



THOMAS FAIRFAX

9th Baron Fairfax of Cameron, and of Belvoir and Vaucluse, Virginia

Thomas Fairfax

# THOMAS FAIRFAX'S FOUR MILE RUN TRACT

By  
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Thomas Fairfax, of Fairfax and Alexandria Counties, was a descendant of Sir Thomas Fairfax of Yorkshire County, England. King Charles I bestowed on Sir Thomas the title First Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron, on May 14, 1627 for the sum of L 1500 sterling.

Cameron, from which the Barony took its name, was a parish in Fife, a maritime county on the east coast of Scotland about six miles south of St. Andrews. The Barony gave Sir Thomas the right to a seat in the Edinburgh House of Lords. The Fairfax family had neither Scottish connections nor land in Scotland, and undoubtedly had little or no interest in attending the House of Lords, yet the Barony was genuine.

The Fairfax interest in Northern Neck, Virginia, was the result of the marriage in 1690 of Thomas, Fifth Lord Fairfax (1657-1710) to Catherine Culpeper (1670-1719). Catherine had inherited the proprietary right over five-sixths of the Northern Neck of Virginia in 1689 upon the death of her father Thomas, Second Lord Culpeper.

Thomas (1690-1781) was the eldest son of Thomas and Catherine Fairfax. He was born at Leeds Castle, England. He succeeded his father in 1710 as Sixth Lord Fairfax. The same year his grandmother, Lady Margaret Culpeper, wife of the Second Lord Culpeper, died. She willed Thomas one-sixth interest in the Culpepers' Virginia property which had passed to her from her husband's cousin, Alexander Culpeper, son of Thomas Culpeper (1602-1651). Thomas Culpeper was one of the original seven members of the "porcon"<sup>1</sup> that King Charles II granted by patent, while in exile in France, to "seven trusty and well-beloved companions." Another member of the Culpeper family included in the "porcon" was Sir John (1600-1660), cousin of Thomas, who had been created Lord Culpeper in 1664. It was their respective fathers who first invested in the Virginia Company<sup>2</sup> in 1609. The land that King Charles granted to the seven was "bounded by and with the "heads" of the River Tappahanocke (Rappahannock) Quiriough (Occoquan) and Patawomecke (Potomac)."

When Catherine Culpeper Fairfax died in 1719 she named her son, Thomas, legatee of the bulk of her estate which included "all the lands of Virginia."

Lord Fairfax appointed his cousin, William Fairfax, Agent of the Northern Neck Proprietary, when Robert "King" Carter died in 1732. He also arranged for his cousin to transfer as Collector of Customs of the Ports of Salem and Marblehead, Massachusetts, to Collector of Customs at South Potomac River.

Agent Fairfax advised Thomas of an impending boundary dispute in the Tidewater and Piedmont sections of the Proprietary. It was imperative that the "Heads or Springs" of the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers be established; acting upon this matter was of the utmost importance because 900 square miles or 576,000 acres were at stake.

Even though the Colony had referred the Rappahannock "forks" controversy to the British Commissioner for Trade and Plantations, in England, the Governor continued to issue patents within the disputed areas confident that the question would be determined in favor of the Colony.

Lord Fairfax, meanwhile, presented his petition to the Privy Council in London, and in November of 1733 the Privy Council Committee ordered the Lieutenant Governor of the Colony that upon his receipt of their order a "survey to settle the marks and boundaries" of the Proprietary was to be accomplished in two years after the arrival of the order in Virginia. Also the Lieutenant Governor was ordered not to "presume to make" any patents of lands in the disputed areas.

Lord Fairfax left England on the sailing ship "Glasgow" in March of 1735. He was in Williamsburg in October and presented the Privy Council order through his attorney, Edward Barradall, to the Lieutenant Governor of the Colony of Virginia.

When the survey was completed in 1737 the Commissioners of the Colony and Lord Fairfax disagreed on the interpretation of "first Heads or Springs" of the rivers, and their differences were not resolved. Lord Fairfax closed his land office to prevent further plunder and returned to England. Many years later another Privy Council Committee on April 11, 1745 determined that the Proprietary's boundaries of the first spring of the Rappahannock, was the Conway and the Potomac's was the Cohongarooten. Three million more acres were added to the Proprietary making a total of six million acres.<sup>3</sup>

After the Northern Neck land dispute was settled Lord Fairfax decided to move to Virginia. He stayed at the home of his cousin, "Colonel" William Fairfax, who had built a beautiful brick Georgian home he named Belvoir. Lord Fairfax's principle land office was located here.

