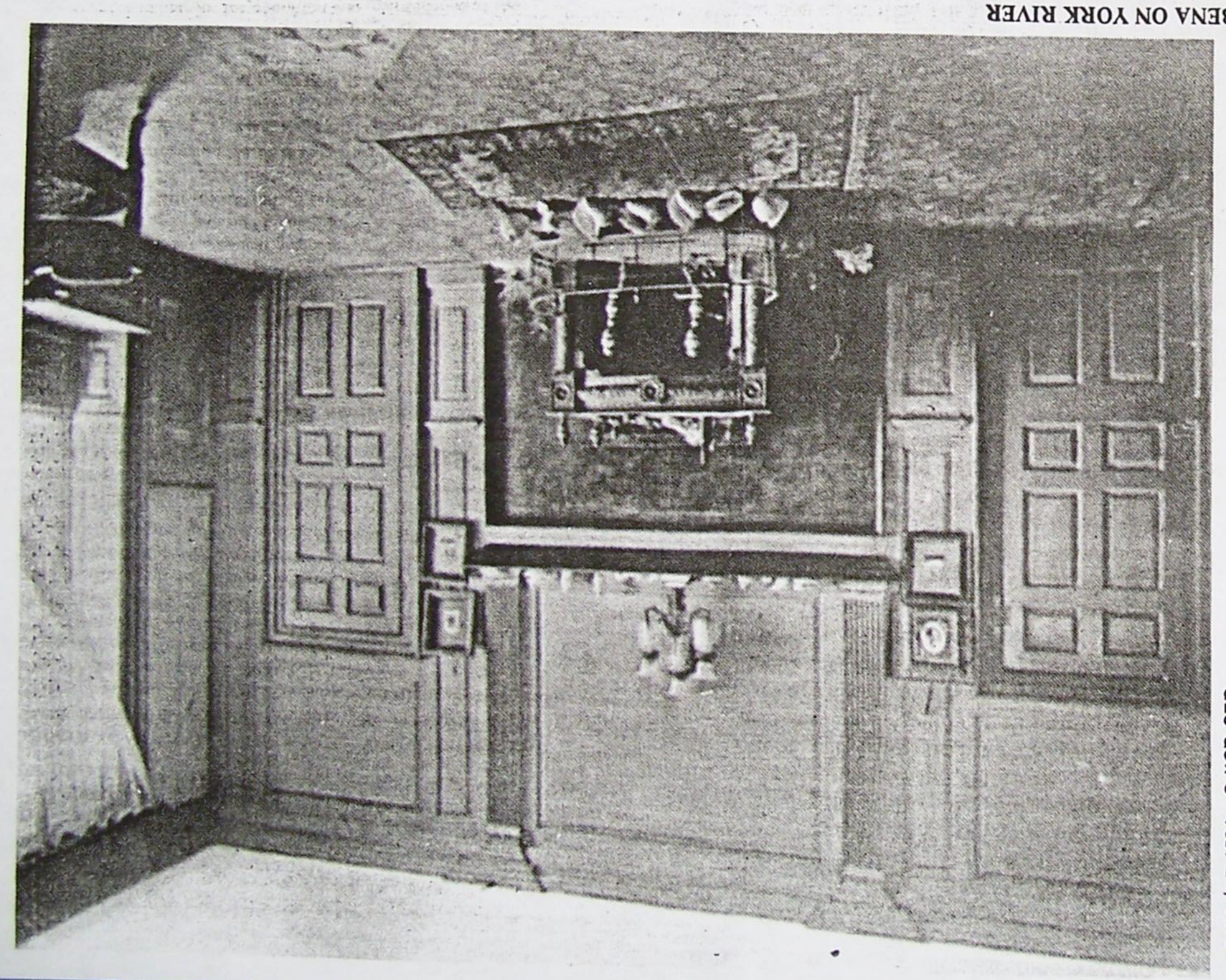


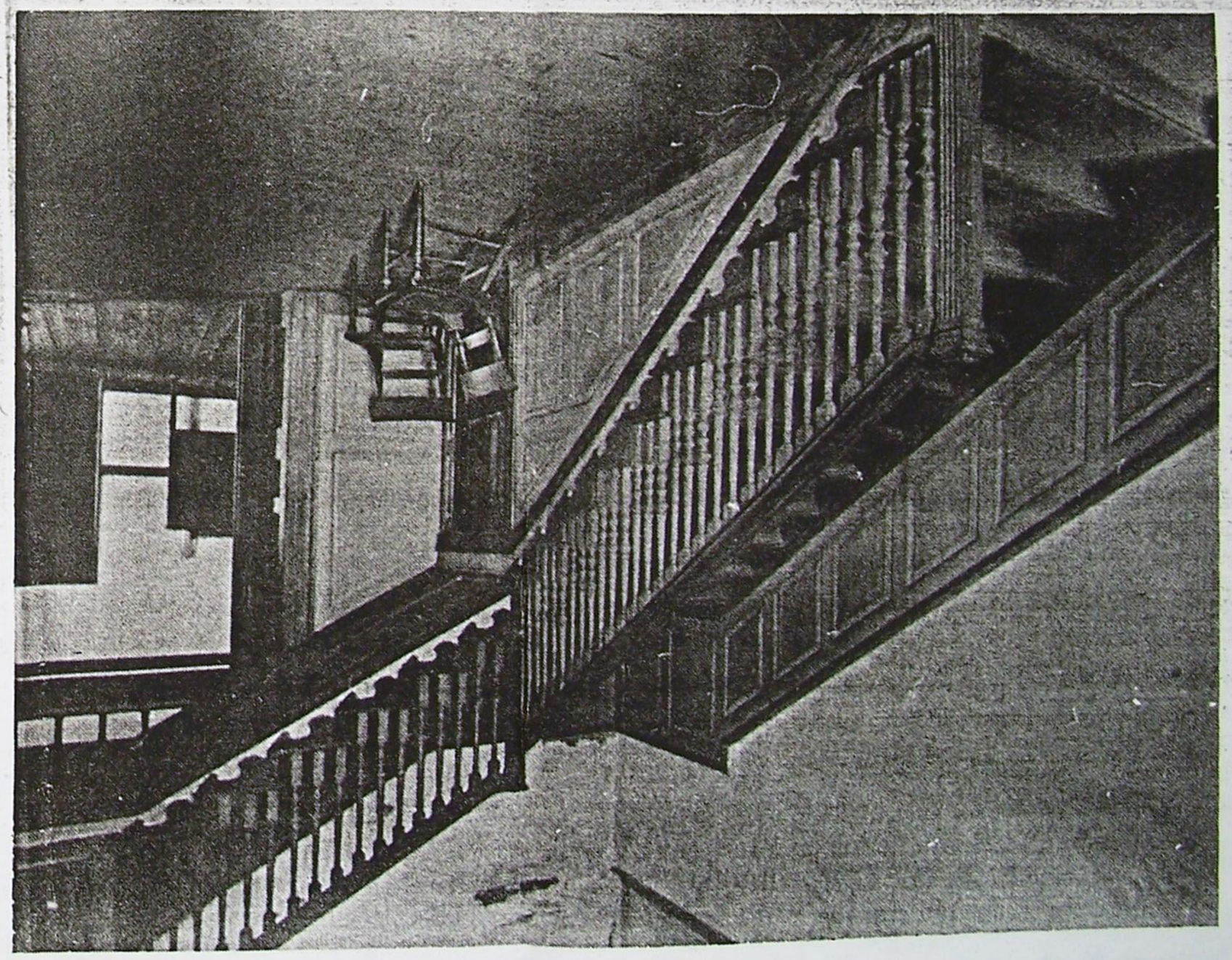






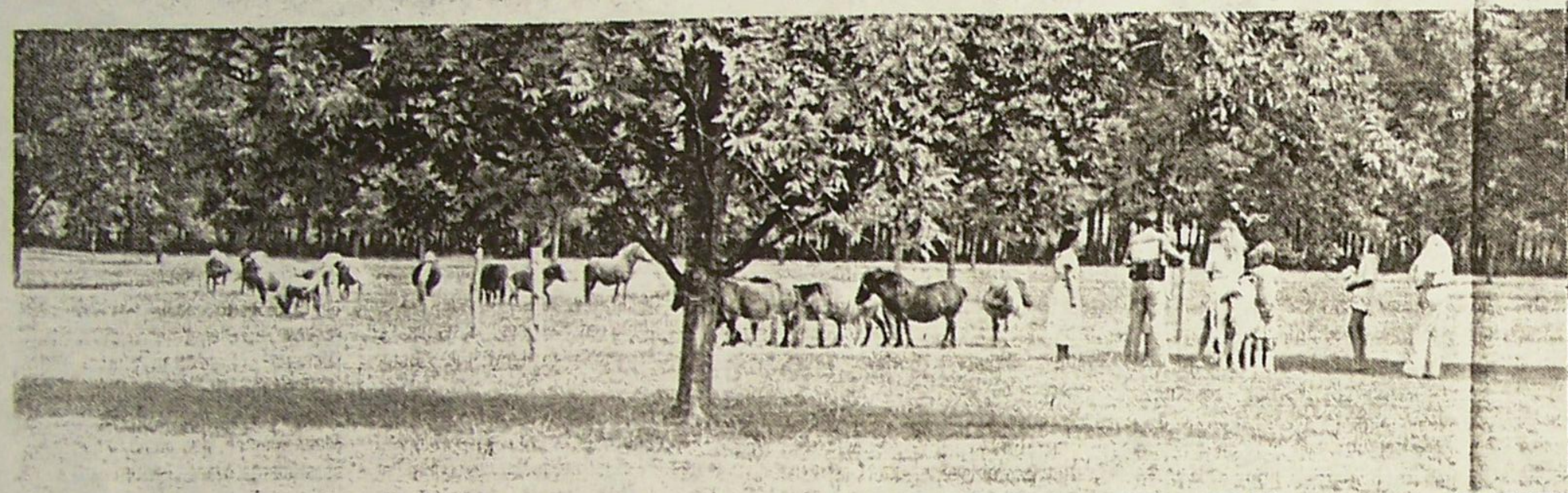
"LITTLE ENGLAND" AT BENA ON YORK RIVER

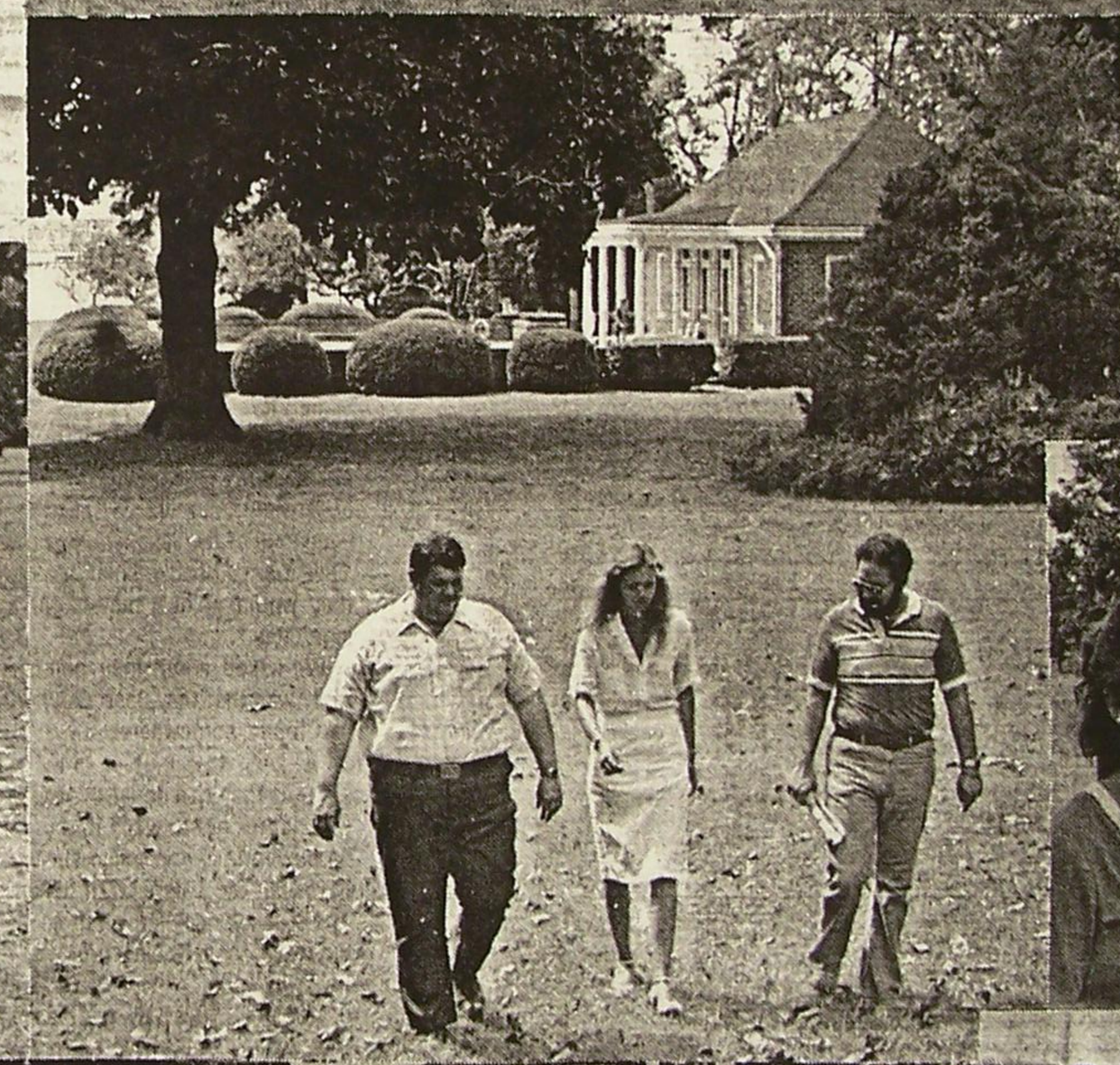


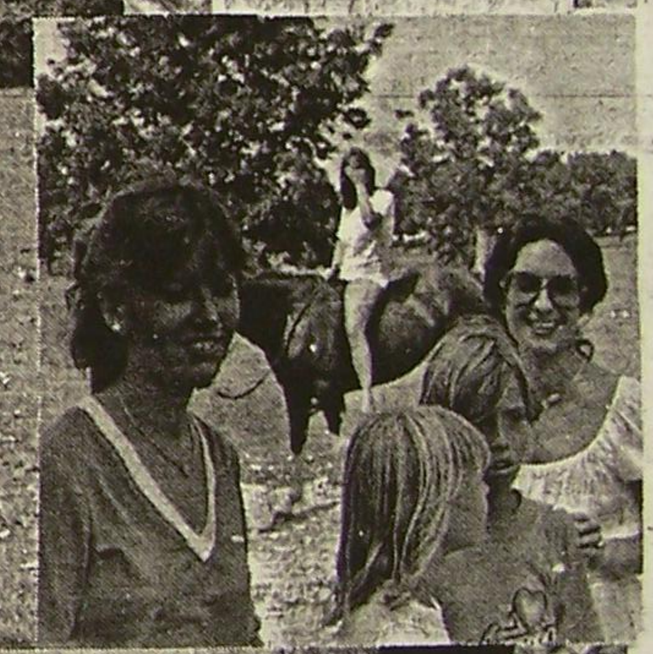


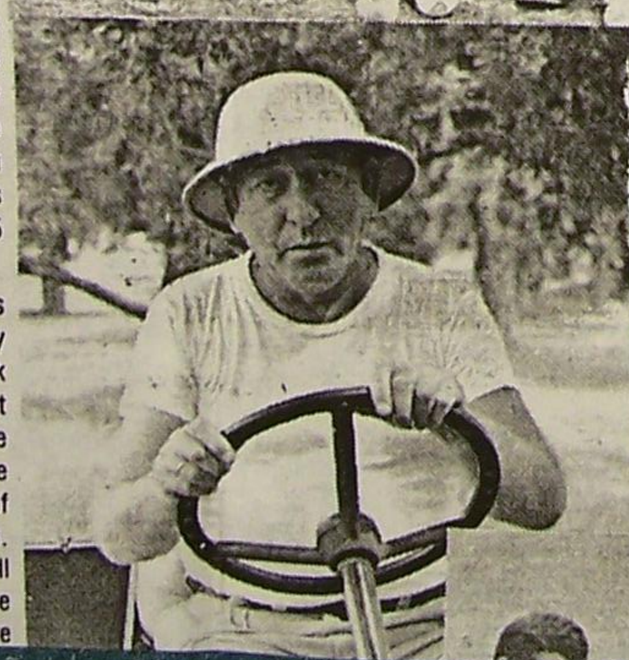
"LITTLE ENGLAND" AT BENA ON YORK RIVER

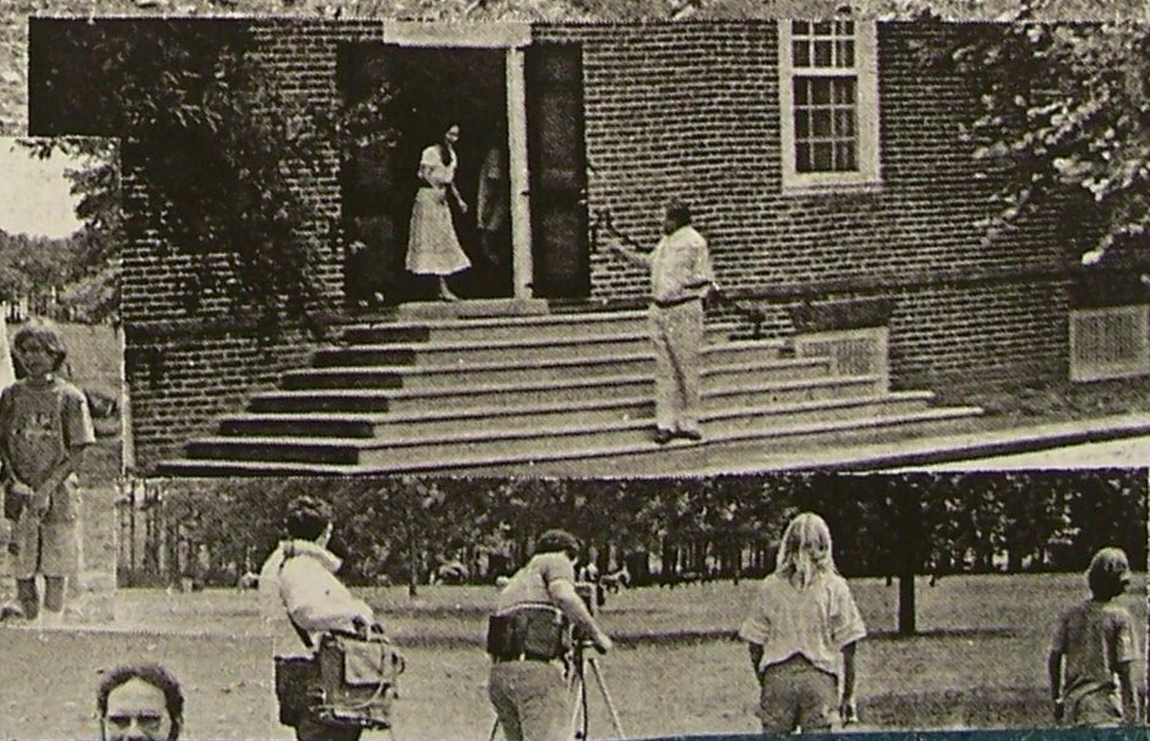
MINIATURE HORSES at "Little England"











Little England, referred to in Revolutionary days as "Perrin's home on the Sarah's Creek", now the home of 31 Miniature horses, stands at the end of a narrow point of land bounded on the north by Sarah's Creek and on the south by the York river in Gloucester County, facing Yorktown. On this site in 1716, Captain John Perrin built the beautifully proportioned Georgian brick house which stands today, one of Virginia's least altered and best preserved colonial plantation houses.

In 1781 the house was mentioned by Brigadier General Weeden in a letter to General Washington. In this he reported "I have stationed a lay of Horsemen from Perrins House to Camp. The house stands at the mouth of Saraj Creek and commands a full view of Gloster, York and all their shipping."

This "lay" of horsemen were experienced French huzzards from the legion of Lauzun which had arrived in America with the army of Rochambeau in 1780. It is interesting to note that Lauzun, popular at the Court of Versailles and believed to be a lover of Marie Antoinette, was the first to announce the surrender of Cornwallis to Louis XVI.

In the 20th century, Little England was used for more peaceful purposes and became known as a Daffodil Farm in the Fifties. Today it is the home of American Minature Horses, which are registered in the International Miniature Horse Registry and are bred and sold here. Since this spring, 9 new regular horses, although because of their size they are much more susceptible to accidents and to attacks by packs of dogs.

Nowadays they are mostly used as pets, also in circuses, and even as curiosity pieces. They are also exhibited in parades and at County and State Fairs.

There is no more economical horse to keep. In general, they require the same care any type of horse would do. They eat the same grasses and grains bigger horses eat, only much smaller portions. During green grass season, nothing other than it, water and mineral salt is needed. One-third of an acre of grass is sufficient to maintain one mini-horse. If pasture is not available, one pint of sweet feed, cracked corn, oats, etc., and a small bit of good hay daily along with salt lick and fresh water should be provided. Although they are very hardy and adjust to any climate, some sort of shelter should be provided in the winter. The life expectancy is similar to big horses - around 25 years.

