

The Dulany/Tripps/Harper Barn is No More
By H. H. Douglas
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The Harper House/Dulany Barn at 2824 East Cameron Road is no more. It burned January 1, 1976, leaving only the stone shell. The shell stood as a ghostly ruin until 4:10 p.m, March 3, 1983, when the final piece of wall was bulldozed into oblivion. A new house is being built on the site.

Greenway Downs, the locale of the barn on East Cameron Road, and of the old farm house still standing at 2819 East Greenway Boulevard, was part of the extensive Dulany Farm 200 years ago. Both George Washington and George Mason are said to have stayed at the farm when they came to attend meetings of the Episcopal vestry before the Revolution.

In August 1814 the barn became the temporary haven of 150 barrels of black powder, removed from the Washington Navy Yard on the orders of Commodore Thomas Tingey, as the British were approaching Washington during the War of 1812.

The story of the Dulany Farm has never been fully told, but "The Hill," the focus of black residents in the Falls Church area, is said to have been a part of the Dulany Farm, and that what is now "The Hill" was given by the Dulanys, at the end of the Civil War, to their former slaves.

From 1869, the 109 acre Dulany Farm was known as the Silas Tripp Farm. The Tripp family once played an important role in the life of Falls Church. Silas Tripp's name may be found on a plaque of the interior south church of The Falls Church.

In January 1934, Captain Carl B. Harper, and his wife Martha, bought both the house and barn, and lived in the house while they converted the barn into a home. As much as possible of the old barn was retained and utilized as the entire structure was veneered with stone from Tripp's Quarry on south Washington Street. It became a veritable castle. It faced south. The main floor was one level above the ground at front, and at ground level at the back. The basement entrance was under the front entrance. The main floor entrance was reached by curved stone steps from both east and west. Four one inch tie rods though the walls from front to back gave added stability to the walls. The tie rod plates were in the shape of elephants burned out of steel plates approximately two inches thick.

In the basement there was a huge fireplace, topped by another on the main floor. A passage behind the fireplaces connected the two floors. The entrances to the passage, on each floor, was closed by delicately balanced, hinged stone slabs. The bedrooms on the east end of the second floor opened onto an interior "porch" hung

from the rafters. From the “porch” a set of drawbridge stairs, raised and lowered by pulleys attached to heavy chains, descended to the center of the living room in front of the mammoth fireplace.

The Barn was purchased by Ronald Ray Hodge and his wife, Dominique Van Steyn, an English actress, early in 1970. In the early 1920’s the Tripp family had sold the property to Ruby Lee Minar and William Hoge, real estate developers. In the early 1930’s they sold the house and barn to Captain and Mrs. Harper. Converting the barn into their home became an obsession with Captain Harper. He died in December 1964.

Mrs. Hodge wanted to restore it after the fire but found that the problems and the cost were too great. At one point she offered the stone to members of the Harper family for use in constructing a new house, but nothing came of this. The stone came from Tripps Quarry, as it did for the Falls Church Bank, Columbia Baptist Church (preceding the present brick structure), St. James Church, the Presbyterian Church, and many house foundations throughout the City. The quarry has not been a quarry for many years. The stone was sold to Sislers, Inc., who now operate a stone business adjacent to the old quarry and just across Tripps Run.