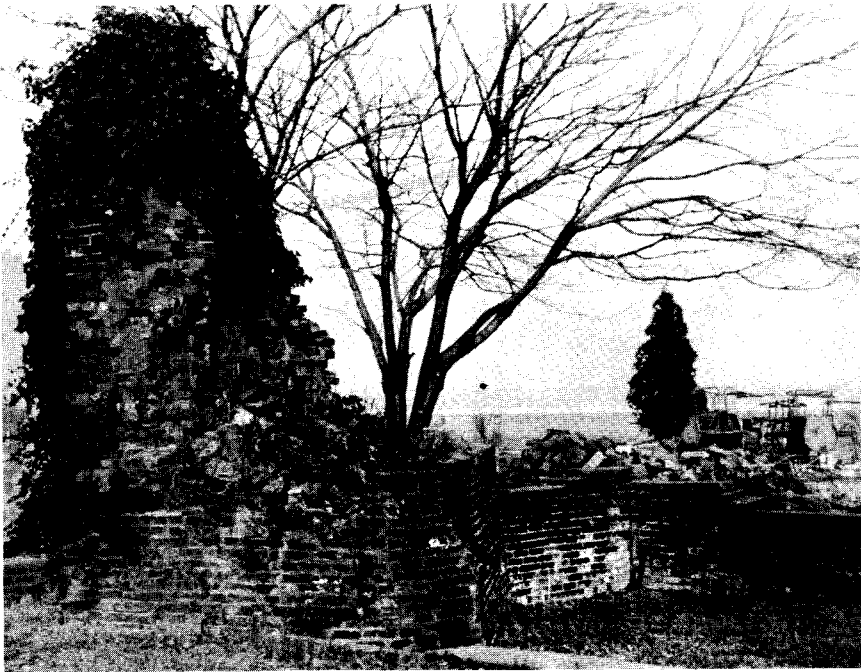


Arlington's Local and National Heritage

By Eleanor Lee Templeman

Probably no other area of its size contains symbols of such a complete chronology of American History as Arlington County, whose record parallels that of our Nation. It begins with the Indian quarries and village sites and the first exploration by white men under the leadership of Captain John Smith in 1608, and proceeds down through the pioneer struggles in the wilderness and the birth of our Nation, through three and a half centuries of growth and achievement. Arlington's homes symbolize the lives of those who dwelt in them and helped mold our national destiny.



Foundations of "Abingdon"

On the knoll above National Airport are the foundations and chimney fragments of "ABINGDON", the house either acquired or built by Gerard Alexander on land inherited in 1735. This land was part of the six thousand acre tract purchased by his grandfather, John Alexander, November 13, 1669 from Robert Howson for six hogsheads of tobacco. Howson was a ship-master who

had the previous month received the patent from the King's agent, Governor Wm. Berkeley, as payment of "headrights" for settlers he had brought into the colony.

Part of this grant and the house were purchased 1778 by John Parke Custis, son of Martha Dandridge Custis Washington. A Revolutionary officer, he died at Yorktown of "camp fever". George Washington was a frequent visitor at Abingdon. Here was born "Nellie" (Eleanor) Custis who married George Washington's nephew, Lawrence Lewis at Mt. Vernon February 22, 1799, the last birthday of the General's life. WOODLAWN PLANTATION, part of the Mt. Vernon estate was his wedding gift.

Abingdon was also the birthplace of George Washington Parke Custis (Nellie's brother). He inherited the northern portion of his father's estate, upon which he built "ARLINGTON HOUSE". Here, the daughter, Mary Custis married Robert Edward Lee; and here the Lees raised their children.

The western part of our county was pioneered by the Ball family, descendants of a brother of Colonel William Ball (great-grandfather of George Washington) who arrived in Tidewater Virginia about 1650. By 1695, John Ball Sr. had acquired patents just below Alexandria on Hunting Creek. Subsequent to the Indian War of 1676, the Potomac Rangers had traversed the area back from the river between Accotink Creek and Sugarland Run, which would have brought them through present Glen-carlyn in western Arlington. To this area came John Ball Jr. and Moses Ball, to settle on their land patents of 1742 and 1748 respectively. Of their homes, a portion of John's cabin still exists within the walls of a house at 5620 3rd Street South, whose clapboard exterior completely hides the hand-adzed logs within. Moses Ball's house has disappeared without trace, but his flowing spring has been preserved on the grounds of 601 S. Carlin Springs Road, and bears a small bronze plate, reading, "Moses Ball 1717-1792".

On April 22, 1785, Moses Ball assisted George Washington in his survey of property which Washington had acquired adjacent to the Ball patents on Four Mile Run, and which eventually became known as "Washington Forest". Moses Ball was the progenitor of the family which has produced community leaders in every generation. He and his son, Ensign John Ball of the



"Mary Carlin House"

Revolution are buried in the family cemetery at the rear of 3427 Washington Boulevard.