The American Miniature Horse has made a fascinating hobby and a very good outlet for people who work under stress and high tension. Kept in a spacious backyard, these loveable equine pets will be able to give you the multitude of pleasure only dreamed of by so many horse owners.

In the present times, the small miniature horses are no longer the privilege of royal families, but are

in the Fifties. Today it is the home of American Minature Horses, which are registered in the International Miniature Horse Registry and are bred and sold here. Since this spring, 9 new foals have been born. The last one is "4th of July boy", now called "Little England's Prince Hamlet." His mother's name is "Lady Desdemona." As you can see, all the names of these mares and stallions are taken from Shakespeare's dramas and comedies. They were "raised to the nobility" to fit into this noble surrounding of American history. "Lord" Cupido, for example is the name of the smallest stallion, a most fervent experienced lover. His greatest rival in beauty is a palomino and white "Lord Adonis."

In the 17th century it has been an exclusive custom of members of the royal families of England as well as on the Continent, to give a new born (miniature) horse to a new born prince or princess for growing up together.

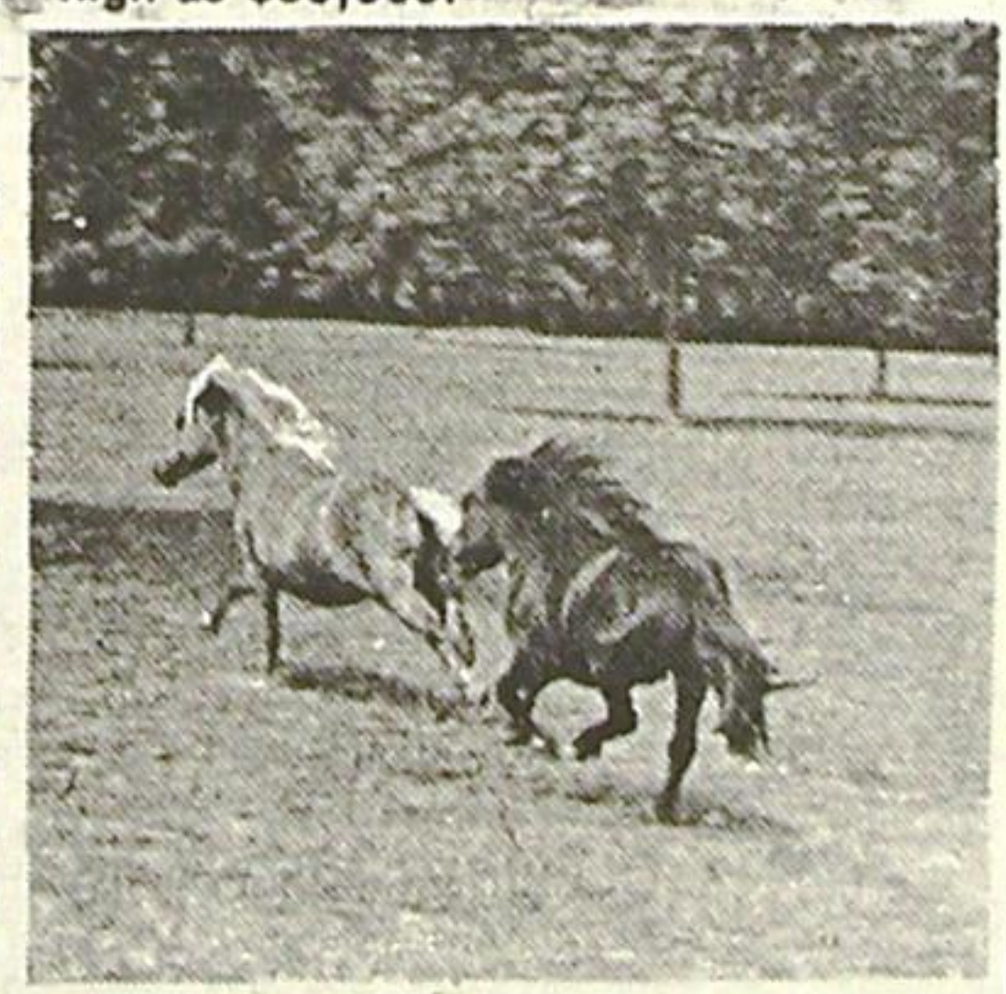
Miniature hoses are rare. Only about one in several thousand horses qualifies as a miniature. The maximum height of a miniature horse is usually defined as 34 inches. The smaller the horse, the more money it is worth. There are less than 400 in the world under 30 inches, according to a publication of the American Miniature Horse Registry.

There are two types of Miniature horses, one being the short, stock draft horse look and the other is a finer boned thoroughbred or Arabian type. It is unusual for a breed to produce all colors, but because these Miniature horses were bred down from all types of horses, they reproduce all colors. The true Miniature is simply a small pony or horse and is not a malformed dwarf. Practically all Miniatures have a good disposition, most of them being unusually friendly and playful, more like a puppy than a horse. They do not have the often criticized fault of the Shetland, that of biting or kicking.

Miniatures are just as healthy as by so many horse owners.

In the present times, the small miniature horses are no longer the privilege of royal families, but are available right here in Gloucester County at the old plantation, "Little England" down at Bena on the York River.

Henry Zitzman is keeper of the horses at Little England and can be reached at telephone number 642-2050 or 642-2046. According to a recent television program, the price range for the minatures is from $3,000 up. Some of these horses in recent months have brought prices as high as $30,000.



Miniature ponies are like big puppies

By Vivian Breckenridge

Little England may not sound like the sort of place where the deer and the antelope play, but 32 miniature horses frolic on the windswept pastures that surround the 18th century plantation house in nearby Gloucester.

Six miles north of the George P. Coleman Bridge that spans the York River, near Bena, stands a stately Georgian mansion buildt in 1716 by Capt. John Perrin.

The 60 acre estate was purchased three years ago by Dr. and Mrs. Johann Rinecker of Munich from the heirs of the late Theodore Pratt. Their first inspiration was in fact to raise deer for the table.

Helga Renicker thought it would be quite fitting to see deer roaming and grazing freely on grounds that mimic an English park. But Virginia custom and statute mitigated against the plan. It is against state law to keep deer in captivity.

A mutual love of horses, which had brought Hans and Helga Rinecker together during their courtship in 1969, led to the eventual decision to raise minature horses.

"We wanted to engage in some enterprise to help defray the expense of the property," Mrs. Rinecker said of their $1.1 million investment, which is home to the Rineckers a scant three months of every year. "Anyway," she added, "I fell in love with horses when one kicked me when I was three."

The Rineckers started the project by purchasing 20 small mares and three stallions from South Carolina stock. Miniature horses are rare. There are less than 400 horses in the world under 30 inches, according to the American Miniature Horse Registry. And the smaller the hores, the higher the price.

The horses at Little England were bought at an average price of $3,000 per head, and one stallion is valued at $8,000. The high prices reflect the scarcity of the friendly little beasts. One horse in several thousand qualifies as a true minature.

"The true miniature is not just a small pony or horse and is not a malformed dwarf," Mrs. Rinecker said. All of the Little England stock are registered, and the farm is a member of the American Miniature Horse Registry in Indiana and the Internal Miniature Horse Registry in California, which set the standards for the breed.

Mature miniature horses measure 34 inches or less from the withers to the ground. Their weight ranges from 50 to 250 pounds, depending on height, sex and bone structure.

It is easy to recognize two distinct body types in the Little England pastures. The short stock draft horse has the appearance of a small pony. More highly prized by some miniature horse fanciers is the finer-boned thoroughbred Arabian of Lilliputian scale.

These horses date to the 17th century, when they were bred as pets for members of the royal family in England and on the continent. Their noble origins are reflected in the names chosen by Mrs. Rinecker when the South Carolina herd became Virginians. "We only raised them to be nobility, to fit into this noble surrounding of American history," Mrs. Rinecker wrote in a Little England brochure.

Thus, Mr. Clean became Lord Adonis. His dark-complexioned rival is Malvolio. The tiny stallion, Prince Hamlet, a mere 18 inches tall, is one of nine foals that have resulted from the romantic liasons with the like of Ladies Adriana and Desdemona.

Despite their Shakespearean titles, Little England's minatures think of themselves as ordinary horses. And they give a pretty convincing performance. The three mature stallions have to be kept in separate pastures, or one must be stabled while another rules the brood of mares.

Photos by Vivian Breckenridge

Lewis Jenkins takes a firm hold on stallion Lord Adonis, nee Mr. Clean.

Lewis Jenkins, who has worked for 40 years on the plantation nearly surrounded by the York River and Sara's Creek, attests to the general horsiness of his charges. "They can tell just as good as a person can when it's between 3 and 3:30 in the afternoon — feeding time."

The horses all know their own position at the feeding trough, too. If an interloper attempts to dine above the salt, a series of nips and flashing hooves convince the intruder of the error of its ways.

With humans, the horses are real jokesters. They nip at jeans, and if a person gets down at their level, they've been known to remove and sail a cap.

Elmer Thacker, who has worked on the property through various enterprises and changing ownerships for over 18 years, said, "As soon as I sit down in the pasture, three or four of the little critters roll over on top of me like dogs."

Because the Rineckers spend most of their time in Munich, where their children, ages 8 and 12, attend school, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Sydow live on the property as caretakers. Visitors are welcomed, by appointment (642-2050) to view the herd. Mrs. Rinecker has decided to sell some of the foals in order to decrease the stock and, ultimately, to make the horse farm a paying concern.

"Better than growing tomatoes," the breeding of minature horses is recommended by Mrs. Rinecker as "a fascinating hobby and a good outlet for people who work under stress and high tension."

The sturdy animals require only a third of an acre of grass, or if pasture is not available, can be fed sweet feed, cracked corn, or oats and hay for about $3 a week.

There are no diseases peculiar to the miniature horses because of their size. Tetanus shots, plus protection against any horse diseases endemic to the area, will usually keep them healthy to the age of 25.

With their friendly and playful dispositions, "like hooved puppy dogs," according to Mrs. Rinecker, they make delightful pets. In fact, she said, "they have no bad habits at all."

Elmer Thacker can't remember all the fancy names, but this little pinto is one of his favorites.

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— Photo before alterations —

Airville

This was a Dixon family place, the gambrel roofed portion was built c. 1756 by John Dixon.

Col. Thomas Smith, son of Rev. Armistead Smith, added the large house in the 1840's.

Col Smith's niece, Maria Tabb, married the artist William James Hubard and the couple lived here.

At one time Airville was home to the Harwood family and the Harwood Mill was nearby.

Photo 1968

— Ice house — House beyond — Photo 1968

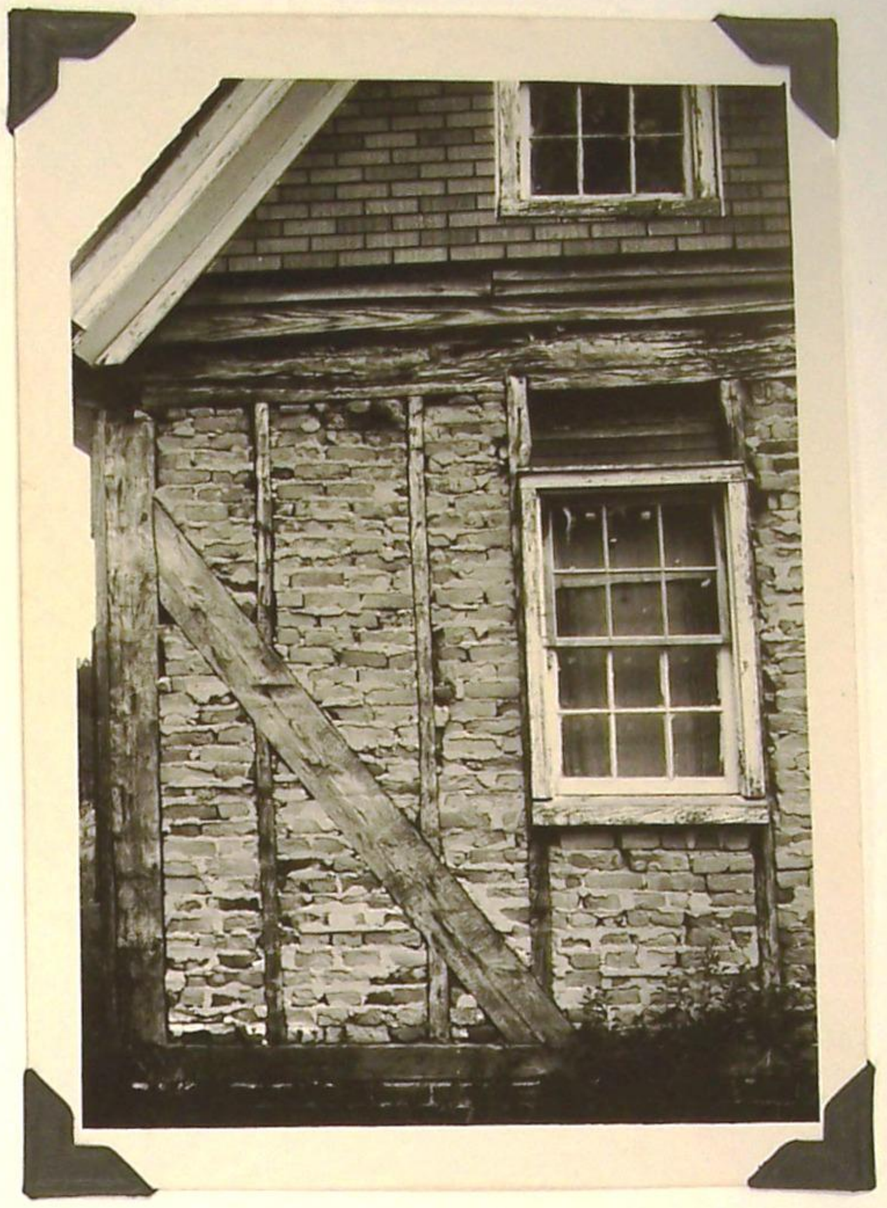
Line of domestic outbuildings
Photo 1968

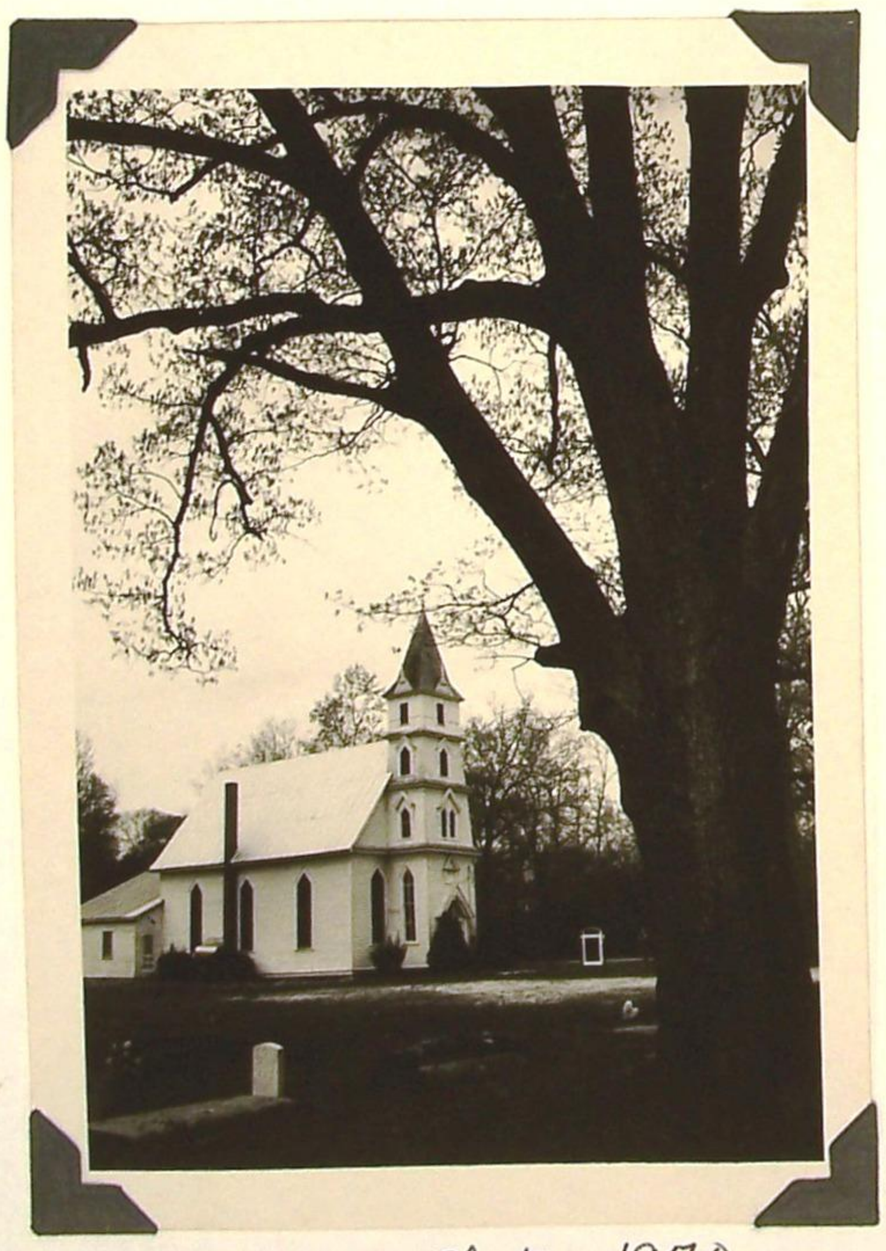
"Airville" Sold For Over Half Million

"Airville", Gloucester County estate near Zanoni, has been sold by Robert D. Foster and his wife, Frances Ann Foster, of North in Mathews County to J. Donald Shenk and Jewell Y. Shenk for $530,000. Included with the sale of residence and 45.3675 acres is a .58 acre lot on Ware River near "Five Gables". "Airville" was built in 1756 by John Dixon. The unusual hanging stairway is a work of art. General William Boothe Taliaferro of Civil War fame said that his father, Warner T. Taliaferro watched manoeuvres of the British fleet during the War of 1812 from a portico at "Airville". Gclo-Quips - 7/15/87

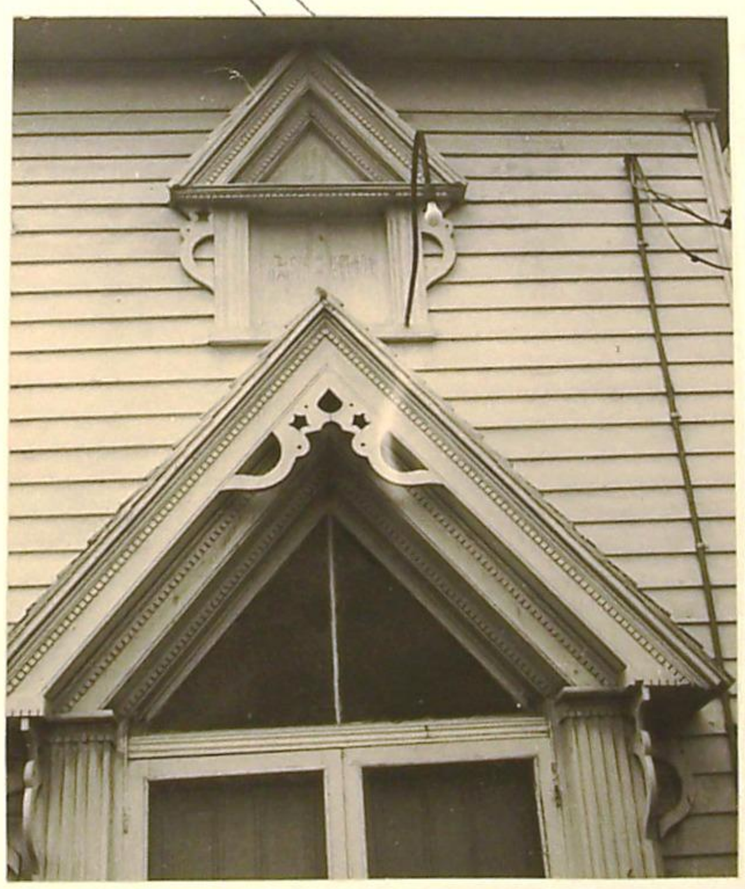
Old house near Airville - showing a good example of brick noggin construction.

Photos 1970





Photos 1970



Detail of entrance

- Country Gothic -

Zion Poplars Baptist Church

This is a negro church established in 1866. The first building was where the older portion of the cemetery is now situated. It was named for a group of several Poplars beneath which the first members met. A public school for Colored children was taught here at one time. The present building dates to 1900 or before.

