

THE ROOTS OF CLARENDON

By
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At the turn of the twentieth century a twenty-five acre tract of land situated in Alexandria County, now Arlington County*, on the north side of the Georgetown-Ballston Road, (later renamed Wilson Boulevard) was surveyed for the 'Plan of Clarendon.'''²

The original Clarendon site was located in the northwest section of the five hundred acre Northern Neck land grant to William Struttfield of Westmoreland County. William Struttfield had applied for a "certain quantity of land" in Stafford County at the Proprietor's Office on November 12, 1707. The agent representing the Proprietor(s) at that time was probably Robert Carter. The Proprietors were Margaret, Lady Culpepper, and the 5th Lord Fairfax and his wife Katherine.

William Struttfield obtained a warrant from the Proprietor's Office for laying out a survey. Thomas Gregg surveyed the land situated on the Potomac River. The surveyor began at the mouth of a small run called Wankapin (Wampakan) Branch, renamed Rocky Run, at the lower end of the land of Major Thomas Owsley. The line extended west along Owsley's land six hundred fifteen poles. From this corner the line extended south one hundred thirty poles to the land of Robert Alexander, then easterly along Alexander's line to the Potomac River six hundred fifteen poles, and from that corner on the Potomac River north one hundred thirty poles to the beginning.

The agent accepted the survey and William Struttfield's Northern Neck land grant was recorded in Book 3, page 227, on September 2, 1709. The land was not given free and clear to the grantee. There were several restrictions that a grantee had to fulfill to receive a clear title to his land.

The Proprietors of the Northern Neck required an annual rent — in essence a quitrent existed on the land. For every fifty acres one shilling sterling was to be paid to the Proprietors on the feast day of St. Michael, the archangel.

In the early days of issuing land grants the collection of the rents was of great financial importance to the Proprietor. The quitrent placed a cloud upon the title. To remove this cloud and to receive a clear title to the land the Proprietor gave the grantee three years in which to settle on his land and raise crops. If the rent was not paid for two years the Proprietor's agent would reissue the grant.

In 1733 Anthony Carpenter, the eldest surviving son of Elizabeth Struttfield

* 1920 - name changed to Arlington County

1847 - retroceded to Virginia

1801 - formed as Alexandria County of the District of Columbia

The land upon which Arlington is situated was previously part of the following larger counties:

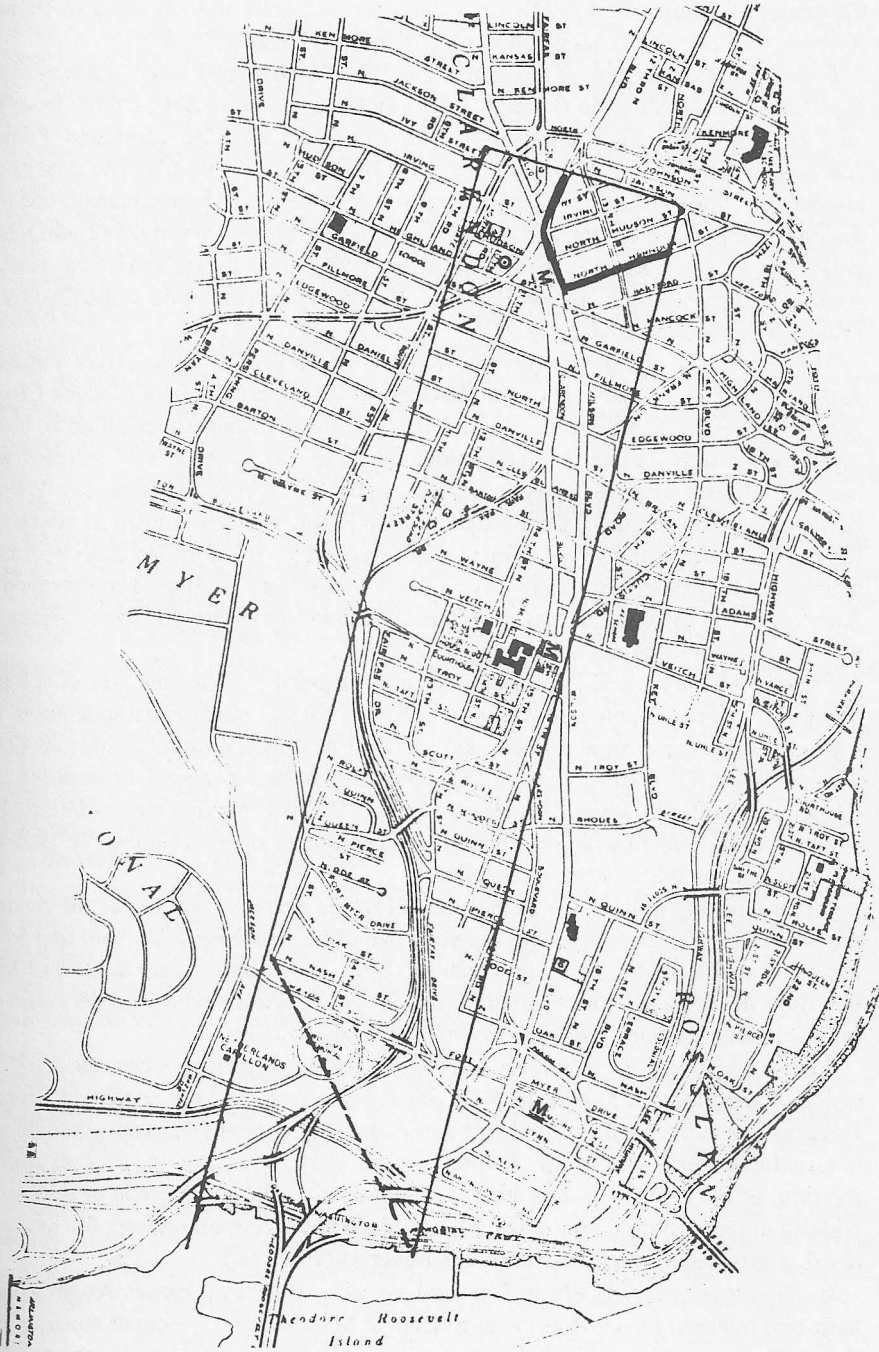
1742-1801 Fairfax

1731-1742 Prince William

1664-1731 Stafford

1653-1664 Westmoreland

1648-1653 Northumberland



William Struttfield and Daniel Jennings land grants as outlined on a portion of the 1985 Arlington County Map. (Broken lines indicate Jennings land). The Struttfield and Jennings grants were taken from Don Wise's 1976 Bicentennial Edition of Land Grants. Heavily outlined area in the upper right hand corner of the Struttfield land grant is Clarendon's twenty-five acres.

Carpenter, William Struttfield's only daughter and heir, sold the land to Francis Awbrey, of Prince William County, for fifty pounds sterling.³

Following the purchase of the former Struttfield land grant Francis Awbrey made application to the Virginia General Assembly for a license to have a ferry from his land to Maryland. The Assembly by an enactment of 1738 appointed Francis Awbrey, among others, to operate ferries on the rivers of Virginia. The enactment also stated "that public ferries be constantly kept at the places herein named, and that the rates for passing on the said ferries would be as follows: seven pence and a half penny for a man, and seven pence and a half penny for a horse, and so on. Francis Awbrey's ferry would be on the Potomac River from his plantation in the County of Prince William over to Maryland."⁴

The ferry was operated from the Virginia shore on the Little River opposite Anolstan (Mason's, later Theodore Roosevelt) Island to the mouth of Rock Creek. Ferrymen were also authorized to establish an "ordinary" sometimes called an inn or tavern at the ferry landing to accommodate people and animals. The ordinary was licensed and by law had fixed rates that could be charged. Present day Wilson Boulevard, formerly the Ballston-Georgetown Road, was also known as Awbrey's Road.⁵ This road with its very steep grades was carved out of forested areas by inland plantation owners making their way to the Awbrey ferry landing. The presence of Awbrey's ferry provided access to northern Virginia from Maryland thereby opening the area to commerce and development.