The pioneer, John Ball Jr. died in 1766 and is probably buried in what later became the Carlin Cemetery next to the Glencarlyn Library on Kensington Street between 3rd and 4th Sts. South. His property was sold in 1772 to William Carlin, Alexandria tailor of George Washington. Carlin built about 1800 for his daughters the attractive log house at 5512 S. Carlin Springs Road. It is probably the second oldest standing structure in the county.

No other local house represents so many periods of history as "THE GLEBE" at 4527 N. 17th Street. The original structure was built, 1775, as the home of the minister of "Fairfax Parish" which had been established ten years earlier and included Christ Church of Alexandria and the church at "The Falls", (now Falls Church). The term "glebe" applied to church lands allotted to the minister for his residence and farm lands which were to produce part of his compensation.



"The Glebe"

The wooden parts of the glebe house burned in 1808; in 1815 the property was sold to John Mason and Walter Jones. The money from the sale was used to erect the steeple on Christ Church, and to build the fence to enclose the churchyard in Alexandria.

In 1820, Walter Jones built a story-and-a-half brick house incorporating the foundations and some of the original walls of "The Glebe." The Octagon wing was probably added by the noted sculptor Clarke Mills as a studio. He purchased the property in 1846, and by 1852 was working on the equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson placed in Lafayette Park in Washington, in 1853. It is reasonable to assume that the two-story-high octagon room with its high windows was erected for studio purposes for the preparation of this large statue. He used as a model, the spirited horse of Mr. Vanderwerken whose farm was up Chain Bridge Road (now North Glebe). Clarke Mills completed a similar statue of George Washington in 1860. A Civil War map

of 1864 showing the unusual shape of the building proves that it was built prior to that date. Caleb Cushing, our first Minister to China, purchased "The Glebe" in 1870 and used the octagon wing for his collection of art and curios. It is now the home of former State Senator and Mrs. Frank L. Ball, Sr.

Aside from the fact that Clarke Mills' statue of Andrew Jackson was cast from British cannon captured during the War of 1812, Arlington has other links with that war. When "Old Hickory" laid the cornerstone of Jackson City in 1836 at the south end of "Long Bridge", his navy cannon, a memento of the war, was fired in celebration; it is now on the grounds of the Court House. When the British burned the Capitol and White House, Dolly Madison fled over Chain Bridge, carrying the Federal documents and the Stuart portrait of George Washington.

The handsomest and most important home historically, "ARLINGTON HOUSE" was built in the early Federal Period by George Washington Parke Custis. It was started in 1803, but not completed for many years. Mr. Custis had strained his finances to purchase the Washington family heirlooms at the sale of the estate settlement of his grandmother, Martha Custis Washington. The fact is not generally known that the house was for some years called, "MOUNT WASHINGTON", in honor of the family treasures.

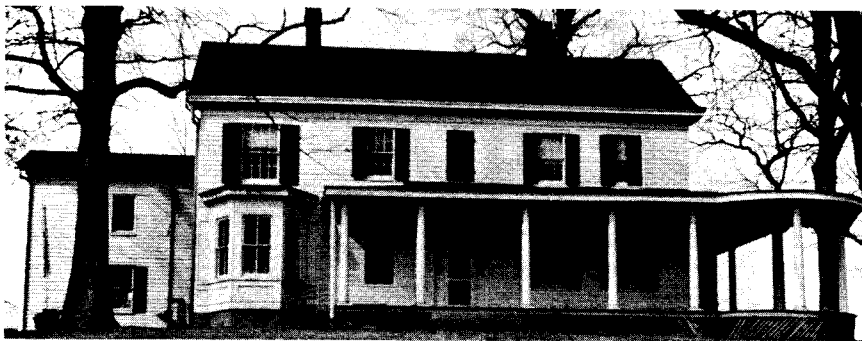
In addition to "Arlington House's" well-known association with the "War between the States", it is connected with two other national conflicts. Mr. Custis had been a reserve officer from the time he became eighteen. When the British attacked the city of Washington August 24, 1814, he applied to President Madison for assignment to active duty, which was refused because of his rheumatic condition. He therefore entered the ranks as a volunteer member of Captain George Peter's Battery of Georgetown. Mr. Custis' field piece fired the last shot of the engagement at Bladensburg. Robert E. Lee served with distinction during the Mexican War (1846-48) as an officer and Topographic Engineer. He was cited for meritorious action at Buena Vista, Vera Cruz and Mexico City.