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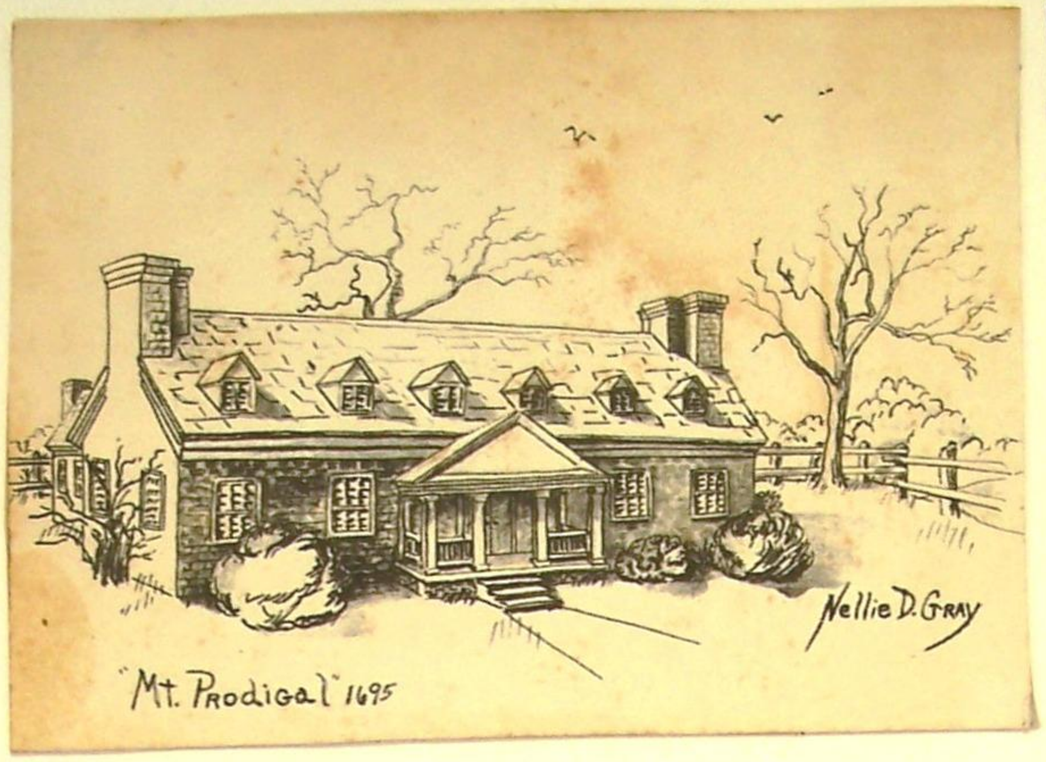
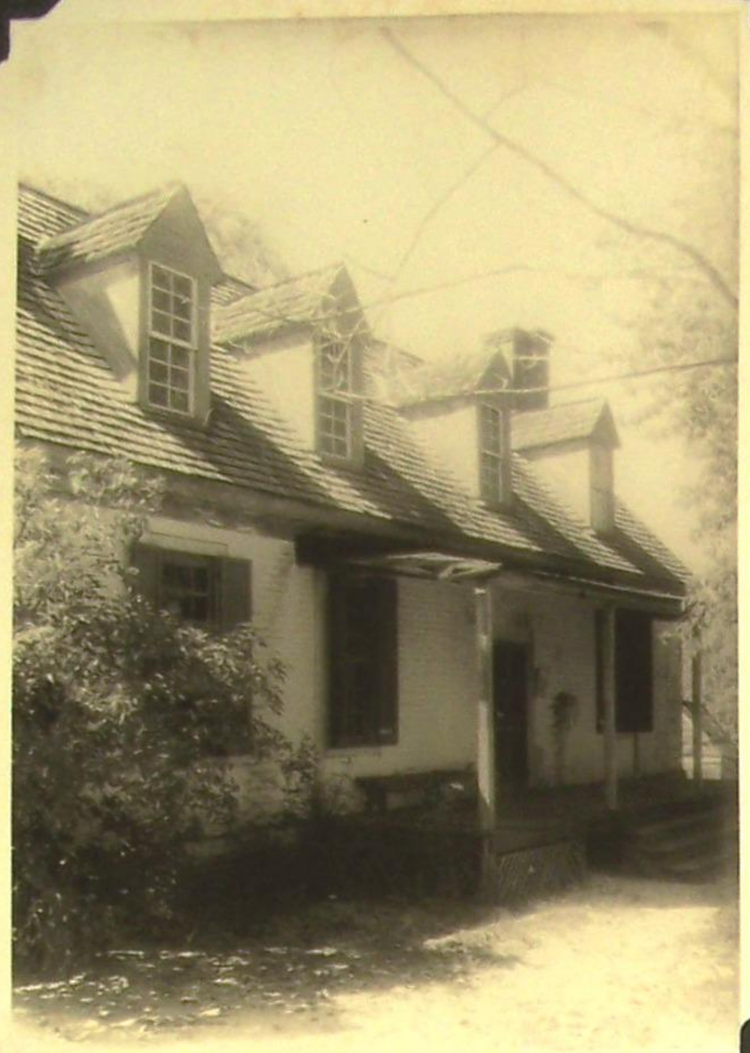


Mount Prodigal - near Adner
in the Northern part of Gloucester County.

Possibly built in the 17th century by the Hubard family. There is said to be a dated block which can not now be located beneath the numerous coats of whitewash. The T-chimneys, narrow dormers and other features proclaim it of early origin.
Later home to the Dudley and Roane families.

Photos 1930's by Frances
Benjamin Johnston



Photos 1930's
by Frances
Benjamin
Johnston

Kempsville in the northern
part of Gloucester County

Kemp family home built
c. 1765.

Long in the Broaddus family
and presently home to the Mays
family.

Nearby once stood the Dragon Run
Ordinary.

One of the earliest brick homes (CIRCA 1660) maintained in its original state. Magnificent paneling, hardware and floors. Swimming pool, cabana, guest house, managers dwelling, 200 acres, more than $20,000 in marketable timber.

JIM & PAT CARTER REAL ESTATE
WHITE STONE, VIRGINIA
ASSOCIATED BROKERS

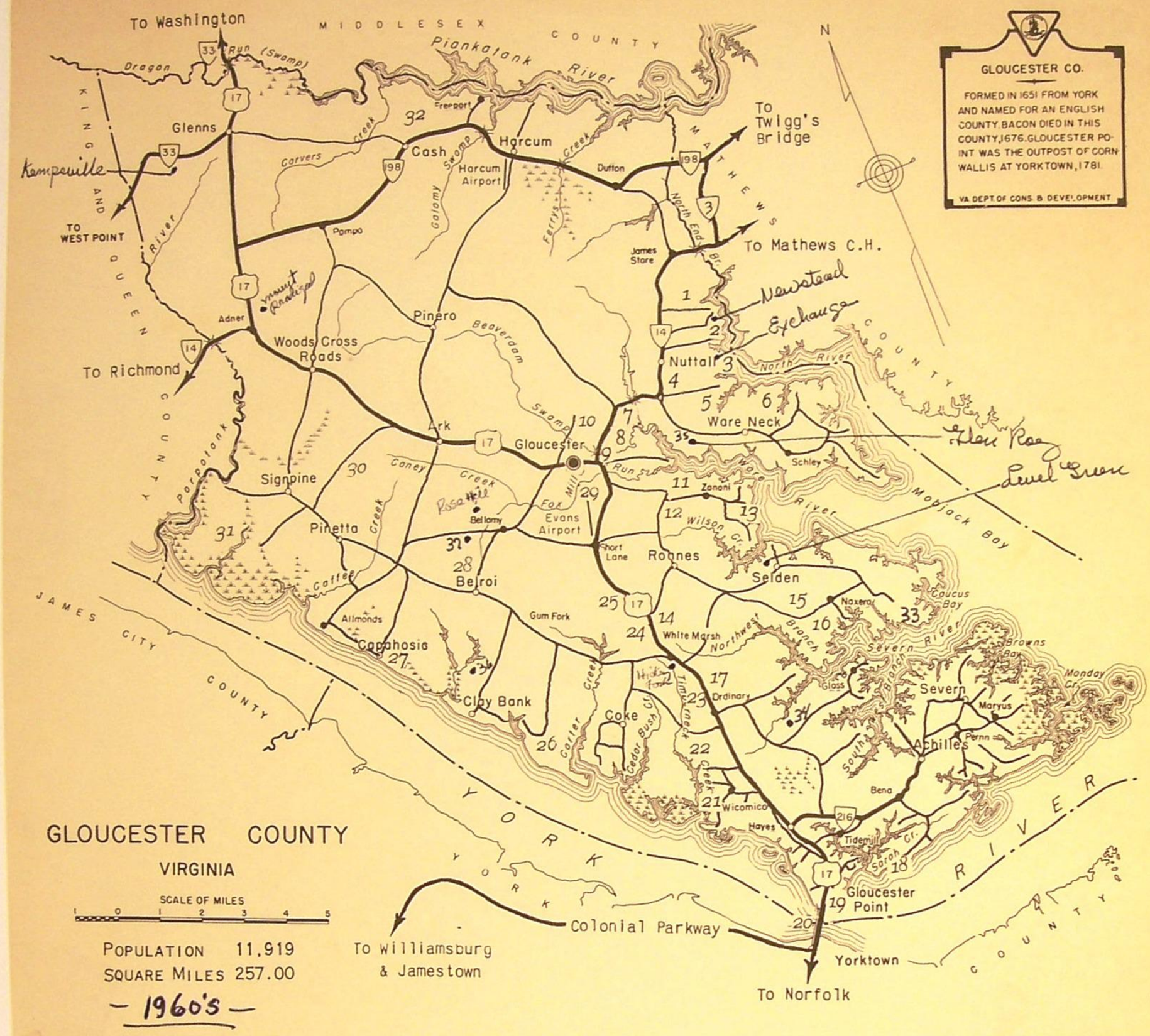
MRS. MABLE BILLUPS
Mathews, Virginia

JOHN GARLAND POLLARD, JR.
Lancaster, Virginia

TELEPHONE 435-4951

1962

A Visitor's Map of GLOUCESTER County



GLOUCESTER CO.

FORMED IN 1651 FROM YORK AND NAMED FOR AN ENGLISH COUNTY. BACON DIED IN THIS COUNTY, 1676. GLOUCESTER POINT WAS THE OUTPOST OF CORNWALLIS AT YORKTOWN, 1781.

VA. DEPT. OF CONS. & DEVELOPMENT

● Gloucester Court House
Debtors Prison
Confederate Monument
Gloucester Public Library

1. River's Edge Farm *
2. Toddsbury *
3. Elmington *
4. Wellford–Taliaferro Wayside (Picnic Area)
5. Daffodil Mart
6. Belle Ville *
7. Church Hill *
8. Ware Church
9. Long Bridge Ordinary
10. Roaring Springs *
11. Goshen *
12. Airville *
13. Whitehall *
14. White Marsh Plantation *
15. Warner Hall Plantation and Cemetery *
16. Eagle Point Plantation *
17. Abingdon Church
18. Little England *
19. Va. Marine Laboratory
20. Coleman Memorial Bridge
21. Powhatan's Chimney
22. Timberneck *
23. Seawell's Ordinary
24. Gloucester High School
25. Abingdon Glebe *
26. Rosewell Ruins
27. Capahosic House *
28. Walter Reed's Birthplace
29. Golf Course
30. Marlfield Ruins
31. Purton *
32. Highgate *
33. Lands End
34. (Pleasant Point (Cisburne)) (Private Home)
35. Ellen Rae
36. Concord Ruins / 37. Bellamy Church

Prepared for your information & convenience by MORGAN'S DRUG STORE

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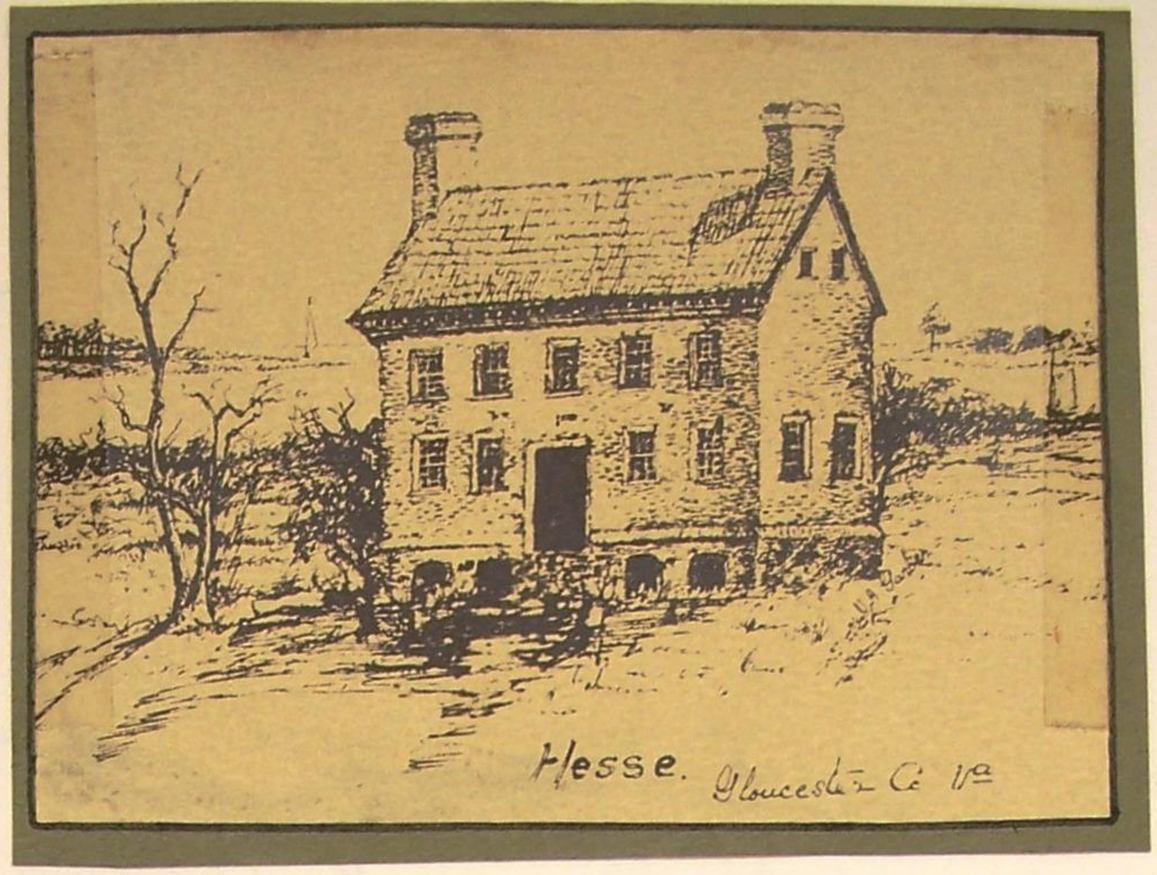
Addendum

Following are some buildings which are now in Mathews County which was formed from Gloucester County in 1791.

Hesse



Just across from the mouth of the Piankatank River with a view out to the Chesapeake Bay.

The seat of the Armistead family. The present house of c. 1860 replaces an earlier one which burned c. 1798.* Perhaps some of the remaining walls and chimneys were built as there is in one of the chimneys a dated brick "A.O. 1674." The original structure was double the size of the present one-room deep house, the rooms on the river side that were destroyed in the fire were not replaced.

Hesse was thought to have been erected by John Armistead, the Councellor. It became the home of his son Henry who married Martha Burwell. Their son William married Mary Bowles (she remarried following William's death Rev. Thomas Price and some of the Hesse furniture at that time went with her to the Price home).

William and Mary (Bowles) Armistead had a son William who lived at Hesse and married Maria daughter of Charles Carter of "Clove".

About 1907 Hesse was described by Mrs. Virginia Armistead Garber as having black marble or ironstone mantels. There were two large rooms on each floor. A plaster partition was later built to form a hall in which the stairway was located (it had formerly been included in the larger room). There were window seats and paneled, folding interior shutters according to Mrs. Garber's memory.

John Armistead (the supposed builder of Hesse) was the second son of the emigrant, William Armistead, and is generally referred to as the Councellor. He was sheriff of Gloucester County in 1675, member of the house of Burgesses in 1685 and appointed to the Council about 1687. In 1680 he was Lieutenant-Colonel of Horse in Gloucester County and one of the justices of the county.

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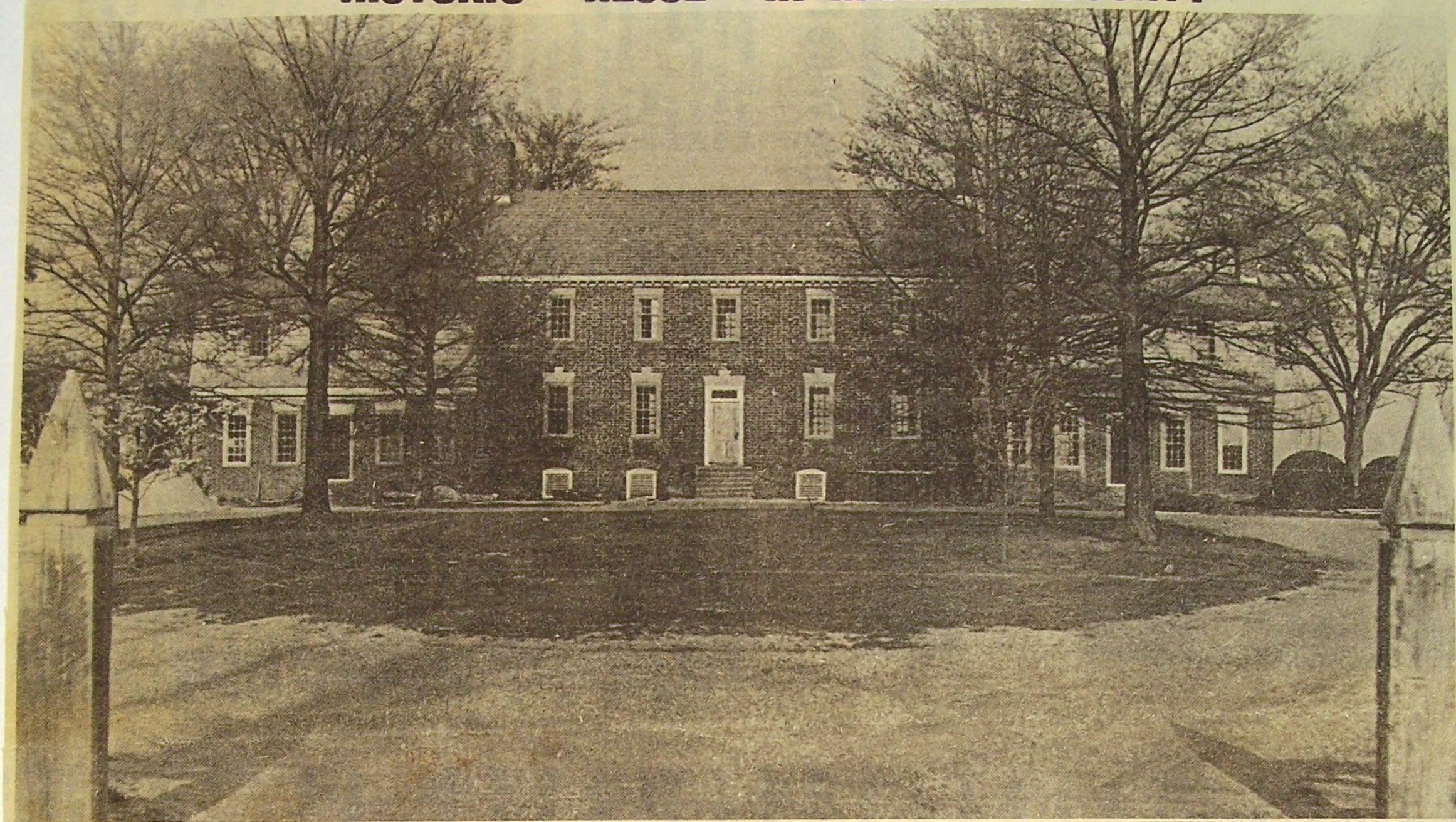
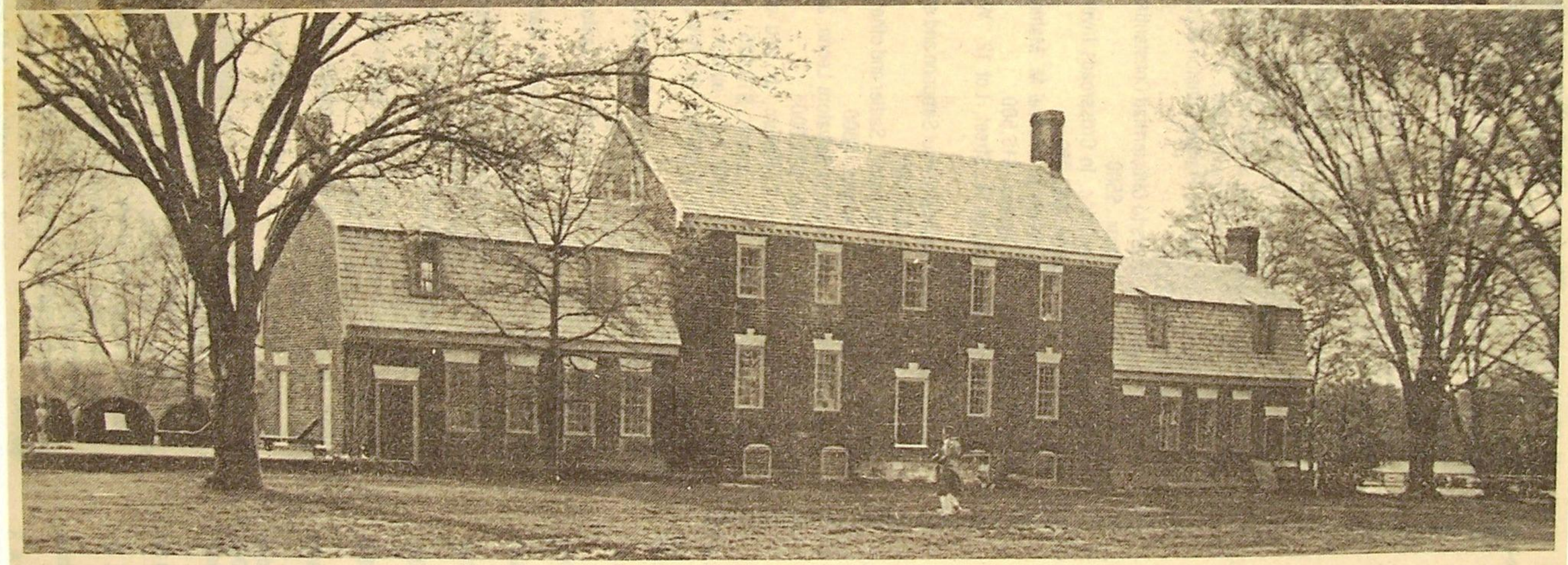
* a letter from William Nelson of King William County to William Cocke of Cartersville in Cumberland County dated February 1798 speaks of the burning of Hesse. This was after the death of Maria Carter Armistead, widow of William Armistead and Hesse was leased to a Mr. Vanbibber.

