

Historic Home Through Area

by Daniel Shea

A 200-year-old community landmark in the Falls Church area fell victim to the path of an uncontrollable fire last Thursday which destroyed all of the possessions of the family that resided in the home and in the process erased a slate of colorful Virginia history.

The structure, which was referred to as the Harper Home after C. B. Harper who redesigned it in the 1930's, was a virtual architectural spectacular complete with hidden staircases and interior drawbridges. At one time, the home was surrounded by a moat much in the fashion of

a medieval castle.

The home, however, was not always the marvel into which Harper converted it. It had a much more modest beginning and, when initially built during the Revolutionary War period, it was nothing more than a barn fashioned from simple pinewood.

It was this pinewood, fire officials said this week, that led to the spectre of charred remains which were left following the blaze.

The barn, which was built and used as a stable for the 200-acre Dulany farm in the early 1800's, took its place in the annals of Virginia history in the summer of 1814.

It was at this time that the War of 1812 was raging, and the British were attacking Washington. The White House and Capitol were soon to be burned and military officials in the capital feared that a stockade of gunpowder stored in the Navy Yard in Washington would fall into the hands of the British.

According to Henry H. Douglas, who is chairman of the Falls Church Historical Society, a certain Commodore Thomas from the Navy Yard decided to remove these kegs of black powder into the vast rural area surrounding Washington. It was the Dulany barn which was chosen by Navy officials to store the powder.

Although, according to Douglas, the idea was met with nervousness on the part of many Falls Church farmers, the site was approved and the barn so took its place in history.

Local legend has planted a theory that George Washington, although he may never have slept there, may well have quartered his horse in the barn while visiting with friends at a local tavern in Falls Church.

The farmhouse, which is still standing, is located directly behind the Harper Home.

In 1869, according to Douglas, the farmhouse and barn were sold to Silas Tripp. It is after Tripp that Tripp's Run, which meanders through Falls Church, is named.

Tripp operated a quarry in the city and, coincidentally, it was with stone from this quarry that Harper eventually veneered the barn in the 1930's. The skeleton of the massive stone structure is all that remains of Dulany's barn following last week's fire.

When Tripp bought the farm, it was reduced from its

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In reaction to last week's fire at 2824 Cameron Road near the city of Falls Church which resulted in the total destruction of the historic Harper Home, the director of Fairfax County's Fire and Rescue Services Department this week charged that the water pressure in all the fire hydrants in a 3.5 square mile area surrounding the city is "less than sufficient for firefighting purposes."

Claiming that the water mains in the area boarded by Arlington Boulevard, the Leesburg Pike and the beltway are antiquated and "unquestionably inadequate," George H. Alexander of the fire and rescue services charged that the Falls Church public utilities department operated what he termed "a corroded pipe system which is probably more than 20 years old."

Fire officials, water department officials and citizens in the Greenway Downs section of the county all indicated that when the first of five fire companies arrived at the scene of the New Year's day blaze they immediately hooked up to the hydrant adjacent to the

home but as the firefighters began to attack the flames, the water pressure gave out.

Joseph Livinski, assistant director of the public utilities department, sharply denied Alexander's charge of a "totally inefficient system" and said that the failure of the fire hydrant which is less than 30 paces from the Harper Home was only an isolated incident.

"Mr. Alexander, at various times, has engaged in vocal criticism of our system. He seems to be aware of these difficulties but has never communicated them to us," Livinski said.

Although the Harper Home is located in Fairfax County, the Falls Church water department has been contracted to provide water service to this area.

Livinski, who is in charge of the city's investigation of how the water pressure seemed to give out, said this week that work crews have been dispatched to the Cameron Road scene and that "if we find a correctable situation, then we will immediately proceed with a replacement."

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County Charged With Slowdown Of Town Report

by Daniel Shea

The Vienna Town Council, in closed session Monday night, heard a Washington consultant detail his firm's problems in getting information from Fairfax County for a study of whether or not Vienna could afford to become a city.