Francis Awbrey owned thousands of acres in northern Virginia. He developed many of the tracts he purchased; therefore, he was not just another land speculator. He was a tobacco inspector at Pohick, and a Sheriff of Prince William County in 1739. As a member of the Truro Vestry (Episcopal Church) he supervised the building of a chapel for the Parish which was near his home. This was the first church building of any kind to be erected within the bounds of the present Loudoun County. In 1926 the site was marked with a stone monument.⁶

It is interesting to note that in the will of Francis Awbrey (1690-1741) he devised the Struttfield five hundred acres between two of his seven sons, Richard and John. Richard inherited fifty acres on which the ferry and ordinary were kept, and John inherited the remaining four hundred fifty acres.⁷ Richard Awbrey predeceased his brother, John. Richard's will devised his fifty acres to John.

John Awbrey's will of February 5, 1743 devised the fifty acres where the ferry and ordinary were located to his wife's daughter, Hannover. Awbrey appointed Richard Boggess to run the business until Hannover attained the age of eighteen when he was to turn the property over to her. Awbrey's wife, Mary, was expecting another child at the time of his death. His will stipulated that if this child lived it was to inherit his additional four hundred fifty acres. The child did not survive; therefore, the land was divided between the two daughters, Hannover and Frances.⁸

In November of 1767 Philip Ellis and his wife, Frances (Frances Awbrey) sold their two hundred twenty-four acres to George Mason for sixty pounds sterling, and Owen Bradie and his wife, Hannover (Hannover Awbrey) sold their two hundred seventy-six acres to Mason for ninety pounds sterling. George Mason's will devised the five hundred acres to his son John in 1792.⁹

What is most puzzling is that a Northern Neck land grant for the fifty acre tract containing the ferry and ordinary was made to Daniel Jennings, a surveyor of Fairfax County, probably in error, as waste land on March 22, 1744.¹⁰ There is no record that Mr. Jennings returned the land, nor when Awbrey's Ferry ceased operating. However, in 1748 George Mason received a charter to operate a ferry from Maryland. The ferry crossed the Potomac River from High Street in Georgetown to Mason's Island.¹¹

John Mason (1766-1849) married Anna Maria Murray of Annapolis, Maryland in 1796. They had ten children. Mason's inheritance included properties in Georgetown, the District of Columbia, and Virginia, and Mason's Island. Mason built a summer residence on the island in the early 1800s. In 1805 he had a causeway built to connect the island with the Virginia shore.¹²

By an enactment of the Virginia General Assembly in 1798 John Mason was given approval to establish a town on ninety acres of land. This acreage subsequently became Rosslyn. Mason had lots, streets and alleys laid out for his proposed town which was to be named South Haven. Several houses were built in South Haven near the ferry, but the town Mason envisioned never materialized.¹³

As a result of a succession of business reverses John Mason borrowed large sums of money from the Bank of the United States in Washington, D.C. These business problems eventually led to his financial downfall as Mason was unable to pay back the money on the promissory notes from the bank. In time the bank took over Mason's properties in Washington, D.C. and the eighteen hundred twenty-two acres in Virginia, with one exception: Mason was able to retain a farm of three hundred acres four miles west of Alexandria called Clermont.¹⁴ Mason's loss during the years 1825-1833 was not only the land but all the improvements which included farms, farm houses, outbuildings, mills, the town of South Haven, which was also described in deeds as West Haven, the ferry, the ferry landing, and in Washington, numerous lots, houses and business properties.¹⁵