HISTORIC "HESSE" IN MATHEWS COUNTY





The glory which has been is returning to "Hesse". The once pretentious mansion overlooking the Piankatank River in Mathews County is being restored by its owners, Mr. and Mrs. William Stephens of New Orleans.

Hesse was the home of the Armisteads who intermarried with the Carters, Nelsons, Burwells and other families of distinction in the Colonial period.

Robert (King) Carter of Northern Neck came by his vessel down the Rappahannock, into Chesapeake Bay and to the Piankatank River to court and win the heart of Miss Judith Armistead of "Hesse", who became his first wife. He died in 1732 leaving an estate of more than 300,000 acres of land, 1,000 slaves and over 10,000 pounds in money. Their descendants include two Presidents, six Governors of Virginia and Robert E. Lee himself.

John Armistead can be assumed to have established the family at "Hesse" near Cobbs Creek. His father died on land he owned in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, and John, who was born in 1635, was High Sheriff of Gloucester in 1675, Burgess in 1685 and Member of the Virginia Council in 1688. He died at Hesse in 1698. Certainly it was from Hesse that Robert (King) Carter courted John's daughter, Judith. She died in Lancaster County, Va., in February 1699 after eleven years of marriage. She and Carter were parents of five children.

Henry Armistead, son of John, is presumed to have been the builder of the present brick building. He acquired the land prior to 1670 which had been granted to his father, John, in 1658.

Horsley Brothers of Gloucester are contractors of the restoration project. The Maxwell family sold the property to the Stephens for a reportedly $400,000.

WELCOME TO GARDEN WEEK

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Glo-Quips - 20 April 1977

continued →

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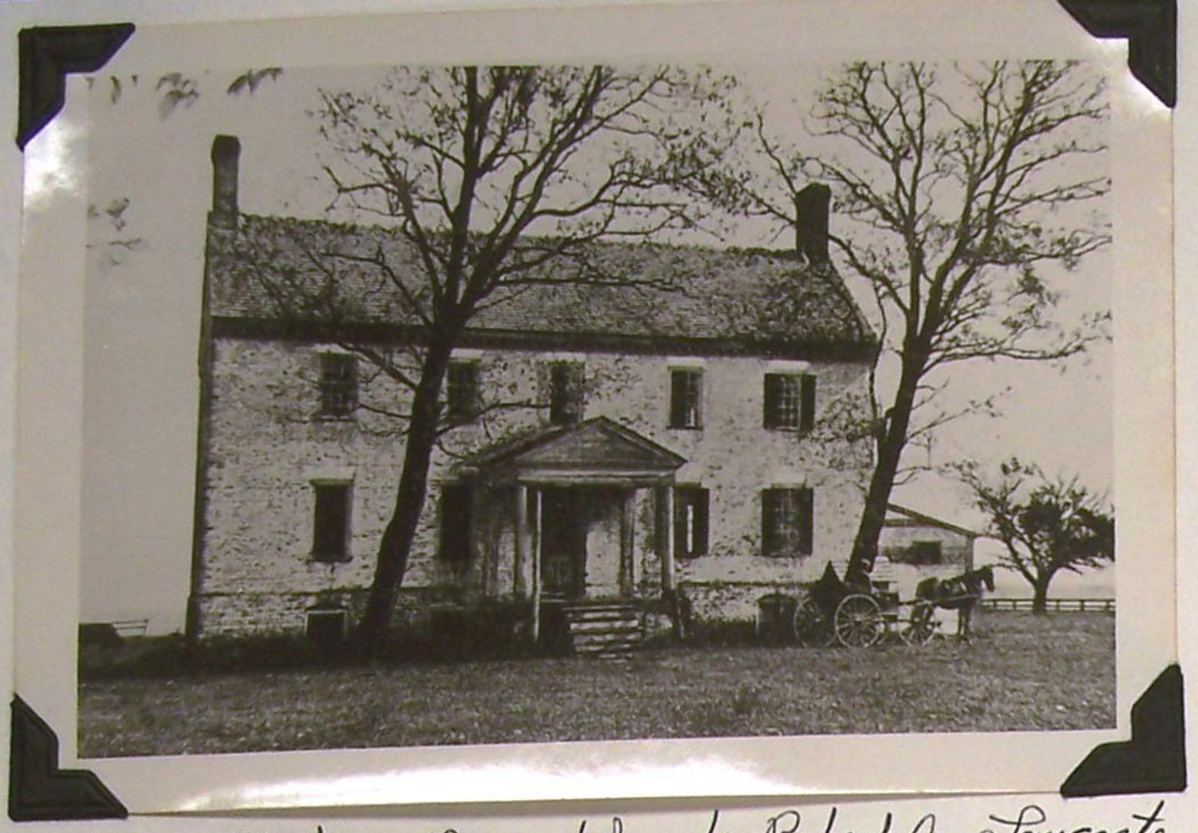


Photo c. 1900 or before by Robert A. Lancaster, Jr.
(Land Facade)

John Armistead, the probable builder of the original house, married Judith (Robinson or Beverley, her surname is uncertain) and their children were:

1- Judith - married Robert 'King' Carter of "Corotoman"

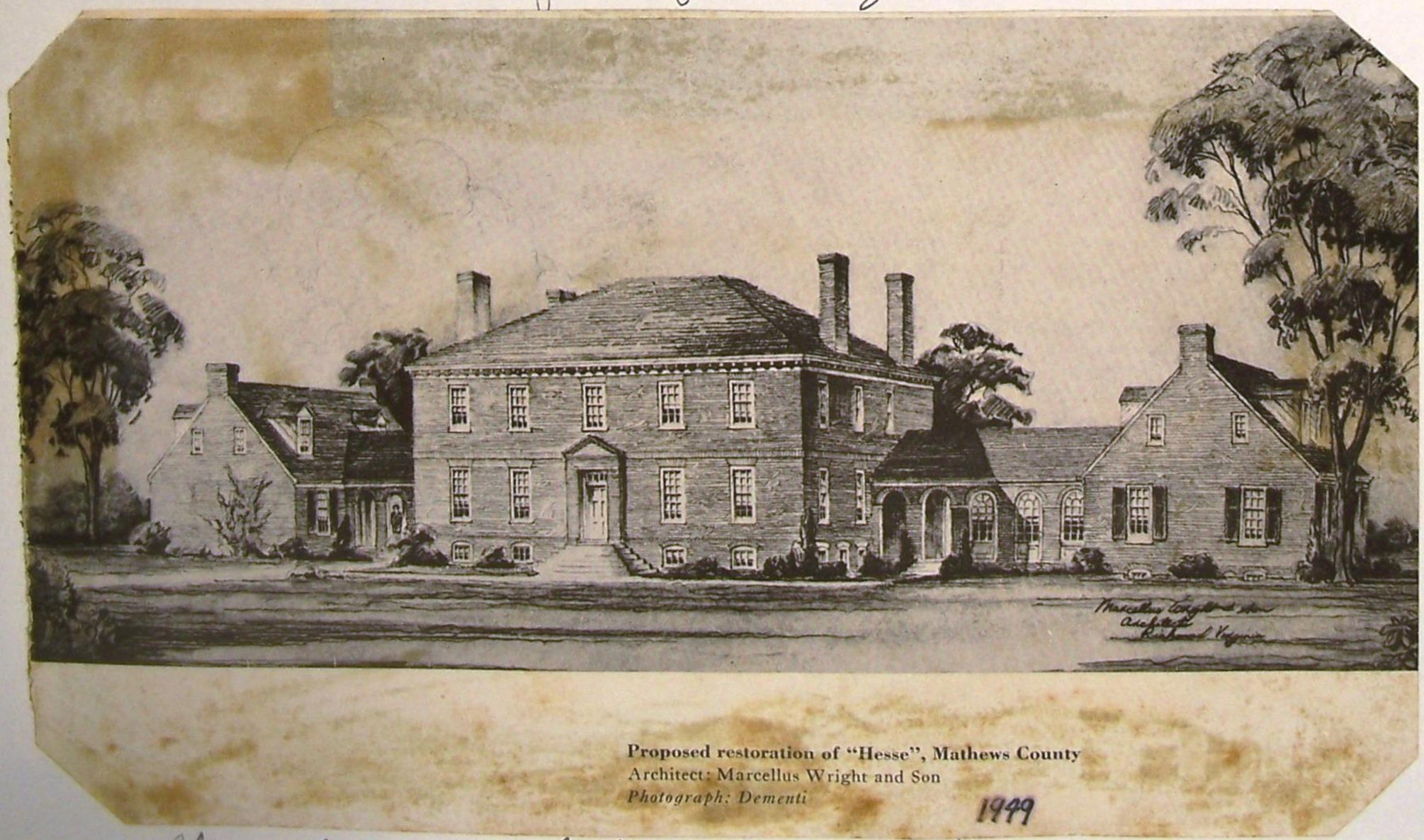
2- Elizabeth - married 1st Ralph Wormeley of "Rosegill"
2nd William Churchill of Middlesex County

3- William - married Anna Lee daughter of Hancock Lee

4- Henry - married Martha Burwell daughter of Maj. Lewis Burwell and Abigail Smith.

Hesse continued —

River facade - photo early 1930's



Proposed restoration of "Hesse", Mathews County
Architect: Marcellus Wright and Son
Photograph: Dementi

1949

This grand plan obviously did not come off!

HESSE IN MATHEWS IS SOLD

Gla-Quipo 19 Nov. 1975

"Hesse", one of the most historic homes in Virginia, has been sold. The new owners of the estate which overlooks the Piankatank River in Mathews County, are Mr. and Mrs. McDonald L. Stephens of New Orleans and "Waverley" on North River in Gloucester County.

"Hesse" has been owned in recent years by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick B. Maxwell of Cobbs Creek.

When Robert ("King") Carter of Corotoman in Northern Neck married for the first time, he sought Judith Armistead, who was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Armistead of "Hesse". Carter was chief of colonial landlords and owned over 300,000 acres of land in Virginia. He served as governor of the State at one time.

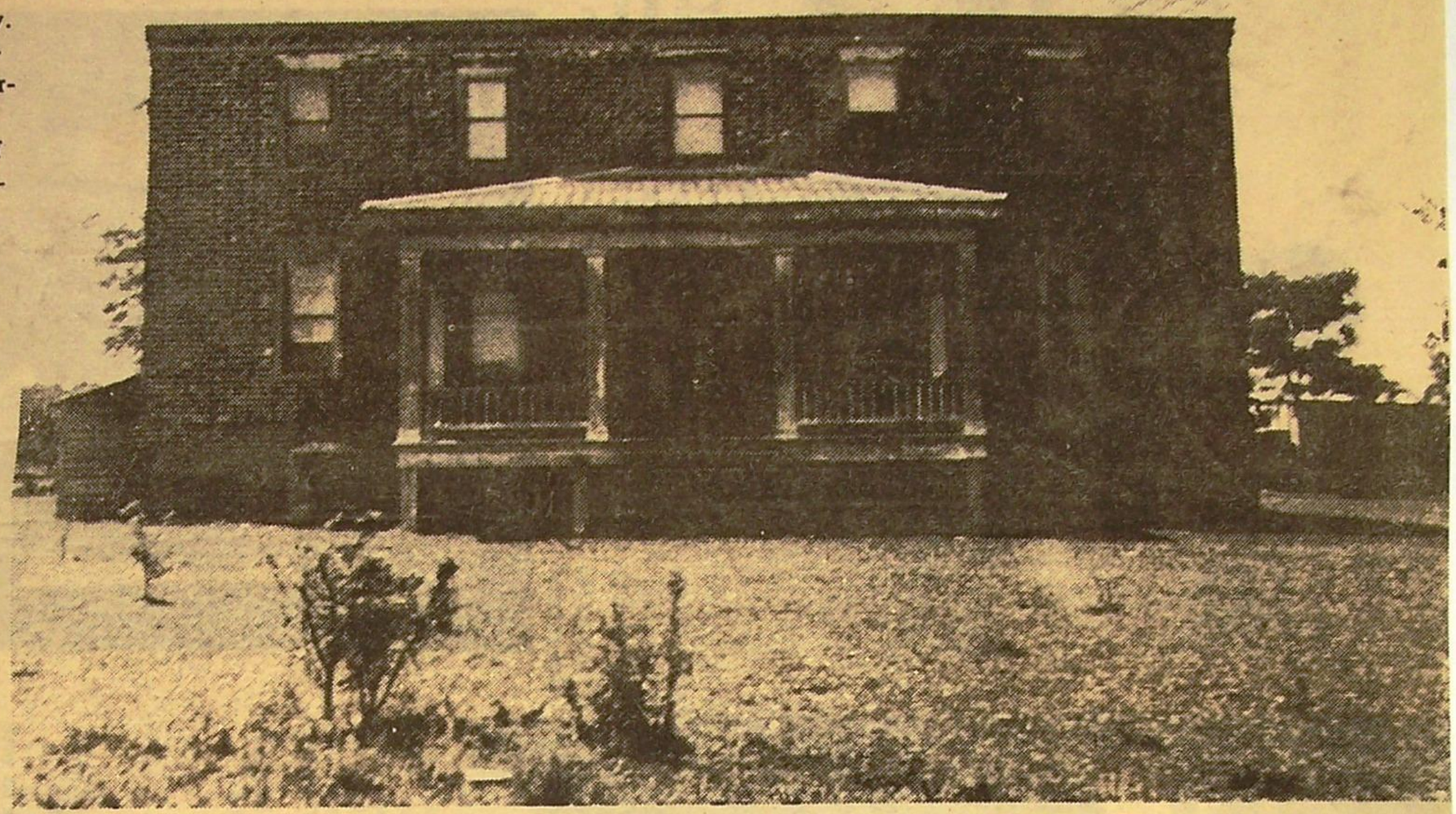
"Hesse" in the middle 1700's contained as high as 3879 acres on the Piankatank River.

Mr. and Mrs. Stephens plan a restoration project on "Hesse' which could take several years. Contractors are the Horsley Brothers (Perry and Donald) of Gloucester.

According to deed filed in the Clerk's Office of Mathews County, 31.8 acres of land sold to the Stephens family cost $400,000.

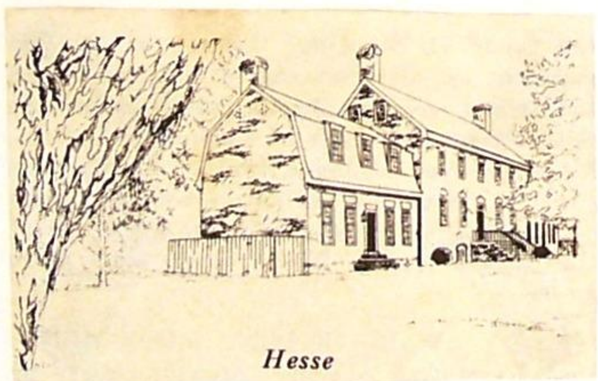
Mr. Stephens has automotive interests in New Orleans and Virginia. His permanent home is in New Orleans but "Waverley" in Gloucester has been a summer residence. The latter will probably be sold when "Hesse" is completed.

Mr. Stephens is a member of the Stephens family who are the owners of "Tides Inn" in Irvington, Virginia.