Vienna mayor Joseph R. Spriggs employed a seldom-used provision of the state freedom of information act to close the part of the regular town council meeting dealing with the preliminary report of Hammer, Siler, George Associates.

Regarding the closed session, Spriggs said, "Once we have a document that lays out all the information on the city status," the information would be released. Public hearings would also be held on the matter, he said.

"Apparently they (the consultants) are having problems with getting financial data and it seems to be

county itself," said town councilman Donald E. Upchurch. "They have had interviews but they haven't had the right level of cooperation."

Upchurch added that county personnel seemed to be "dragging their feet" when the consultants tried to obtain financial information.

As a result, he said, the consultants were unable to properly analyze all of the economics which surround the study of the feasibility of the town separating from the county and becoming a city.

"I'll bet they are having trouble," said county supervisor Audrey Moore. "If somebody doesn't want something to happen, they're not going to act very quickly."

According to Upchurch, the consultants have been attempting to obtain information from various county departments. Among these are the county school board.

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county in 1972 "did not possess any study of the Blue Plains plant or other evidence or factual basis upon which it determined that a sewer moratorium or allocation policy was necessary to protect the public health, safety or welfare."

The moratorium was enacted "for the purpose of preventing growth of the county's population (which) violates the county's proprietary duty to provide sewage treatment service and is not a valid exercise of the police power," Plummer also ruled.

The complaint was brought before the court by plaintiffs Langley Development Corp., Clifford A. Webb and Cyrus Katzen.

Murder Suspect Arrested

Alexandria police on Monday said that they had arrested James Clifford Roberts, 27, in connection with the Dec. 19 sexual assault and strangulation death of 5-year-old Lynda K. White.

Roberts, who police said was an acquaintance of the White family and had been in their apartment at 4612 Raleigh Ave. in the early morning on the day of the murder, is being held on \$100,000 bond in the city jail.

A police spokesman said that Roberts, who lives at 823 S. Columbus St. in Alexandria, had been arrested and charged with counts of abduction, rape and murder.

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Historic House . . .

Continued from page 1

original 200 acres to a plot of approximately 109 acres, according to Douglas. In the mid 20's Tripp sold the farm to a certain Mr. Eakin who eventually subdivided the farm and made way for the development which was soon to take place.

In 1930, Douglas said, Harper purchased the barn but was unable to acquire the farmhouse to go with it because the buyer and seller could not come to terms over a sum of \$500.

Harper was a Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate who held a degree in aeronautical engineering. He was apparently the inventive sort and soon put his fertile imagination to work and produced the architectural splendor which stood until last week.

In addition to his designing abilities, Harper, whose relatives remain in the Northern Virginia area, is said to have flight tested the Spirit of St. Louis airplane before Charles Lindbergh flew it across the Atlantic.

Also, according to Douglas, he taught Amelia Earhart to fly the twin engine aircraft in which she gained fame as an aviator.

Harper finished his work on the home in 1934 and it remained in the Harper family until about six years ago, according to Douglas.

Although the home was kept in virtually the same condition in which Harper left it, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Hodge, the current owners,

can only look back at a tableau of destruction which swept their home, their belongings and a little of Northern Virginia into the pages of history.

Publication Lists State Activities

More than 200 things to do and see in Virginia are featured in the new Virginia state chamber of commerce publication, "Virginia Annual Events 1976".

Everything from a poultry parade in Harrisonburg to the annual wild pony roundup at Chincoteague; from colonial music in Williamsburg to the old Fiddler's convention in Galax; and from the jousting tournament at Natural Chimneys to the Scottish Games in Alexandria are included on this special Bicentennial year calendar.

Arts and crafts festivals, indoor and outdoor dramas, antique shows and sales are among the categories of events that have become more popular in recent years.

Single copies of "Virginia Annual Events 1976" may be obtained at no charge by writing to "Events," Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, 611 E. Franklin St., Richmond 23219.

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