The first residence that Lord Fairfax built was on the east side of the Shenandoah River which he named Manor of Leeds "quarter." It was while Lord Fairfax was waiting for the survey to be made on the boundaries of the Proprietary that he commissioned the Surveyor, John Warner, to survey several tracts of "waste and ungranted land" for himself. The Manor of Leeds tract, 149,387 acres, included the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge in Fauquier County and land that is in the present counties of Clark, Fauquier and Loudoun.

Lord Fairfax did not remain for very long on the "quarter." He moved across the river to a larger tract of land near several springs and built a modest dwelling, calling it Greenway Court. He later built a manor house which contained a library and was used for entertainment of guests as well as for meals. Lord Fairfax never slept in the manor house. He preferred the cottage.

Lord Fairfax died a bachelor on December 9, 1781, at the age of 91. He was buried "within the common rail" in Winchester's Old Frederick Parish Church. His resting place was subsequently marked with a marble plaque: "In memory of Thomas, Lord Fairfax who died 1782 (sic) and whose ashes repose underneath this church, which he endowed." In 1829 the old stone church was razed and its cemetery levelled. Fairfax's remains were reinterred beneath the Chancel of the new Christ Episcopal Church located at Washington and Boscawen Streets. In 1925 the Church was enlarged and his remains were located. His tomb is now in the side yard of the Church.

The Proprietary and title, Seventh Lord Fairfax, passed to Thomas' brother Robert (1707-1793) in England. Thomas left his Manor of Leeds to his oldest living nephew, Reverend Denny Martin with the proviso that he change his name to Fairfax.

The Reverend Denny Martin-Fairfax inherited the Proprietary upon the death of Robert in 1793. He sold his five-sixths interest to James Markham Marshall. When Denny died he left the Manor of Leeds to his brother. On October 18, 1806, Lieutenant General Martin deeded the 160,382 acres, Manor of Leeds, to Raleigh Colston, John Marshall and James M. Marshall.

The title Eighth Lord Fairfax descended to Bryan (1736-1802), son of Colonel William Fairfax and Deborah Gedney Clark, his second wife.

Young Bryan first started out on a Colonial Career in Barbados, but he soon came back to Virginia and served in the Virginia Regiment under George Washington at Winchester as a Volunteer Cadet.

Colonel Fairfax died in 1757 and Bryan's brother George became Belvoir's land agent. Bryan married Elizabeth Cary in 1759. George left for England in 1760 to take care of inheritance matters. Belvoir was put at Lord Fairfax's disposal, and he came down-river.

Although Belvoir was the principle land office for many years Lord Fairfax realized that the main office should be in closer proximity to the ungranted land in the newly expanded Proprietary which lay beyond the Blue Ridge. Lord Fairfax had offered George the proposed Valley office agency but George refused. While George was in England Lord Fairfax closed the Belvoir office and in 1761 opened the Greenway Valley office and appointed his nephew Thomas Bryan Martin as Agent.

This change did not cause concern for Bryan because he was now living at Towlston Grange. The 5,568 acre tract of Towlston Grange was inherited by Bryan from his father Colonel Fairfax in 1757. About 1760 Bryan moved his family from Greenhill to the new house at Towlston Grange, where the family remained until 1790.

Bryan and Lord Fairfax got along famously despite the wide differences in their ages. In gratitude to Lord Fairfax for his "many kindnesses" Bryan named his first son Thomas.

Bryan's first wife Elizabeth died in 1778. There were four children, Sally, Thomas, Ferdinando and Elizabeth. His second wife was Jane Donaldson. They had one daughter, Ann.

A part of Towlston Grange was deeded to Thomas from his father on October 1, 1788; "Ash Grove" was built by Thomas in 1790 and is near the intersection of Leesburg Pike and the Dulles Access Road.

Bryan Fairfax was ordained a minister of the newly established Episcopal Church in 1789. He succeeded David Griffith as rector of Fairfax Parish. The Parish included two churches, the Falls Church now in the town of Falls Church, and Christ Church in Alexandria.

The Reverend Fairfax moved his family to a new home on 329 acres near Alexandria, called Mount Eagle, in the early part of 1790. Mount Eagle was on the south bank of Cameron Run.

In 1792 Reverend Fairfax retired from the ministry.

Bryan Fairfax and George Washington were lifelong friends. In December of 1799 George Washington paid his last social call on his friend, Bryan, at Mount Eagle. Within a short time Bryan was one of the principal mourners at the funeral of George Washington. No other person among George Washington's intimates could claim a friendship of greater duration or one more marked by lifelong constancy under trying circumstances.