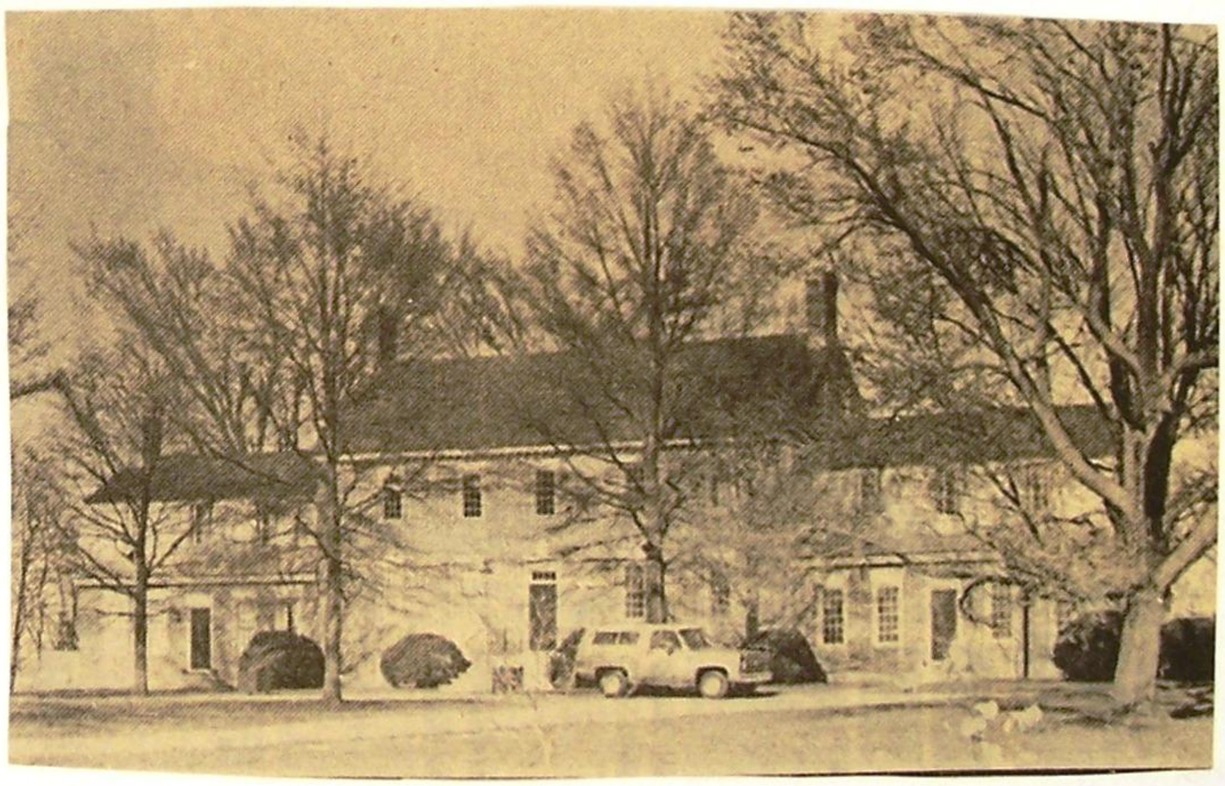


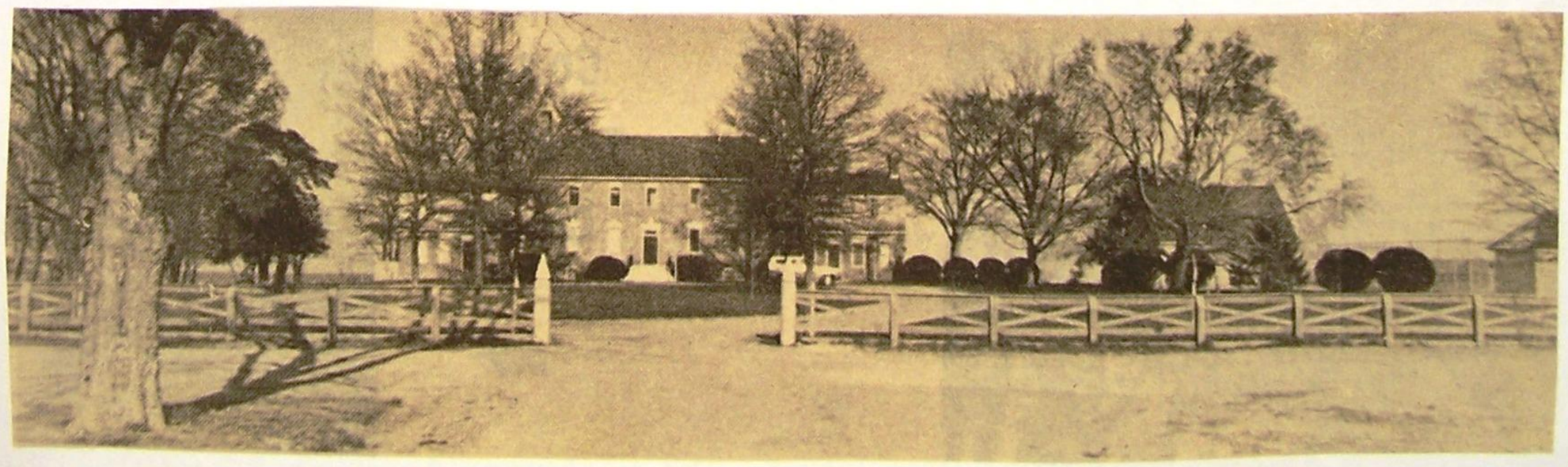
ANCESTRAL SEAT OF ARMISTEAD FAMILY IN VIRGINIA, "HESSE" SHOWN IN 1930

— 1978 —



Hesse





— 1978 —

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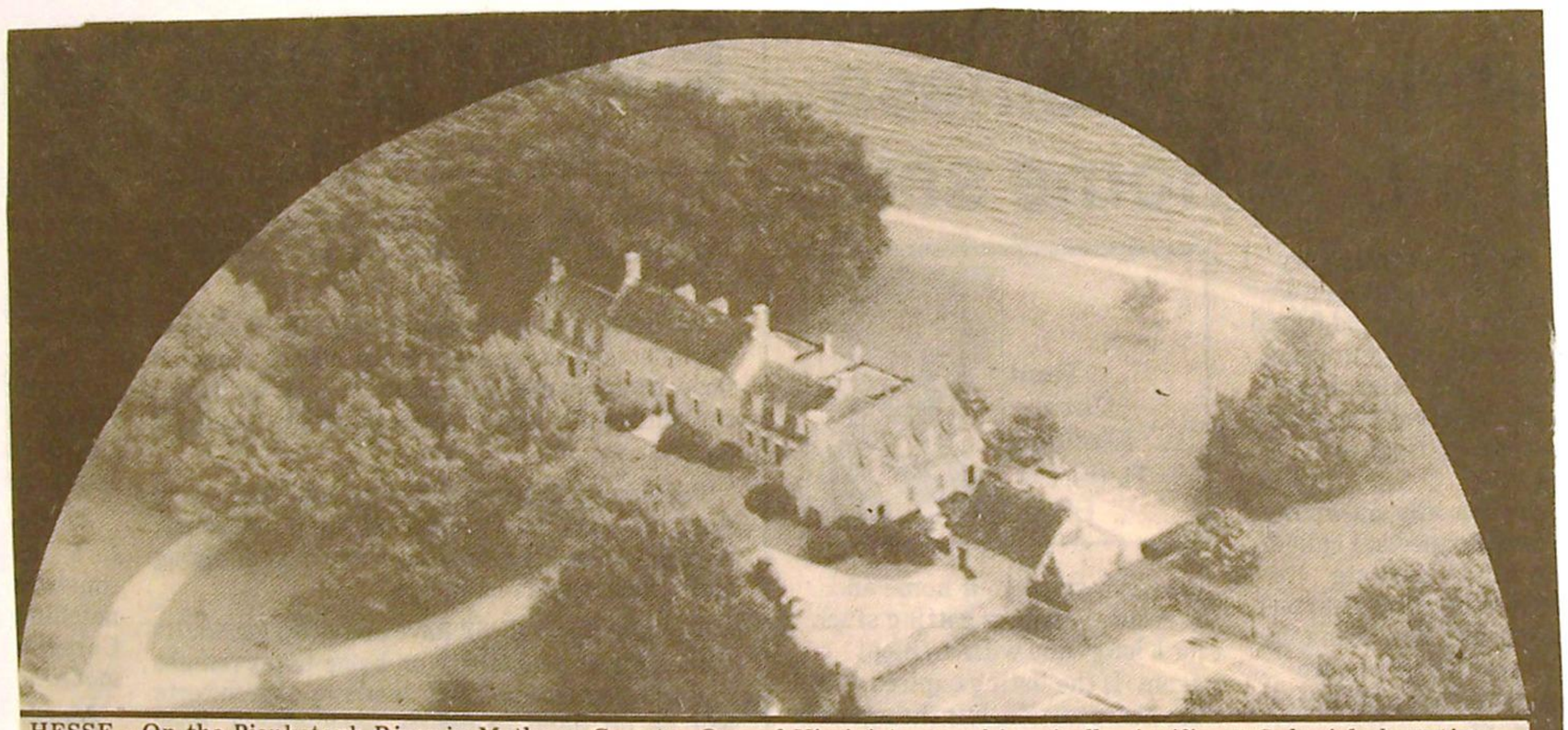
— Entrance to Hesse — 1978

Hesse continued



HESSE - On the Piankatank River in Mathews County. One of Virginia's most historically significant Colonial plantations, dating to the early 17th century. 242 acres. On the national and Virginia historic registers. $5,250,000. May '91

Entrance facade

Providence - on the Piankatank River

Built c. 1750 by the Fritchett family.

When owned by the Howlett family around 1800 it was known as "Howlett Hall."

In 1936 the McComb family restored the house, added the wing and used the original name of Providence.

Now owned by Mrs. Hope Norton who has renamed it once again - calling it "Hopemont."

— Photos April 1966 —

River facade

Detail of River facade

— These two photos 1966 by Milton Waff —

– Photo c. 1900 –

Poplar Grove

on the East River

The land was a grant to Samuel Williams and his son Thomas. The first part of this long house was a small gambrel roofed brick structure erected c. 1750.

Later owned by John Patterson who planted Lombardy Poplars, the symbol of the Whig party and the place has since been known as Poplar Grove.

Maria Patterson married Col. Christopher Tompkins and their daughter Sally Tompkins was born here 9 November 1833. She was a nurse and administrator of the Robertson Hospital in Richmond during the war between the States and was commissioned Captain by Jefferson Davis.

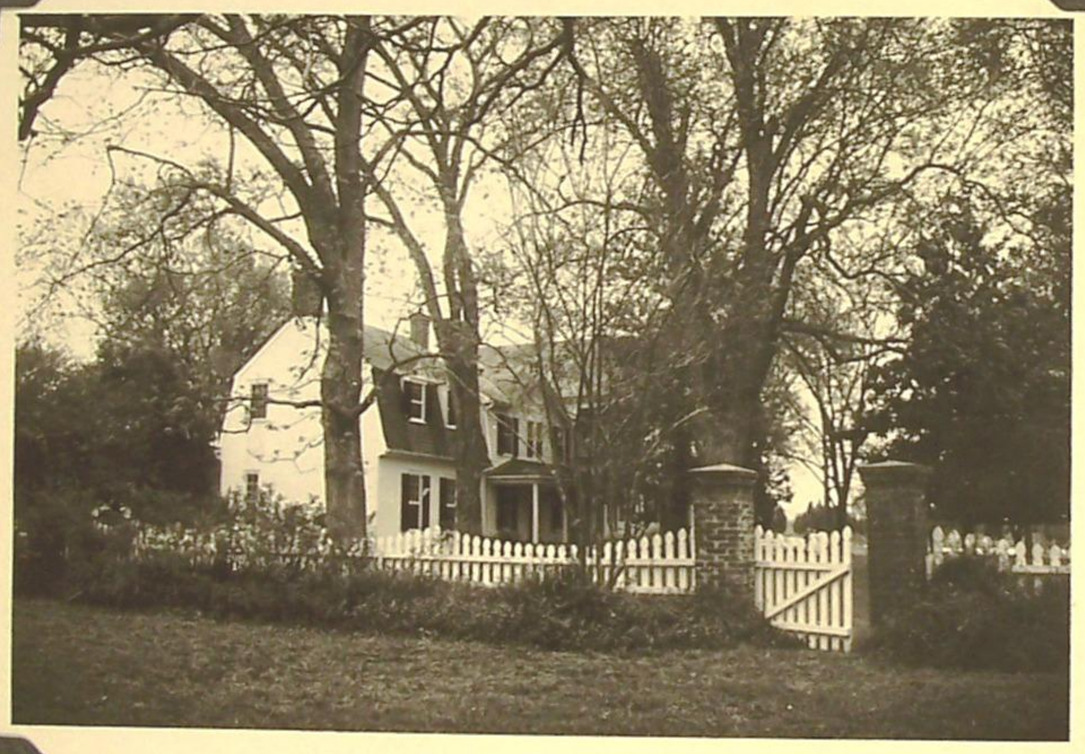
– The c. 1750 portion of the house –
Photo 1930's

Old photo of Poplar Grove when owned by the Garnett family

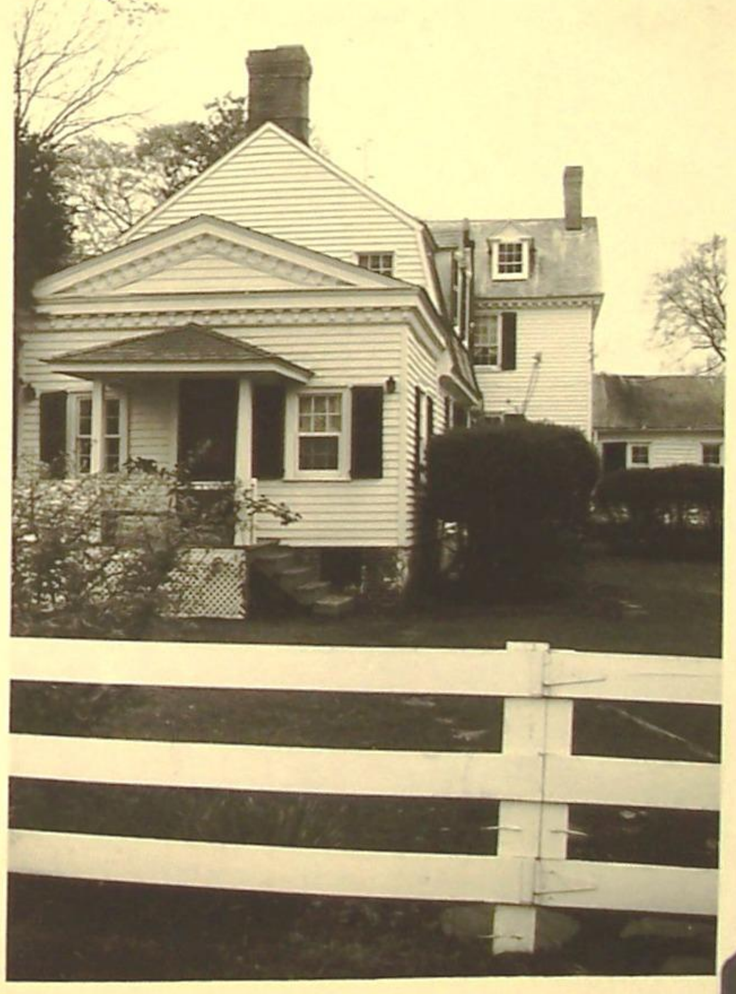
South (River) facade

— view from Southeast —

Poplar Grove - 1966



view from southwest - original portion on the left



East end of the house

Original portion (c.1750) and a domestic outbuilding (dairy)

continued →

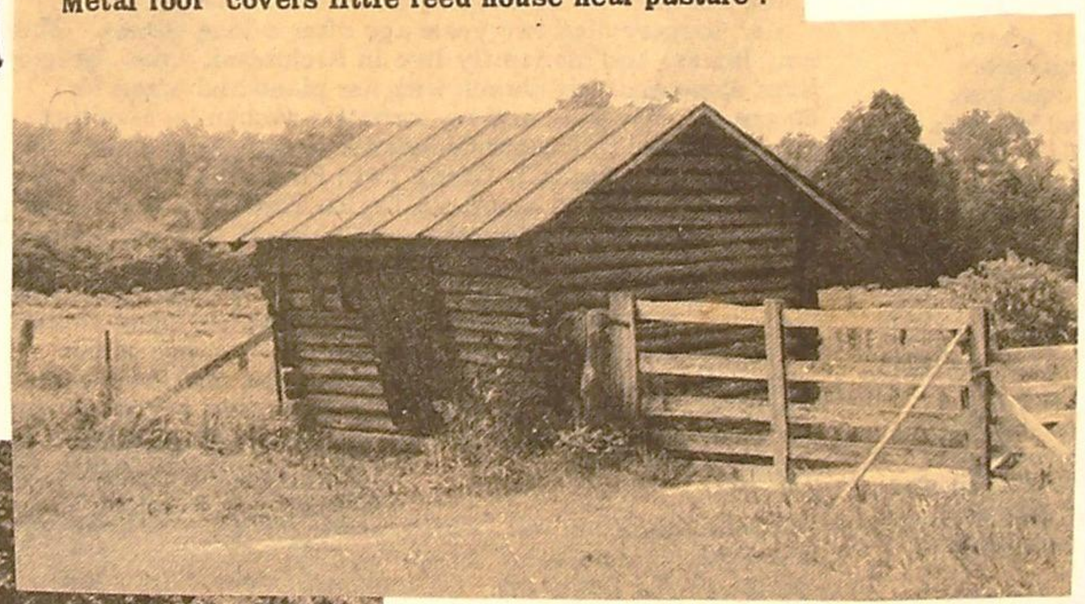
- well house -

Dairy and smoke house

Domestic outbuildings
at Poplar Grove
— Photos 1966 —

LOG BUILDING AT POPLAR GROVE IN MATHEWS

Metal roof covers little feed house near pasture .



KEEPING THEM DOWN ON FARM IN MATHEWS COUNTY------ An old black mule has the company of a pony and her colt, and the ducks and geese who enjoy the water in the pond, on Poplar Grove in Mathews County.

TIDEMILL AT POPLAR GROVE IN MATHEWS COUNTY

GLO-QUIPS - January 9, 1985

TWO VISITS TO TIDEMILL

by WALTER KLOHR of
Bena, Virginia
Gloucester County

The first time I ever saw the mill it was grinding corn. That is, the top millstone was turning merrily. The tide was moving the mill wheel and the grain was being fed through a hole in the massive upper stone. Ike Ward, who owned and operated the mill, gave me a cheery wave of his hand. He caught a sample of the ground meal in his cupped hand and examined it closely.

The mill wheel ground on, activated by the water wheel and the tide outside. The mechanical details of the whole rig fascinated me. I had never seen anything like it before.

This visit was not one solely of curiosity. I was spending the summer with my aunt, Mrs. Rose Ward and we went over to Mathews to visit Ike Ward's wife, whose name was Nettie.

Aunt Rose had a husband, Charlie Ward, who was part owner and captain of the Ruth Decker, a two-masted schooner that was mainly used to haul rough timber from the river-ports to Baltimore. This husband was brother to Ike Ward who had a small schooner which could only carry a fraction as much as the Ruth Decker. Thus, Ike Ward, had two lines of work: the mill and the schooner. I enjoyed that visit very much and was ready for the next visit.

In those days, people visited more than in later years. It was part of a way of life that has truly gone with the wind.

This time, I was disappointed that the mill wasn't turning. The supper stone was raised up and Ike Ward was working on the lower stone.

After a genial wave of his hand, he want back to his work of "picking" the grooves in the lower stone. These grooves held the grain which the revolving top stone ground to the proper coarseness.

This wasn't near as exciting to a ten-year-old, so I went out on the dock where the schooner was moored and watched the minnows among the seagrass.

There are certain features that are necessary to the location of a tide mill. There must be a pond for tidal waters to flow into and out of, and that pond must be close to movable water. There are only a few such locations to be found.

This tide mill deserves to be re-built and kept in repair. It really deserves to be a National Landmark.

The tide Mill as seen from the lawn of Poplar Grove

Photo 1966

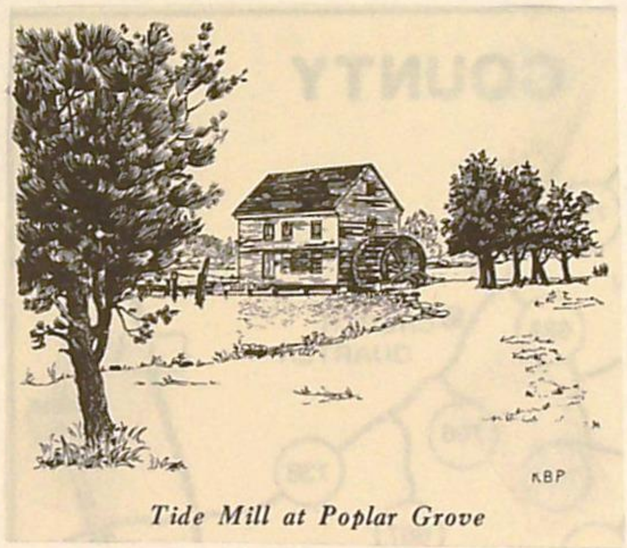
continued →

— old photos before restoration —

The Tide Mill at Poplar Grove

The mill was built prior to the Revolutionary war, burned during the War Between the States and rebuilt. It operated until about 1912. About 32 bushels of meal could be ground on a tide.

At one time there were many such mills but this is one of the very few left in the east.



Tide Mill at Poplar Grove

— Photos 1966 —

THE LONGEST HOME IN MATHEWS COUNTY - This is an old photograph of "Poplar Grove", which overlooks the Mobjack Bay in Mathews County when owned by the Garnett family. Recently, a New York realty corporation purchased the property from the Smith Family for $450,000. Captain Sally Tompkins of the Confederate Army lived here and this is the place where a rare tide mill is located. 1980

Poplar Grove continued

The next owner was Englishman John Patterson, turned American patriot. Patterson enlarged the house, and planted the poplars for which it is named. Patterson's daughter, Maria, married Christopher Tompkins—ship captain, builder of ships and houses, General Assembly representative, merchant and banker. His daughter, the nurse Sally Tompkins and the only woman to be commissioned an officer in the Confederate Army, was born at Poplar Grove in 1833. Among the modern owners of the property was John Lennon and his wife, Yoko Ono. The present owner is renovating the property and reclaiming its charm. The house has been added to many times and is now a rambling structure of five sections, with a central temple-style section with massive columns defining the front portico, an open sitting porch on the west side, and a screened porch on the east side. A spiral staircase rises in the spacious entry hall and there are three additional stairways leading to the second floor. Original fine paneling is in the music room to the left, the oldest portion of the house, and in the drawing room and library to the right. A child's note inscribed on an inside cupboard door also attests to its age. Notable is the detailed crown molding, different in each room. Lovely antiques throughout the house add to its charm. Of special interest are the tall grandfather case clock, secretary desk, settee, small chairs and 17th century English gilt mirror in the entry hall; the Sheraton sideboard and 17th century drop leaf table in the dining room; the antique square grand piano, violin, Chippendale sofa and leaded glass china closet in the music room; and an exceptional 1640's small chest with vine inlay. Several lovely portraits by the owner's sister, the artist Harriette Blume, hang in the parlor and drawing room. Beyond the west wing, a serpentine brick wall provides a backdrop for a beautiful perennial garden. The poplars have been replaced by magnificent oaks and magnolias which dot the sweeping lawn extending to the water's edge. To the rear of the house are several original dependencies. The house and mill are Virginia and National Historic Landmarks. Ms. Bernadine Teague, owner.

Lennon Group Gives Estate To Charity

10-27-83

CHURCH VIEW (AP) — An organization founded by slain musician John Lennon has donated the 18th century Poplar Grove estate in Mathews County to a Middlesex County boys' home.

The Spirit Foundation, a charitable organization founded by the former Beatle and his widow, Yoko Ono, gave the estate to the New Beginnings Boys' Home here.

The home, which has almost closed several times because of a lack of money, will sell the estate to create an endowment fund, said Arthur R. Bracke, the home's executive director.

The boys' home's corporate name is the New Beginnings Therapeutic Foster Homes Inc. It is a non-profit organization that provides services for 13 boys, age 7 to 17, who are mildly to moderately emotionally disturbed.

Bracke said he was notified Tuesday about the gift by the New York City law firm of Kimmelman, Sexter and Sobel, retained by the foundation.

"Initially I was astonished. My heart started to pound. I just couldn't believe it was true," he said.

Poplar Grove, which sits on 22.5 acres overlooking the East River, is valued at about $530,000. About $200,000 is owed on the mortgage.

After the estate is sold, the boy's home will use the interest from the balance towards its annual operating budget.

"This gift makes the difference between us living and dying," Bracke said. "The money will go towards our operating budget and capital improvements. About all that will change is that we will be able to sleep at night."

The boys' home operated in Newport News from 1975 to 1979, when it moved to a 23-room plantation home here.

As one of the more prominent landmarks in Mathews, Poplar Grove was built by Samuel Williams of Northampton County in 1750. Poplar Grove was bought by the Lennons in 1980 for $450,000.

