

WASH
STAR



—Washington Star Photographer Rosemary Martuff

Stone walls and rubble are all that remain of what was once George Mason's barn in Falls Church.

Fire Destroys Historic Fairfax House

George's Horse Slept There, 'Ghosts' Haunted It

By Mary Margaret Green
Washington Star Staff Writer

A neighborhood showcase has burned down in Falls Church taking with it more than 200 years of history and most of a family's memories.

The Thursday fire, in a immense stone house at 2824 Cameron St., started in the third-floor bedroom, apparently from faulty wiring, according to owner Dominique Hodge.

It could have been contained there, she said, but the water pressure gave

out at a fire hydrant in front of the house just as firemen got the blaze under control. By the time hoses were attached to hydrants on Lee Highway several blocks away, the house's all-wood interior was beyond saving.

"All you could hear was, 'Dammit! Where's the water?!,'" a neighbor recalled.

THE HOUSE was built as a barn on George Mason's Greenway Downs farm, where George Washington would visit after serving as vestry-

man at nearby Falls Church Episcopal Church.

Washington's horse, according to local legend, probably slept in the barn while Washington and Mason set under a nearby elm drinking cider on lazy Sunday afternoons.

The barn was transformed into a house in 1934 when Carl Harper, an inventor who designed the Navy catapult and also taught Amelia Earhart to fly a twin-engine plane, covered the original Norway pine frame with stone from a local quarry.

Harper added many unique designs of his own, but he never installed ceilings, plaster or wallboard to cover the original exposed beams and foot-wide wooden planks, which had been carried as ballast on colonial sailing ships.

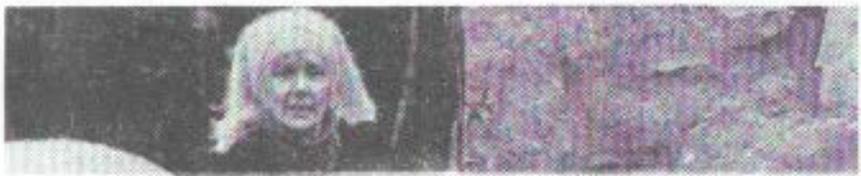
THE HARPERS moved in when the barn was barely habitable, according to neighbors.

"Mrs. Harper told me once that she went in to (her son's) bedroom and the crib was covered with snow," a neighbor recalled. "That's when she told Mr. Harper that they had to do something to make the barn more like a house."

As modest suburban homes filled the surrounding farm meadow in the mid-1940's, the Harper house became such a neighborhood landmark that the Greenway Downs civic association printed a sketch of it on its directory and stationery.

Children still refer to the home as the "spook house" because Harper, who loved children, delighted in tak-

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BIG LABOR Department Local 12 of the AFL-CIO American Federation of Government Employees, currently bargaining with the department for a new contract which, among other things, would make flexitime work schedules available to all Labor employees here, now has its own staff on flexitime — and reports it's working just dandy.

Under Local 12's version, its employees may report at any time from 6 to 10 a.m., and leave 8½ hours after reporting. Most other flexitime programs give employees a 10½-hour time frame in which to work 8 hours, with starting and quitting times to their preference.

Meantime:
 • National leaders of the

...why not implement flexitime and let those want to abide by their current fixed schedule do so, and the others set their own schedule as provided for in the flexitime rules?"

Panel Raps Mental Aid For Youths

Associated Press

Virginia is "underserving the mental health needs of children," the State Board of Mental Health and Mental Retardation says.

An interim report by the Child Mental Health Study Group released last month showed that only about one child in every 15 under the age of 18 who need "serious psychiatric help" is receiving it from the state.

FIRE

Continued From D-1

ing them on Halloween tours that always ended with a trip down a hidden staircase behind one of the chimneys, accented by eerie lighting effects.

THE HOUSE has been owned for about five years by Ronald and Dominique Hodge and Mrs. Hodge's two sons by former marriages, Jody Sollel, 19, and Shaun VanSteyn, 32.

Sollel and Mrs. Hodge, as well as some neighbors and friends, insist that they have seen ghosts, including Harper and his wife, in the house at various times.

"I was standing on the first floor with a friend," Mrs. Hodge recalled yesterday, "when we looked up to the gallery (a four-bedroom area that was once a hayloft) and we saw a short man with white hair and two deep lines on each side of his face. While we were looking up he stepped back into the shadows."

VanSteyn said a female guest was so frightened by "a man in a white wig" who was playing "hide and seek" with her that she left immediately.

WHEN THE FIRE began Thursday, only Mrs. Hodge, Sollel and two house guests were at home. VanSteyn was at a movie and Hodge was in Ohio. "His (Hodge's) father died last month; about two weeks ago he quit his job (as a space photographer), and now this," VanSteyn said, "so he really has lost a lot."

The family gave a New

Year's Eve party for 200 members of the English Speaking Union and Mrs. Hodge was resting in bed Thursday when she heard a sizzling sound in the room immediately above her.

Although she ran upstairs immediately, she said the room was already filled with smoke. Her son and neighbor both called in alarms but, "I was numb. I went and lay in the weeds just watching until the boys (Sollel and friends) found me and wrapped me up," she said.

"They led me to a neighbors house and I just lay under a table in their dining room." The Red Cross has temporarily sheltered the family in the Governor Quality Inn in Falls Church.

EVERYTHING the family owned and cared about, including two of their four

Interchange Ready to Open

BALTIMORE (AP) — The State Highway Administration plans to open on Monday a 1.7-mile segment of relocated Maryland Rte. 175 and an interchange at U.S. Rte. 29.

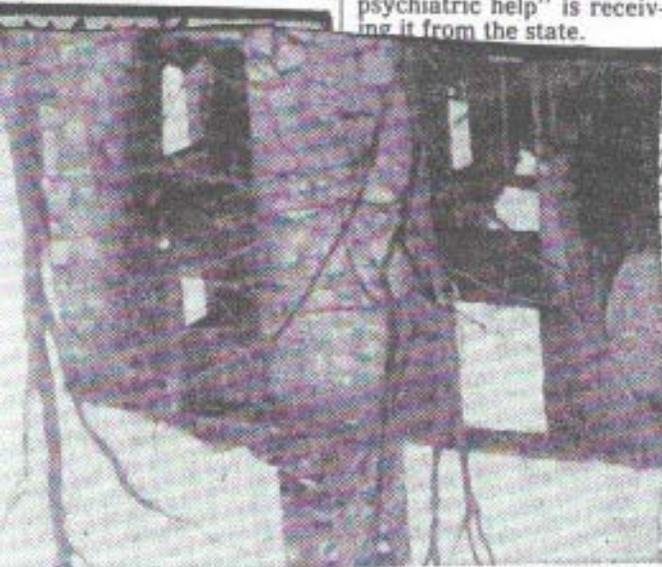
The interchange is expected to ease traffic congestion on U.S. 29 near Columbia and reduce a high accident rate caused by difficult left turns at Oakland Mills Road, according to Bernard M. Evans, the agency's administrator.

The Oakland Mills intersection, in a recent study, was rated the sixth most dangerous in central Maryland.

Siamese cats, was ed, so far as Mr. knows. Firemen l mated damage to to be \$225,000.

Among the mis Mrs. Hodge's mot year-old baby heirloom silver, her's paintings and case and her gran gold watches.

Also lost is a fil "Who's That?" w Hodge made for matography class sl ing at the C. Gallery, the compl tion of her first pro films and a \$6,00 camera, "what r saving went for."



Washington Star Photographer Robert

Fire revealed a "hidden" stairway in historic house's fireplace wall.



JANUA SAVE