Bryan was fifty-seven years old when the Seventh Lord Fairfax passed on. The House of Lords confirmed in May of 1800 his title Eighth Lord Fairfax.

The title Ninth Lord Fairfax descended to Bryan's eldest son, Thomas (1762-1846) on August 7, 1802.

Thomas married his first wife Mary Aylett, 1795. She was the daughter of Colonel William Aylett, of King William County, Virginia. Mary died six months later, April 30, 1796. His second wife, Louisa Washington, a cousin, was the daughter of Warner Washington, nephew of George Washington. She died April 28, 1798. Thomas' third wife was Margaret Herbert, the daughter of William and Sarah Herbert of Alexandria. They married December 31, 1800, and had ten children. They were Albert, Henry, Orlando, Raymond, Ethelbert, Reginald, Eugenia, Aurelia, Lavinia and Monimia.

When the title Ninth Lord Fairfax descended to Thomas in 1802 he adamantly refused to use it and shied away from any of its accompanying trappings. He has been described as a respected and good natured man who spent his life superintending his extensive tobacco plantations.

The manor house built on the Peyton grant known as Vaucluse, in Fairfax County, was purchased by Thomas Fairfax when he gave his house "Ash Grove" to his son Henry in 1827. Vaucluse was located on part of the grounds of the present site of the Alexandria Hospital on Seminary Road, Alexandria. Vaucluse was destroyed by Union forces during the Civil War. This site is important to the history of the Fairfax family because it was the residence of the Ninth Lord Fairfax, his wife and children. There was a cemetery on the grounds where members of the family were buried.

A three-story architecturally interesting Georgian style brick townhouse, built by William Yeaton in the early 1800's, at 607 Cameron Street, a street named for the Sixth Lord Fairfax in 1749, was purchased by Thomas Fairfax for \$5,000.00 for a winter residence, in 1830, and remained in the family for

thirty-four years.

Thomas Fairfax was a follower of the doctrines of the Swedish theologian, Emanuel Swedenborg, for approximately forty-five years. In the Journals of Convention of the Church of the New Jerusalem or New Church as it was called, now the Swedenborgian Church, Thomas Fairfax is listed as representing the denomination in Fairfax County during the years 1827-1836.

In Mrs. Burton Harrison's "Recollections Grave and Gay" she speaks of her "Grandpapa as a devout Swedenborgian and had his children baptized in that faith, some of them being rechristened in the Episcopal Church by their own desire. He was in religion an advanced Swedenborgian; and, one of the first Virginia gentlemen to do so, liberated all the slaves belonging to his patrimonial estate and established them in various trades."

The Washington D.C. Society of the New Jerusalem was organized April 12, 1846, and among the nine members who signed the constitution was Wilson M. C. Fairfax, Thomas' nephew. On April 21, 1846, Thomas passed away and "as it would have been necessary to send fifty miles for a minister of the New Church to perform the burial service, the leader of the Washington Society, at the request of the Society and of the friends of the deceased, acted on the occasion. The place of sepulture was sixty miles distant from any New Church minister."

Ash Grove Cemetery is thought to have been the original burial place of Thomas. Several sources of information state that sometime after Ivy Hill Cemetery, Alexandria, was opened in 1850, Thomas' wife had him reinterred there so that when she passed on they would be together.

The Cemetery records do not indicate that either one is buried there yet there is a Fairfax Memorial stone in Ivy Hill.

Thomas Fairfax's will written March 1, 1843, directed, "that my tract of land on Four Mile Run in the District of Columbia containing about 774 acres with another small tract of eight acres adjoining purchased of Elizabeth Taylor and my house and lot in the Town of Alexandria and any other real property wheresoever situated I may have at my decease be sold and the proceeds divided equally among my sons."

A codicil was added on April 5, 1844, "having directed all the real property to be sold which of course includes the house and land called Vaucluse, I now wish to amend that as follows: I direct that my said wife Margaret may have the option of holding and using during her life either the house and land at Vaucluse or the House and lot on Cameron Street in Alexandria."

The legatees of the estate were his wife Margaret and sons Henry and Orlando, designated executors, and Reginald. Margaret chose to stay at Vaucluse. Henry was killed in the Mexican War in 1847. The Cameron Street house became Orlando's about 1848. The sale of Vaucluse was advertized in the National Intelligencer on August 15, 1849. A public auction was held on May 27, 1850 at which time Reginald bought Vaucluse for \$3980.