The foundation also donated a second Mathews estate, Auburn, with proceeds going to Strawberryfields Orphanage in Liverpool.

Entrance facade Photo by Milton Waff

Garden facade

Auburn ~ Mathews County
Built c. 1818 by Dr. Henry Wythe Tabb, son of Philip Tabb of "Toddsbury". Dr. Tabb's brothers, Philip Edward Tabb lived at "Waverley" and John Tabb lived at "White Marsh" ~ all in Gloucester County.

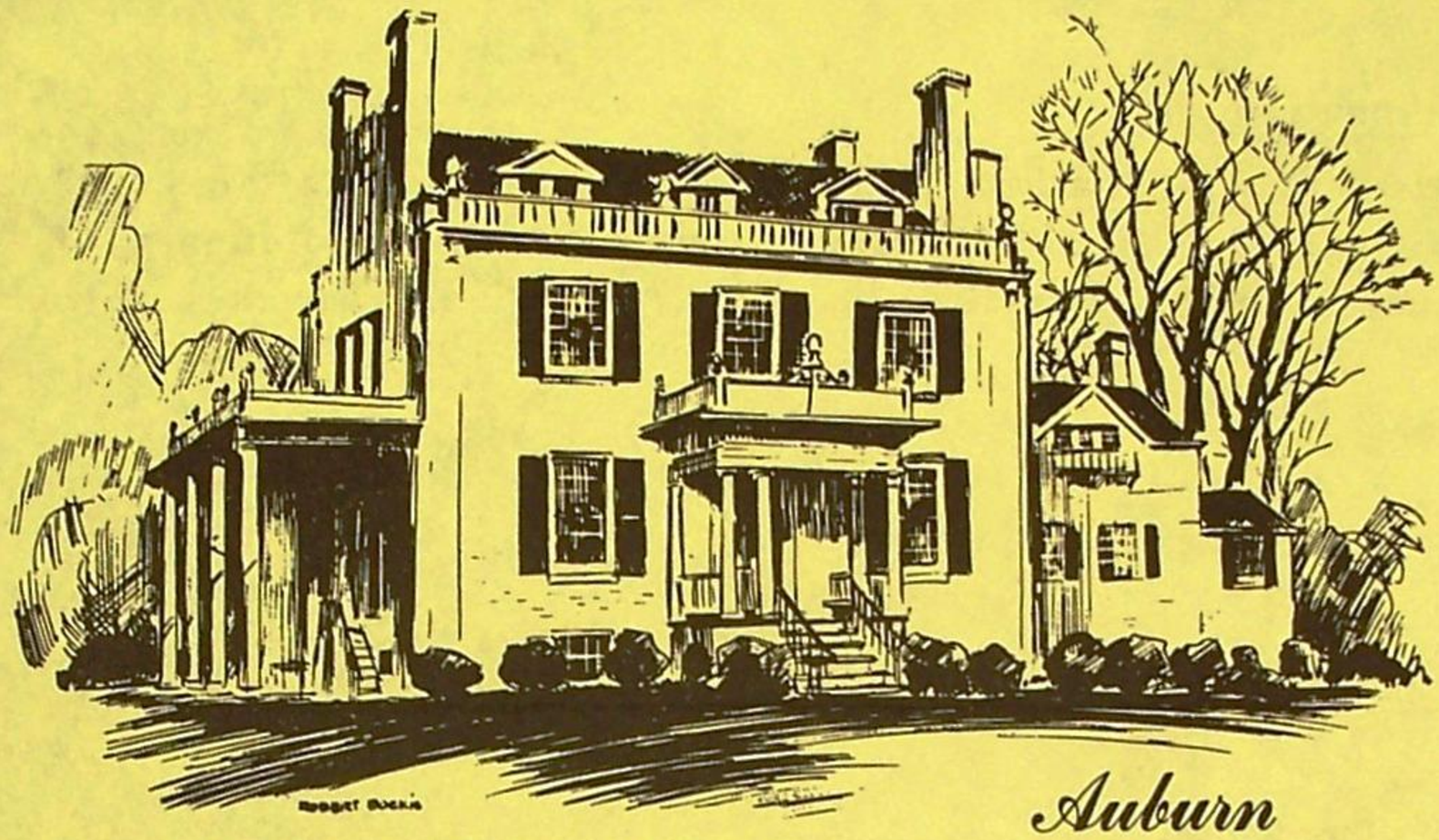
— Photos April 1966 —

House and dependancy

Interior -

The Great pecan tree and domestic outbuildings
Photo by Waff

Auction at Auburn



Auburn

Take Route 14 East 8.6 Miles from Gloucester Courthouse
to State Road 620; or 0.2 of a Mile West of North Post Office
and Follow the Auction Signs to Auburn.

Saturday, May 13th, 1978

10:00 A. M.

(RAIN DATE — MAY 20th)

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Served In The Garden

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JERRY BALLENTYNE: auctioneer

Drawing For The 1972 Pontiac Lemans Will Be Held At Noon

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7-31-81

Lennon Lawsuit Settled

YORKTOWN (AP) — A Circuit Court judge has ruled in favor of a real estate company formed by John Lennon in a dispute with a lawyer who tried to foreclose on a Mathews County mansion bought by Lennon a week before he was killed.

Judge G. Duane Holloway ruled that attorney Bolling R. Powell Jr. merited only $1,514 in fees, far less than the $23,000 bill Powell wanted for collecting two past due monthly payments.

The dispute between Powell and Pentacles Realty Corp., the New York company owned by Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono, began seven days after the former Beatle was shot to death in New York.

Records filed in Mathews County show that Auburn, a historic 105-acre estate, was purchased by Pentacles Dec. 2 for $770,000.

Under the contract, Pentacles was to pay monthly installments of $2,380 for a $154,000 deed of trust assumed from the former owners plus accrued interest.

The first payment was due Dec. 15, seven days after Lennon's death but was not received until Jan. 2 after correspondence between Powell and David Warmflash, president of Pentacles.

When the second payment did not arrive, Powell called in the entire note of $151,814 and $1,951 in interest.

Warmflash instead sent two monthly payments, saying the company would remain 30 days ahead of its obligations.

When Powell threatened to foreclose and sell the property, Warmflash paid the note and interest but balked at the $23,064 in attorney's fees.

After local lawyers testified to normal fees charged in such matters, the judge ruled in favor of Pentacles.

That makes Auburn the second estate in Mathews County owned by Lennon interests.

"AUBURN" FOR SALE

9/22/82

Yoko Ono, wife of the famed Beatles member, John Lennon, is selling "Auburn", historic estate on North River in Mathews County.

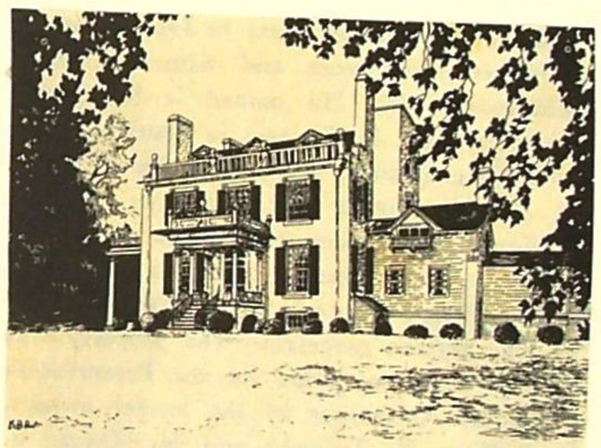
John Lennon's Pentacles Realty, Inc., of New York, purchased the 104.53-acre estate from Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas W. Craw for $770,000 in December of 1980. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Lennon was shot and killed near his apartment in New York City.

Previews, Inc., realty company, is advertising the property for sale at $1,500,000 for 120-acre grounds with stables, barns, guest cottage and 10-foot deep mooring on the North River.

Jeff Stidham of Previews' Washington, D. C. office is agent.

"Poplar Grove", also in Mathews County, is owned by Mrs. John Lennon.

"AUBURN" WAS OLD TABB HOME



Auburn

Mathews County Courthouse
The T-shaped building was built c. 1830 replacing an earlier one erected soon after the County was created.

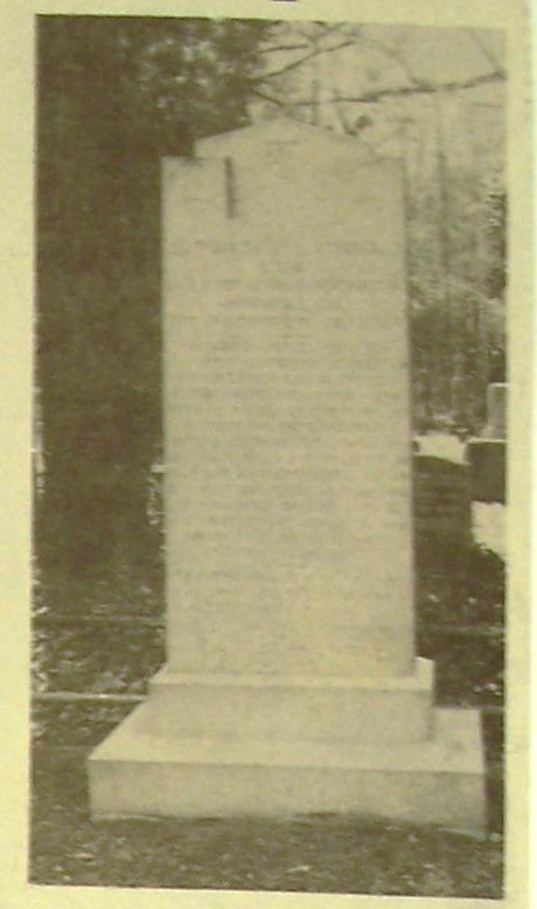
Illustrations from Glo-Quips 20 April 1988

"TOMPKINS COTTAGE"

This is the oldest frame dwelling at Mathews. It is located just south of Court Green. The name is derived from the fact it was owned about 1820 by Christopher Tompkins, father of Polly Tompkins. The western section is thought to have been added c. 1840.

It is presently leased to the Mathews County Historical Society

Monument to Capt. Sally Tompkins



1994 **CHRIST CHURCH IN MATHEWS & TOMPKINS MONUMENT**

The following appeared in the July 1925 issue of Confederate Veteran:

An interesting occasion was the dedication of the monument to Capt. Sally Tompkins on June 3, 1925, in the cemetery of Christ Church at Mathews, Va. This monument is a tribute from the United Confederate Veterans, Daughters, and Sons of the Confederacy, in appreciation of the great work she did in behalf of the sick and wounded Confederate soldiers in the Robertson Hospital at Richmond, Va.

The exercises were as follows:

Invocation, Rev. William Byrd Lee.

Welcome, Mr. George Edward Tabb Lane.

Response and introduction of the speaker by Gen. Edgar Taylor, Chairman, Monument Committee.

Address, Mr. John B. Lightfoot.

Music.

Benediction, Rev. Giles B. Cooke.

The veil was drawn from the monument by little John Warren Cooke, son of Rev. Giles B. Cooke, after the address by Mr. Lightfoot. The monument is of white Virginia granite, eight feet high, with inscription as follows:

Captain Sally L. Tompkins
C.S.A.
Born at Poplar Grove, Mathews Co., Va.
November 9, 1833
Died at Richmond, Va., July 25, 1916

In grateful appreciation of her services in maintaining the Robertson Hospital at Richmond, Va., from 1861 to 1865, where 1,300 soldiers were tenderly cared for, this memorial is erected by the Confederate veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy. President Jefferson Davis gave her a commission as Captain of Cavalry, unassigned, in order that, because of its valuable work in restoring so many men to the army, this hospital should be under government supervision.

I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat,
I was thirsty and ye gave me drink,
I was sick and ye visited me.

(Matthew 25.)

Sally L. Tompkins was born at Poplar Grove, Mathews County, Va., on November 9, 1833, the daughter of Col. Christopher and Maria Patterson Tompkins. At the outbreak of the War between the States, she was possessed of what in that day was a fortune, which she freely gave in the service of the Confederate cause.

In July, 1861, immediately after the first battle of Manassas, she opened a hospital in the house at Third and Main Streets in Richmond, and which was afterwards known as the Robertson Hospital, in honor of Judge Robertson, who gave his house for the purpose.

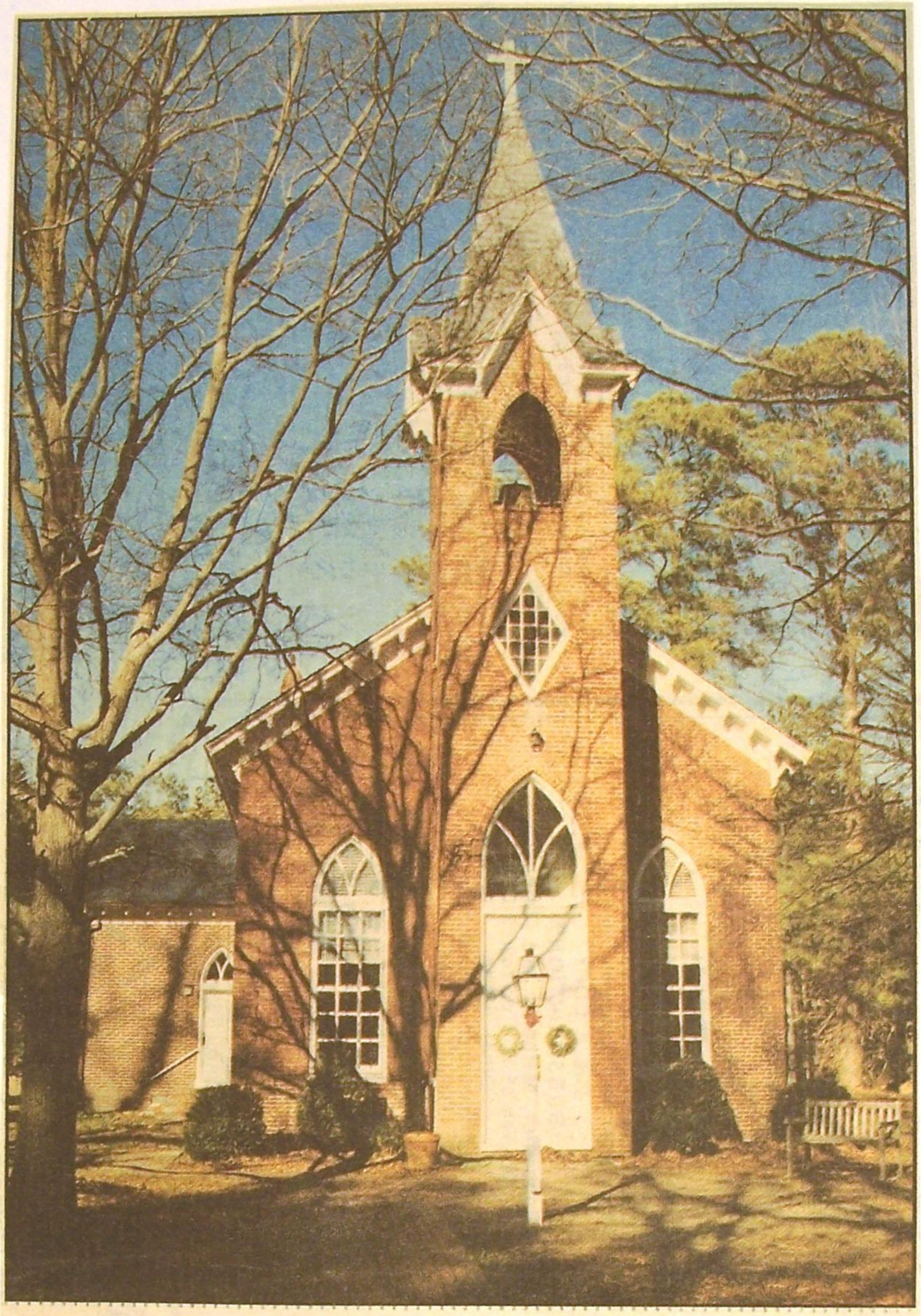
When the Confederate government decided that all private hospitals should be closed, to avoid expense and to conserve food and other materials under proper supervision, the record of the Robertson Hospital was such that President Davis ordered the hospital to be under the control and direction of a government official, and that officer was to be Miss Tompkins. Accordingly she was commissioned captain in the Confederate army on September 9, 1861; she accepted the office, but stipulated that she should not draw the pay.

She conducted the hospital until June 1865, and cared for over 1,300 soldiers. In this hospital the mortality rate was lower than in any other, and the men were steadily returned to service when able to go. Many a soldier boy owed his recovery to her devoted care and attention, and the monument which has been placed over her grave is a testimonial of appreciation for her devotion to the Confederate soldier.

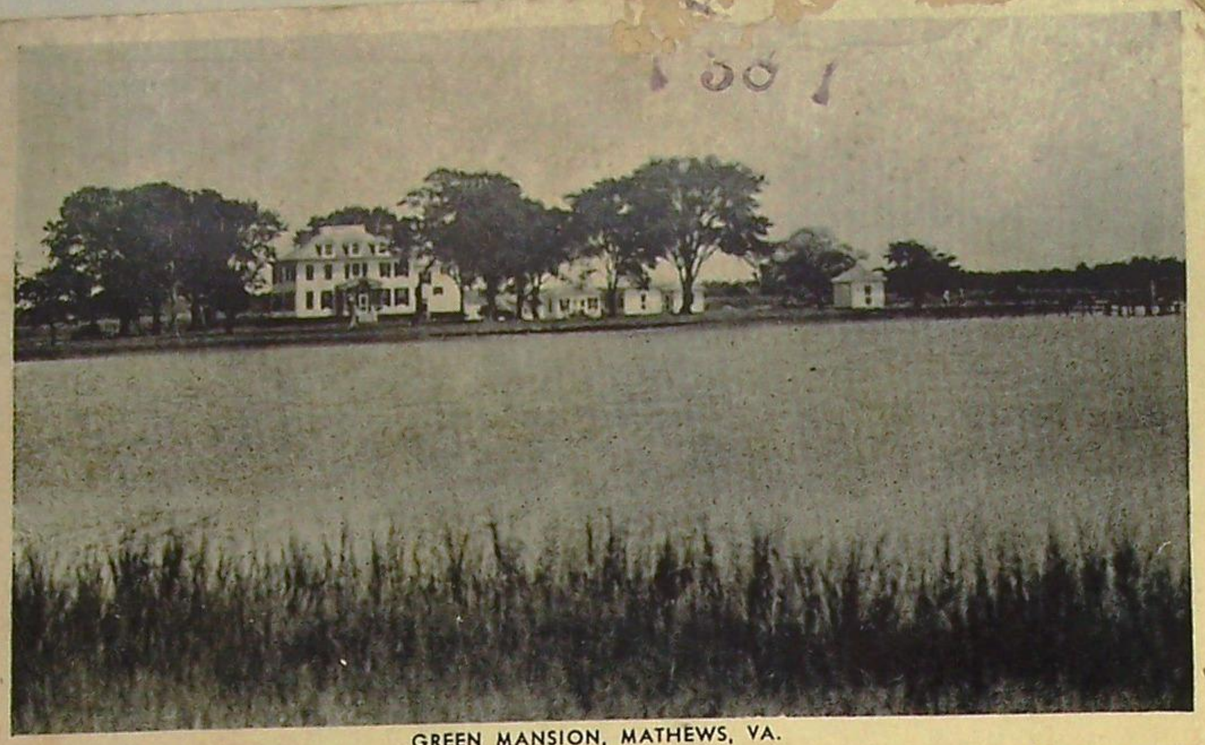
Captain Tompkins died at the Confederate Woman's Home in Richmond in 1916.

Christ Episcopal Church
Built 1841
Mathews County

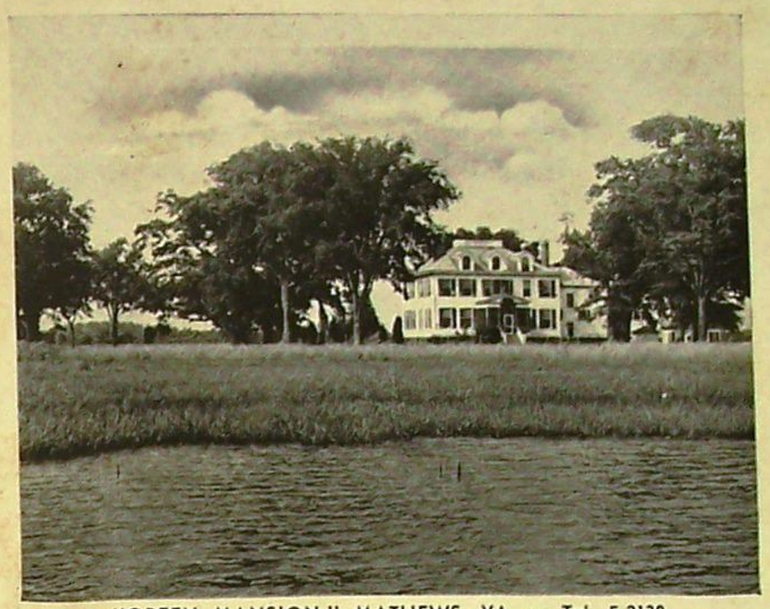
continued →



CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BUILT IN 1841, MATHEWS COUNTY, VIRGINIA



GREEN MANSION, MATHEWS, VA.