The outstanding home of the late Federal period was "PROSPECT HILL", completed about 1841 by James Roach. The present address is 1230 South Arlington Ridge Road, and com-



"Prospect Hill"

mands an excellent view of Washington. Mr. Roach had come from Ireland to New York, thence to Virginia while quite young, with his parents and sisters. In 1837 he married Elizabeth Carson of Alexandria, and built the mansion for her. Their children and grandchildren were born there, but it was lost to the family in the tragic era following the Civil War. The stream draining past the site of Mr. Roach's brick kilns below the ridge, to the lagoon on George Washington Memorial Parkway bears his name, as does the Roach's Run Bird Sanctuary at the lagoon. It is logical to suspect that an earlier house preceeded the Roach Mansion at this obviously ideal site. It was possibly the tenant residence of the Alexanders' attorney, Benjamin Sebastian, as the spring at the base of the hill bears his name. There is a rumor that he and his father were Spanish pirates, forced ashore in Virginia, later making their way up the Potomac and becoming respectable citizens.

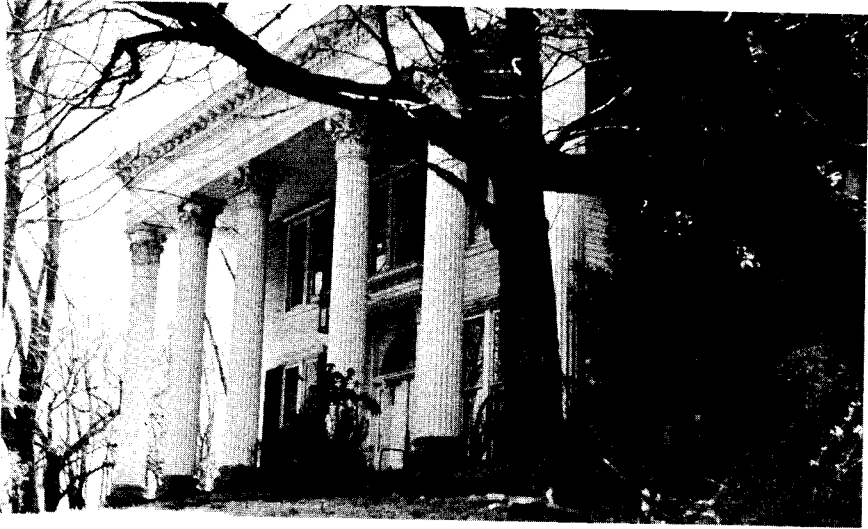


"Falls Grove"

The house most closely associated with the Civil War is "FALLS GROVE". It was built by Gilbert Vanderwerken at the northwest corner of Little Falls and Glebe Roads. He was a New Yorker of adventurous spirit who had operated a coach line between Mexico City and Vera Cruz before coming to Georgetown, where he operated a coach line from Aqueduct Bridge to the Navy Yard. This was the forerunner of the Capital Transit Company of Washington. To provide pasturage for his horses, Mr. Vanderwerken acquired large acreage in north Arlington. About 1852, he built the house for the use of his tenant and also as a summer residence for his family. An additional enterprise was the operation of vast stone quarries along the Virginia palisades.

At the time of the Civil War, he allowed General Hancock to use "Falls Grove" as an army hospital and the two story carpenter shop as his headquarters, under guarantee that the buildings and fine grove of trees would be protected. Both Fort Marcy and Fort Ethan Allen were constructed on the property. Fort Marcy is on the south side of the "Georgetown & Leesburg Turnpike" (McLean Road) above Chain Bridge a few hundred yards beyond the Arlington-Fairfax County line. Fort Ethan Allen is on North Glebe Road just south of its intersection with Military Road. It has been acquired by the county for expansion of James Madison (formerly Saegmuller) School; we hope that the earthworks will be preserved as much as possible. Between these two forts, on the bank of Pimmit Run, is the site of the bloodless duel between Henry Clay and John Randolph in 1826.

During the post-war period, a beautiful Southern style Greek-revival mansion was built by Andrew Adgate Lipscomb II of Fairfax who became Assistant District Attorney of the Dis-



"Altha Hall" formerly "Ruthcomb Hall"

trict of Columbia. Some years previously, he had lost his first wife. Later, he married Lamar Rutherford of Georgia. The house was architecturally similar to one she admired in her native state. The forty foot pillars and beautifully milled panneling and wood trim were shipped from Georgia. Marble mantels came from Italy, crystal chandeliers were obtained in Europe, and doorway hardware from an English castle. The Lipscombs moved into their completed home in 1889, naming it "RUTHCOMB HALL" as a composite of their names, RUTHERford and LipsCOMB. There they entertained great statesmen with gracious southern hospitality.

After the death of Colonel Lipscomb, the property was sold in 1905 to Mr. and Mrs. Thaddeus Mathew Tyssowski of Washington; she was the former Alice Walton Green of Lewinsville, Virginia. Following the precedent of the original owners, they renamed it for a combination of their names; ALice and THAddeus; so it became "ALTHA HALL", the name by which it is most generally known.

This brings us through the turn of the current century, having barely touched on a few of Arlington's more important links with the past. The nearly six decades of the twentieth century have seen continued development in our County and the creation of landmarks which are even now a part of our national history as well as an Arlington heritage for future generations.