Thomas Fairfax purchased the 774½ acres on the Four Mile Run tract from John Carlyle Herbert and his wife Mary, of Prince Georges County,



Maryland, on May 27, 1808, for \$5099.66 "as well as a fee simple estate in 229 acres of land in Fairfax County." The Four Mile Run tract was part of the original land grant of 1215 acres to Evan Thomas and John Todd in 1719, and today is within the boundary of Arlington County, north and south of Columbia Turnpike, and east of the Four Mile Run bridge.

The eight acres cited in Thomas' will were purchased by him from Elizabeth Taylor for \$120,000 on November 27, 1820. The land had been inherited by her from her father Joseph Birch.

Sewall Corbett of Corbettsville, New York, came to Virginia in 1849. On April 1, 1850, Orlando and Reginald Fairfax sold Corbett 282 acres on the southside of Columbia Turnpike for \$3102.00.

A wheelwright and carriage maker from Washington City, John M. Young, purchased 108¾ acres on September 12, 1850 from Orlando Fairfax for \$1568.55¼ cents. The land was on the northside of the Turnpike and adjoined the 100 acres Young purchased from Thomas Hodges in 1836.

On November 22, 1850, Orlando Fairfax and Sewall B. Corbett had entered into a written agreement for 162 acres on the northside of Columbia Turnpike, east of Four Mile Run, adjoining Young's property. Four years later the deed was conveyed to Sewall's father, Cooper Corbett of Broome County, New York, on October 18, 1854, for \$3407.00.

Lewis and Mariah Bailey purchased 202 acres on the southside of the Turnpike between the Run and Sewall B. Corbett's property on December 21, 1850 from Orlando Fairfax for \$4242.00.

A search in the Arlington County deed books for the sale of Thomas Fairfax's eight acres purchased from Elizabeth Taylor in 1820 was to no avail. The angle of the north line of Strum's 1900 map presents the possibility that the eight acres were included in the 108-3/4 acres sold to John M. Young.

The Fairfax Four Mile Run tract was a forest of white oak, red maple, birch, sycamore, ash and chestnut trees that stood tall on the land rising high above the run. Long Branch, upper and lower, and Doctor's Branch were tributaries of the run, flowing into Four Mile Run then into the Potomac River. Grist mills once stood along the banks of the run utilizing its water power. The run today is a trickle except following heavy rains.

More than a century has passed and the former Fairfax tract has streets that criss-cross the land. Individual homes, townhouses, garden and high rise apartments dot the Four Mile Run tract. There are parks and many commercial businesses. It has become an urban area in the County of Arlington.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"porcon" Probably taken from the old French word *porcion*—portion. *Middle English Dictionary 12th-15th Century*. Compiler Francis Henry Stratmann. Rev. ed. Oxford Univ. Press, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Virginia Company's first Charter in 1606 gave all the lands to its recipients "in common"; the second Charter of 1609 authorized the Company to distribute lands to those who were "adventurers" or "planters." "Planters" were those who ventured their money but did not come themselves. When the Crown took over the affairs of the Colony in 1624, the principle of private

ownership of land had been established. Land was not only distributed as a dividend but as a regard for distinguished service to the Colony.

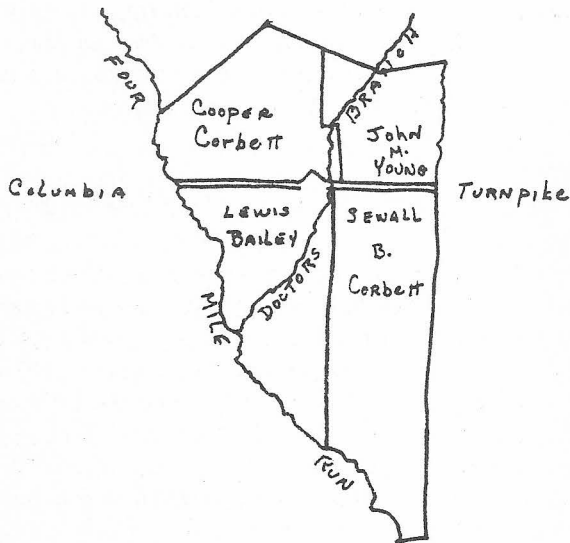
<sup>3</sup>The Northern Neck Proprietary Counties were: Lancaster, Northhampton, Westmoreland, King George, Stafford, Culpeper, Rappahannock, Page, Shenandoah, Frederick, Clarke, Warren, Loudoun, Fauquier, Prince William, Fairfax and Arlington. West Virginia counties are Berkeley, Morgan, Jefferson, Mineral, Grant, Hampshire, and Hardy.

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### FOUR MILE RUN TRACT



Author's drawing based on G. P. Strum's 1900 detailed map of Alexandria, now Arlington County.