"GREEN MANSION," MATHEWS, VA. — Tel. 5-2130

Green Mansion - near North on the North River Mathews County

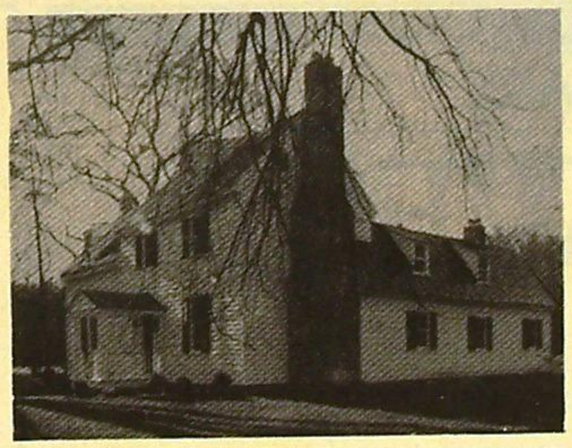
Illustrations c. 1944 - operated at that time as a tourist home (A.K.A. Bed and Breakfast) by Mrs Mabel F. Billups.

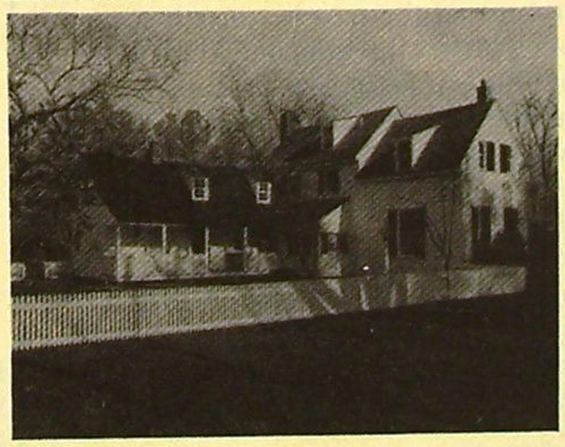
OLD FOLLY FARM

c. 1773

A striking specimen of 18th century Tidewater architecture. Meticulously restored. Dependencies include: stable, two storage buildings, gazebo and pumphouse.

12.8 acres, fenced pasture, completely private. Located near the Chesapeake Bay at Mathews Court House. Brochure. $199,000.





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"NEW BOTTLE" GLOUCESTER COUNTY, VIRGINIA

This photo is of a house believed to be "New Bottle"*, the home of Captain Robert Porteus. If this is the house then it would be of great age as Captain Porteus returned to England about 1727. He lived at York while in England and his son, Beilby, who was born in 1731 later became Bishop of London.

The only way to prove if this is indeed "New Bottle"* would be to find the painting of the house that is known to have been in Bishop Porteus's possession. It was painted in America and when Captain Robert Porteus went back to England he took it with him to remember his Virginia home by.

Colonial Williamsburg has begun excavations near the building and Chief Archaeologist, Ivor Noël-Hume took ~~the~~ this photo in an effort to determine the identity of the house or prove it to be "New Bottle"*.

Edward Porteus was the founder of the family. He came from England and in 1693 he was recommended for appointment to the Council. He founded the estate of "New Bottle" near Clay Bank on the York river. He married a widow Lee of Petsworth Parish and it was their son, Captain Robert Porteus, who returned to England and fathered 19 children. — Two wives

In the yard of "Violet Bank" is a partially engraved tombstone with the name Edward Porteus on it. This, however, is not his grave. No one knows where he was buried. It is thought that the stone was purchased in England, partially engraved there, and shipped to Virginia. The nearest port on the York being Poropotank ("Violet Bank" today) the stone was put ashore there but for some reason never moved to "New Bottle".

The home of Edward Porteus - inherited by his son Robert who married, 1st Mildred Smith of "Preston" and 2nd Elizabeth Jennings of "Rippon Hall", directly across the York River from New Bottle.

---

* - not "New Bottle" but "Concord", Jones and Anderson home "New Bottle" disappeared before 1700 - was near Clay Bank on York River.

Back Cover

BRIGGS
28
RAMBLES
THRU
VA v. 2

Rambles Through Virginia

Vol. 2

Compiled by Feral Briggs
from duplicates and remnants of
his collection of Virginia Architectural
photographs and related material. The
collection itself was deposited with
the Department of Historical Resources
in Richmond 1999-2000 or with
the Historical Societies of Albemarle
and Orange Counties in 2001.

Ramblers Through Virginia
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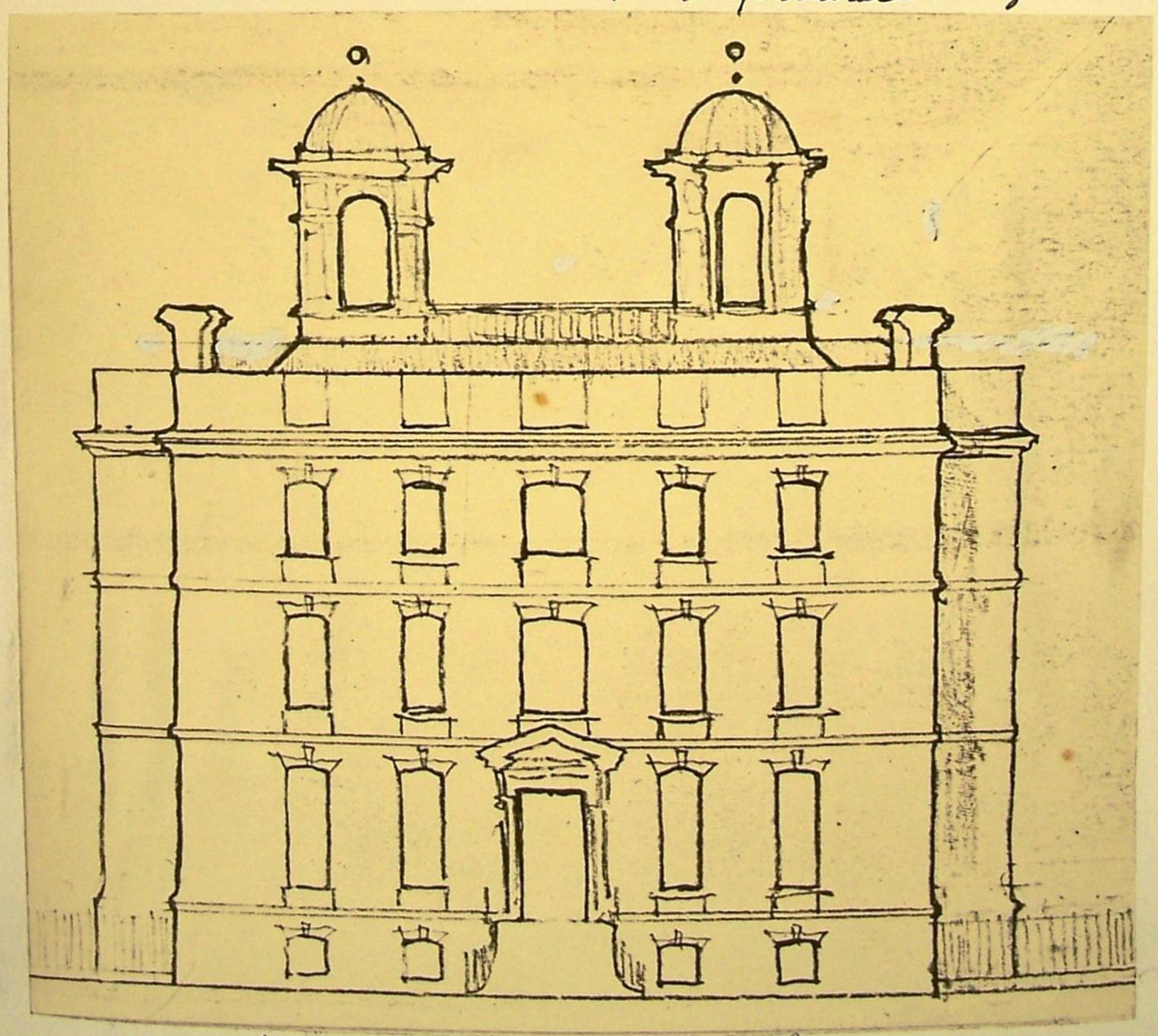
- North elevation of Rosewell as planned -

Rosewell – North bank of the York River on Carter's Creek, Gloucester County

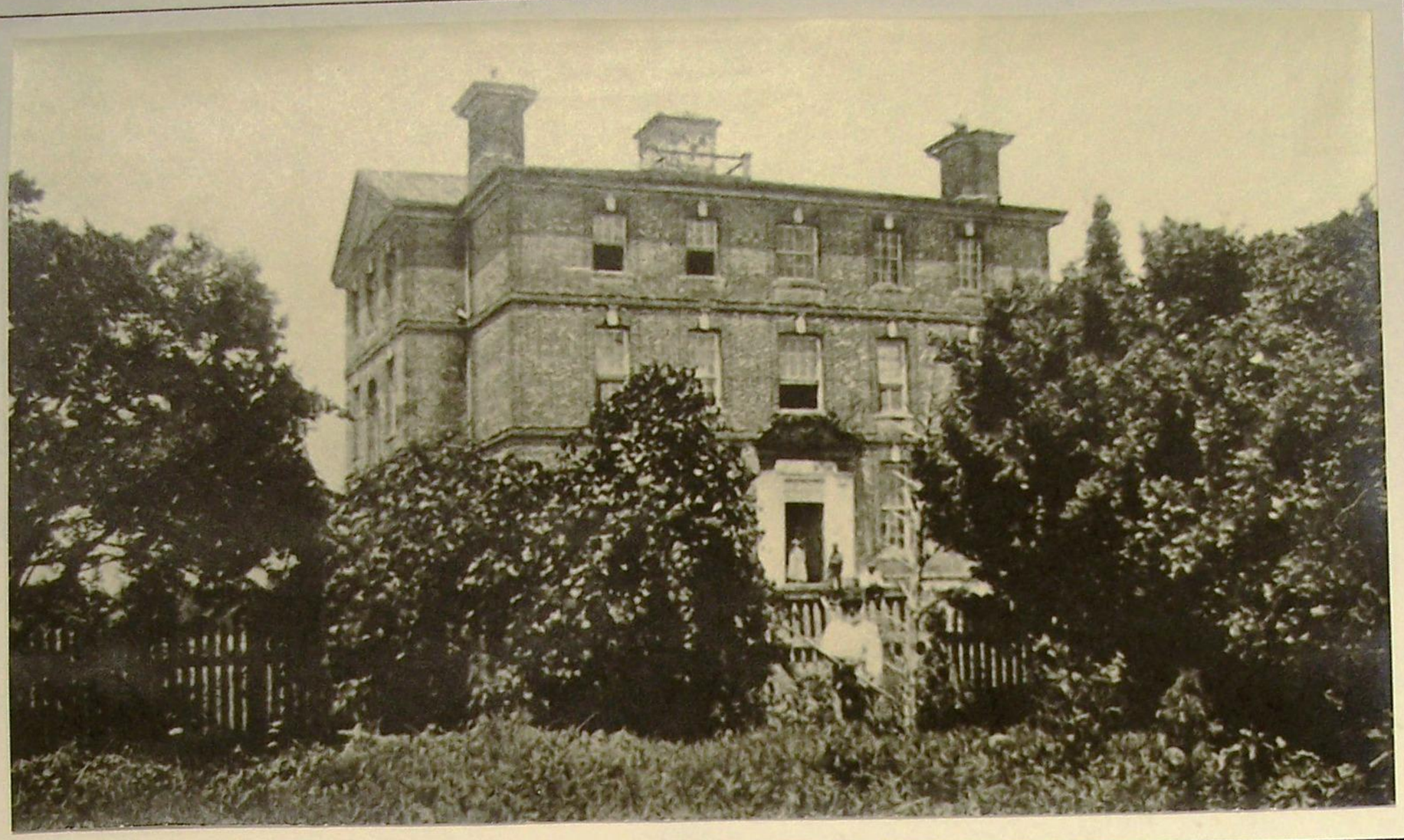
This, the finest Georgian mansion erected in Colonial Virginia, was begun by Mann Page soon after an earlier dwelling of frame had burned in 1729. Page died in 1730 and his son Mann Page II completed the house in the late 1730's. It remained in the Page family for three generations.

On 24 March 1916 Rosewell was destroyed by fire.

View from the north prior to 1900 – photo probably by Huestis P. Cook. Remains of the northwestern forecourt building is seen on the right. The structure is marred by the unfortunate changes to the roof in the mid-19th Century.



- Sketch of the north façade -



South façade seen from the garden – photo c. 1900 or before
Probably by Cook

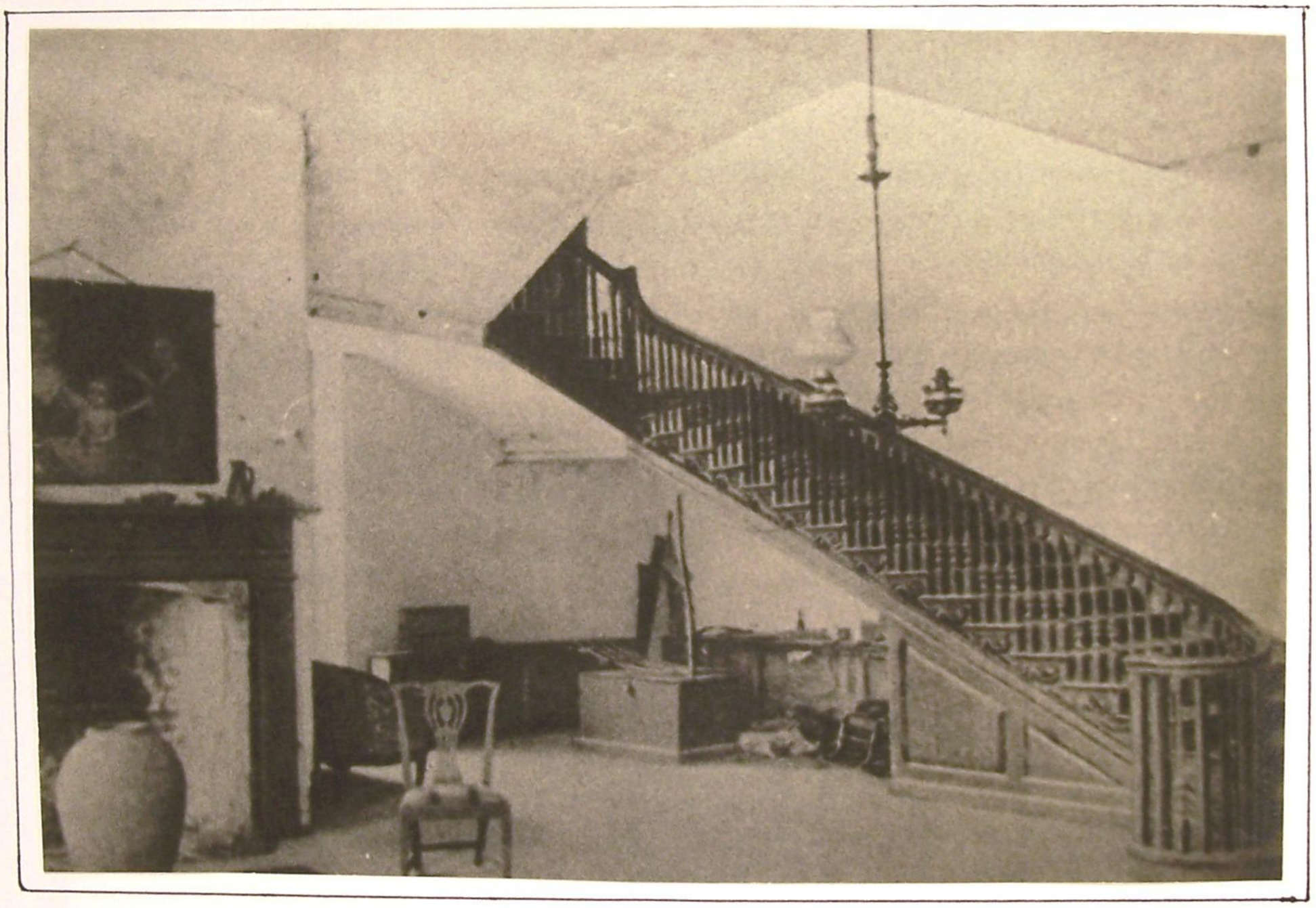
Rosewell continued

View from southeast – the Great Staircase window is seen in the east pavilion – photo by Wallace c. 1910

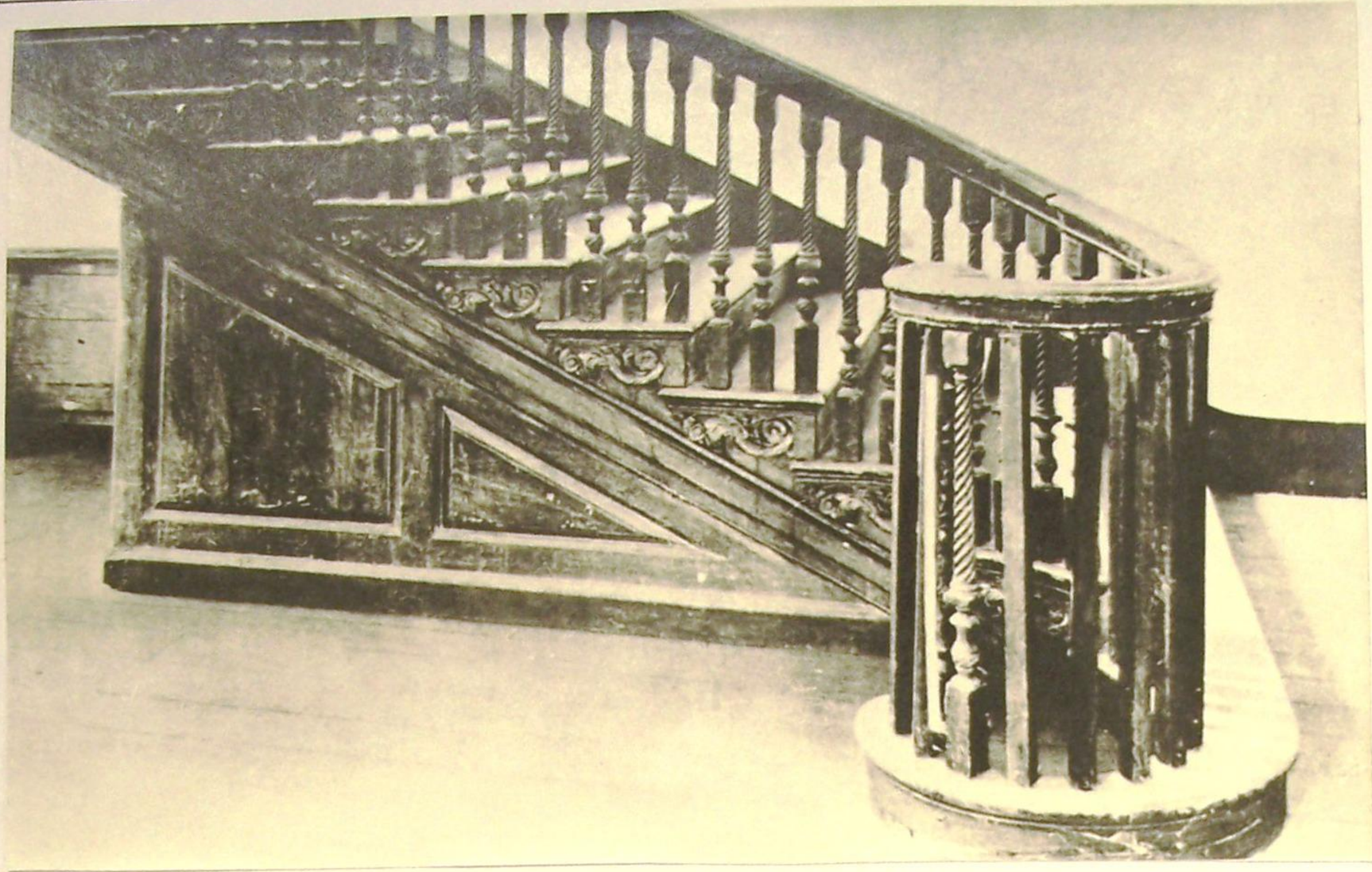
- north façade -

- View from southeast -

-- photos c. 1912 -

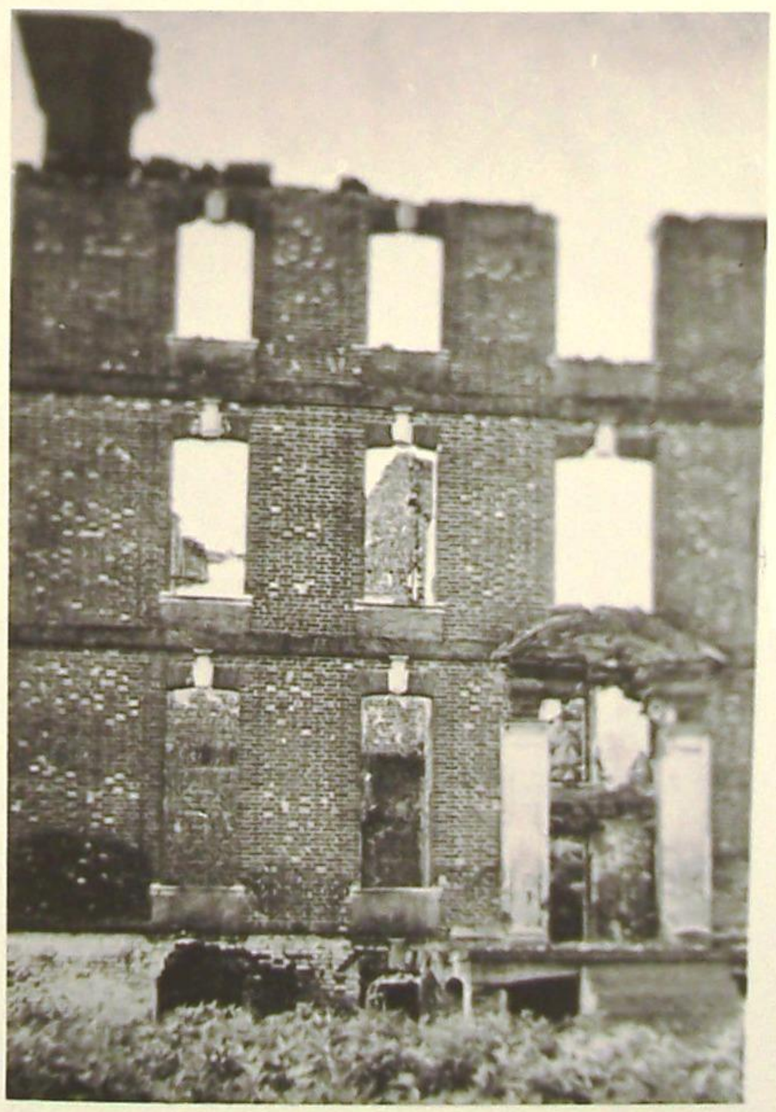


Undoubtedly the most significant extant interior feature was the grand staircase up which 8 people could walk abreast. The interior appears bleak because the fine Georgian paneling and marble chimney piece had been removed in the mid-19th century. The hall had been floored in black & white marble squares, also removed.



Detail of Rosewell's staircase. The most elaborate motif was the fascia board of the landing and 2nd floor gallery. It was carved with scrolled leafage, flowers, and rosettes similar to that still extant at "Tuckahoe" in Goochland County. There is conjecture they are the product of the same craftsman (see page 39).

- View from the north -



- Detail of the south façade -

The ruins following the 1916 fire. All the walls remained until 17 November 1943 when an explosion across the York River at the Naval Mine Depot toppled a large section of the south wall. Since then more portions of the unstable ruins have collapsed.

– Two views of the west end –

Rosewell Ruins continued

Detail of Portland stone bertil and rubbed brick of a window

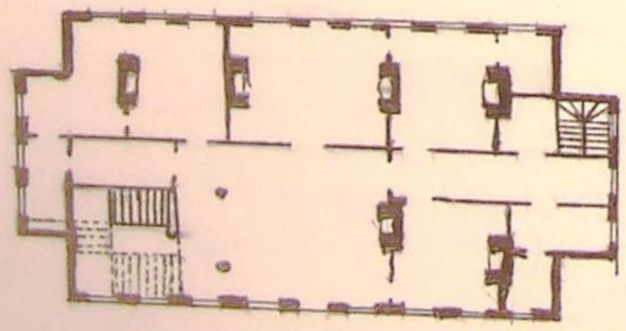
The Page Cemetery east of the mansion. Often vandalized the tombs were moved to Abingdon Churchyard in 1969

Remnants of the south doorway

Aerial view from the southwest ~ photo by Walter Becknell - 1958

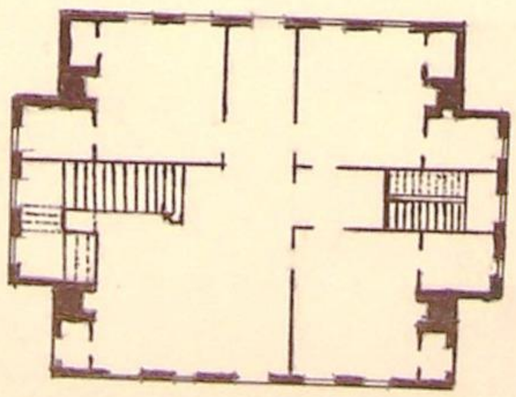
— Rosewell continued —

Thomas T. Waterman noted a precedent for the design of Rosewell in Cound Hall in Shropshire, England. Both the façades and plans are similar tho Cound Hall is much larger. Both structures have large side pavilions (see below).



- Cound Hall -

- not to scale -



- Rosewell -

Guy Friddell visits "Rosewell"

From WE BEGAN AT JAMESTOWN
by Guy Friddell

You hear of Rosewell as Marco Polo used to get word of China -- vaguely, as a wondrous place, but difficult to find -- until one day Marco Polo said, pshaw, he'd go there and learn the truth of it himself. He had nothing to go on, beyond rumors; we had a map supplied by a young archaeologist, D ck Gresham.

Once it was a Xanadu so splendid as to rival and even exceed the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg.' Now Rosewell is the most specular ruin in the United States and should be saved as just that, in rugged contrast to restored Williamsburg. (A Restoration official once told me that ever so often he visited Rosewell to revel in the unregenerate dilapidation.)

The State of Virginia should buy the property and post a guard to keep as much as a single brick from being moved. (As we drove up, a couple was closing a car trunk on a load of loaf-sized bricks for, I guess, a patio. There, just there, where you've got your loafered foot, that fat, odd-sized brick is from Rosewell, once the most magnificent estate in America.)

The house rose three stories, but counting the English basement and the full, deck-on-hip roof, it came to five in height. A cupola at each end added, a sixth story from which the Pages commanded a view of the York River, and beyond, perhaps to the Governor's Palace.

Mann Page began building it, and nine years later died and left the growing house, and debt, to Mann Page II, who sold 27,000 acres and completed the structure. The next Page, John, not only managed to live in the mansion but became Governor of Virginia and a friend of Thomas Jefferson. He may have seen an early draft of the Declaration of Independence. He died in 1808, his widow in 1838, and the great house fell in a speculator's hands. Thomas Booth bought Rosewell for $12,000, stripped the lead roof, marble tiles, wood panelings and the bricks in the walls around the family graves, peddled the materials for $25,000, and sold the shard of a house for $22,000 to the Deans of Gloucester. They tried to repair Rosewell, as task made all the more difficult by the Civil War that blasted the plantation economy. In 1916 fire burned away all but the structure's huge skeleton, which mouldered in the brush.

The road to Xanadu has many twists--and I've misplaced the map -- so that all I remember is the end, bumping along a lane through a cornfield, thinking we must have made a wrong turn because no house, not even a shed, was in sight, when the track swung into a deep grove, and there, rising six stories, framed in valuted oaks, was the great ruin. It was like coming in the midst of a peaceful pasture of cows and sheep upon the broken bulk of a dying mammoth.

The boys jumped from the car and ran up a mound to the doorway and into the snaggled canyon of brick, Gin right at their heels, when suddenly the youngest yelled, "Snake!" -- at which she turned and came flying back to me.

We joined them within the yawning socket and looked down into deep trenches where the basement had been and up at sections of towering walls, with one corner topping the highest tree, and windows taller than today's ordinary house, Vines pulled at the masonry, and a tree, waist-thick, grew in the center of the ruins. Fireplaces cleft the cliff of a wall. Gazing at one across the way, I saw a five-foot black snake stretched across the hearth, unseen in full view, until that moment, like Poe's purloined letter. Gin ran again, and I, moving by inches, while the boys rolled around in mirth, touched the snake with a stick, and found it stiff as iron from whatever cold fissure it had crawled. We left it to sun in the ruins of the great house.

"One thing the ruin forces you to do," said Gin. "It makes you face the fact some things must pass. To fix it up would be almost vulgar."

EDITOR'S NOTE: According to the Gloucester County Land Books Thomas Booth bought "Rosewell" from the Page famity in 1838. In 1849 he sold it to John Catlett and in 1855 Catlett sold "Rosewell" to the Deans family.

— photo by William Seiger —

Warlfield ~ Gloucester County

Built by the Buckner family. There was a marble date plate in the end wall of the earliest portion "B" "1732" ~ it was stolen about 1933. John Buckner, a member of the House of Burgesses, is credited with bringing the first printing press to Virginia.

The rear wing was added by the Jones family who purchased the property c. 1780.

The cemetery contained the graves of the Buckner and Catsby Jones families.

Acquired by the Gray family in 1907 the house is no longer standing.

— Photographs c. 1937 —

Two views showing the rear wing which made the dwelling T-shaped.
– Photographs c. 1937 –

– South (River) façade –

Lands End – On the Severn River, Naxera
Vicinity of Gloucester County

Built c. 1796-1800 by Capt. John Sinclair. In the late 1840's Capt. Richard Jones purchased the property and it became the home of his youngest son Judge Warner Throckmorton Jones.

Later Lands End was regained by the Sinclair family when it was acquired by James Sinclair, grandson of the builder.

Photographs 1940 by Delos H. Smith

- View from the southwest ~ 1940

The wing glimpsed to the rear was begun by Mrs. Nell Drew after she purchased the place in 1935. It was not completed until the 1970's when the Lanciano family restored Lands End.

Ruins of the Lands End Dairy
Photograph 1940 by Delos H. Smith

Goshen - On the Ware River
Gloucester County

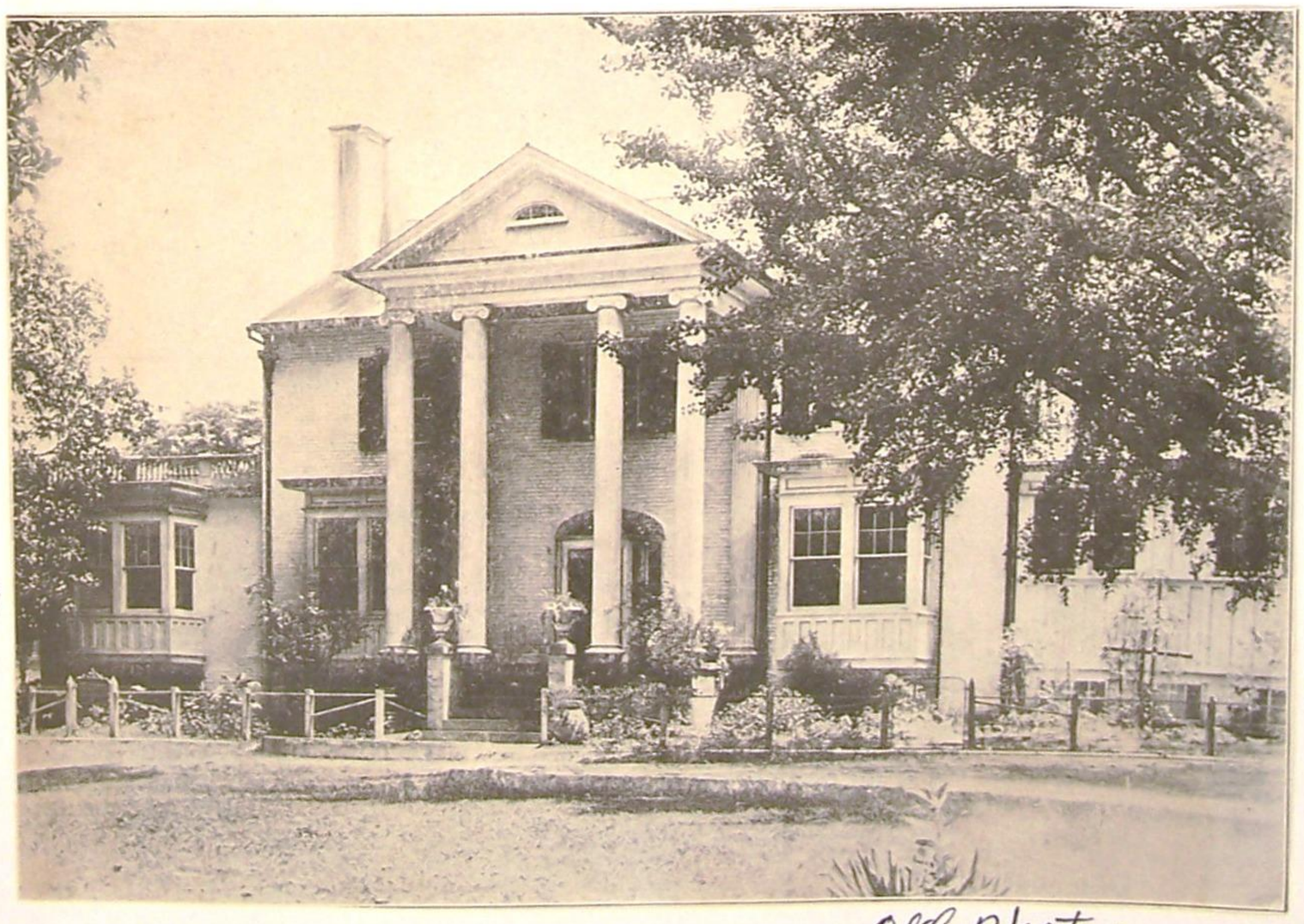
The 18th century home of the Tomlies family, it was purchased in 1819 by William Kennon Berrin whose descendants still own it.

The name means "place of plenty". In recent times extensive wings have been added to both ends of the dwelling as can be seen in the above photograph by Dementi Studio.

Photo by Dementi Studio

White Marsh Plantation — Gloucester County

The present 19th Century house is believed to incorporate the 18th century dwelling of the Rootes family. Thomas Reade Rootes' stepdaughter, Eveline Matilda Prosser, married John Tabb, son of Philip Tabb of "Toddsbury" and White Marsh became a Tabb family home. They developed the extensive gardens, importing many exotic plants and trees and increased the acreage to some 2,000.



— old photo —

Detail of the portico - photo by Dementi Studio

Stable behind Botetourt Hotel – photo by C. E. Peterson C. 1935

Stable – Behind the Botetourt Hotel, Gloucester

There are those who believe this structure to have been the prison erected on or near this site prior to 1754. Authorities from Colonial Williamsburg who examined it considered the walls to be among the oldest brickwork in Gloucester County.

The building was razed soon after these photographs and some of the old hand made brick were used in restoring the Warner Hall Cemetery wall.

Two further photographs of the Jail/Stable, both taken about 1935 by C. E. Peterson.

Was this slit an opening in a jail cell or a stable vent?

-Entrance façade-

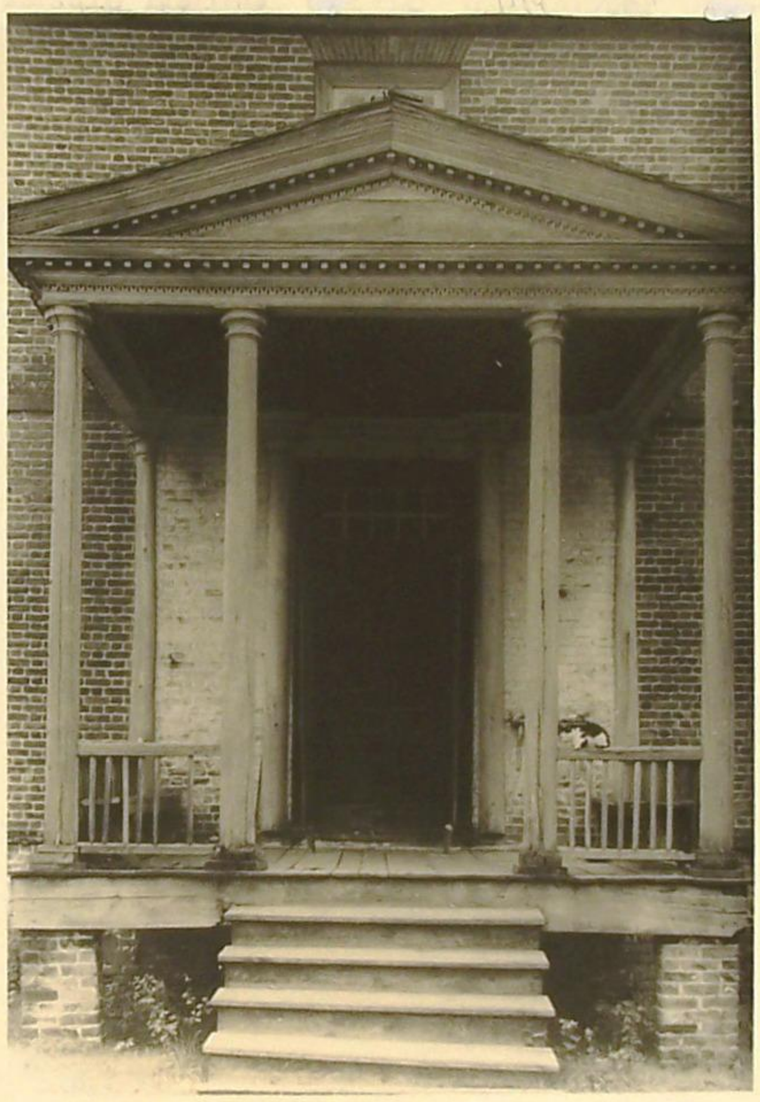
Garden façade

Little England

On Sarah's Creek, Gloucester County

Thomas Perrin erected a frame dwelling perhaps as early as 1650. It now forms the west wing of the Georgian brick house begun c. 1716. It originally had a hipped roof which was changed to the present gable one with dormer windows in the 19th century.

- Photographs 1967 -



Detail of Federal porch added to the garden façade which was removed in a subsequent restoration (Photo 1930's)

Frame wing on left is the earlier dwelling, perhaps late 17th century

- Parlor -

Poplar Grove ~ Matthews County

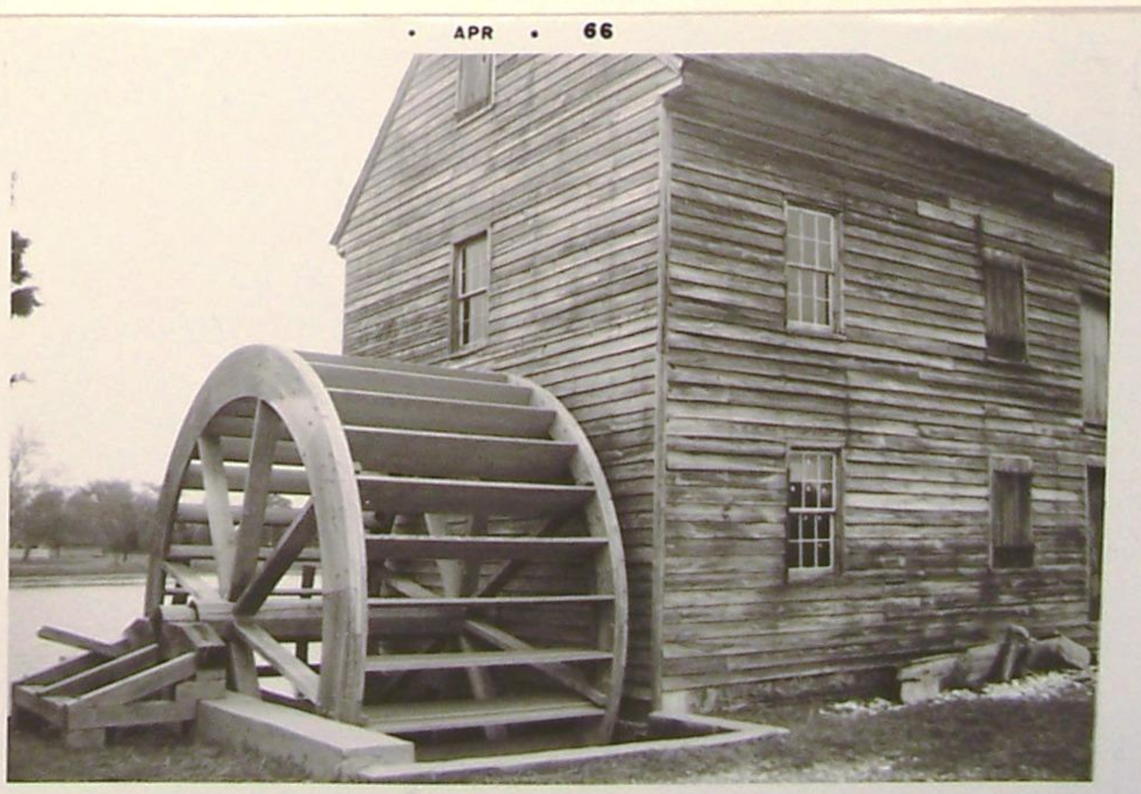
The house began c. 1750 with the gambrel roofed portion seen on the left above and grew over the years.

The Tide Mill is pre-revolutionary having ground meal for Washington's troops.

— Tide Mill seen from the lawn of Poplar Grove —

- Well house

- photographs 1966 -



— Once there were many such mills in the tidewater area ~ this is the last remaining one —

From the
Library of:

Ferol Briggs