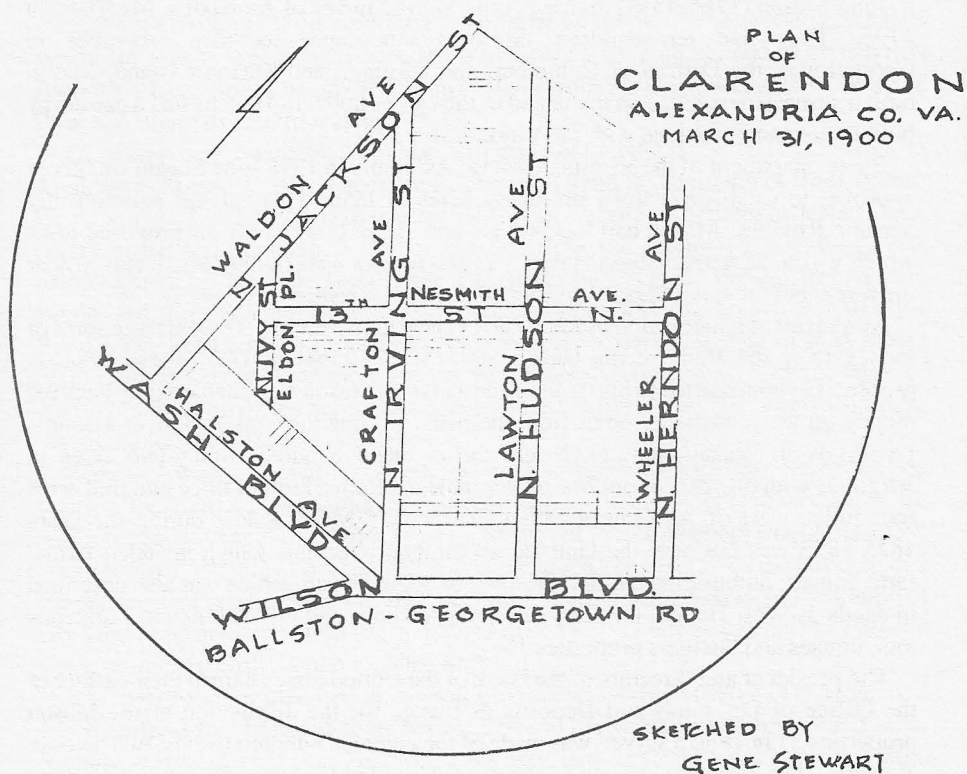
The president and directors of the Bank of the United States named their cashier of the Office of Discounts and Deposits as trustee for the disposition of the Mason properties.¹⁶ In 1836 a survey was made of the eighteen hundred twenty-two acres in Virginia. The surveyor, Lewis Carberry, subdivided the land into sixty-nine parts with forty-three being quarry lots on the river bank, and twenty-six lots or sections inland.¹⁷

Section 15 and the south part of Section 9 were purchased by Robert Cruitt on September 28, 1847 from Robert Widdicomb for \$1698.93. Widdicomb bought it from the bank.¹⁸ Lot 5 of Section 15 containing approximately thirty-four acres was the site of present day Clarendon.

The owners of Lot 5 between 1856-1870 were Amos Denham of Loudoun County; Andrew Hoover; his son, Andrew P. Hoover; Jonah D. Hoover, who paid \$68.00 per acre; Josias Harrison Knott, who paid \$3393.75; and Arthur S. Nesmith, who paid \$4000.00. With the exception of Denham all the owners were from Washington.¹⁹

Mary E. Nesmith, the widow of Arthur S. Nesmith, sold twenty-five of the approximate thirty-four acres to Robert Sprague Hall of Boston, Massachusetts, on October 18, 1897 for \$8000.00. Shortly after Hall purchased the land he sold it to Robert Treat Paine, Jr. also from Boston. Paine had the land subdivided into lots and

streets and dedicated his Plan of Clarendon on March 31, 1900 in accordance with Chapter 483 under the Acts of the Assembly of Virginia of 1887 and 1888.²⁰



Robert T. Paine, Jr. employed Wood, Harmon and Company of Washington to handle the sale of his land. A promotional brochure in the Arlington Historical Society's Archives gives insight to the sales technique used by the real estate company.

The brochure emphasized Clarendon's natural features, its accessibility to Washington, and its ideal suburban location which offered home seekers as perfect a place to live as could be found anywhere near Washington.

Clarendon!

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

IT MEANS _____

Every Man His Own Landlord

IT MEANS _____

A Money-Maker For You

IT MEANS _____

A Profitable Investment For All

IT MEANS _____

A Sensation in Suburban Real Estate

Opening Sale, April 23rd.

But Don't Wait! Go Before! Go Out Now! Go Today!

And Make Sure of Your Lot. First Come, First Served.

Three-fourths of these Lots will be sold at

\$90. to \$140.

ALL LOTS \$2 DOWN.

\$1 TO \$1.25 A WEEK.

WOOD, HARMON & CO.

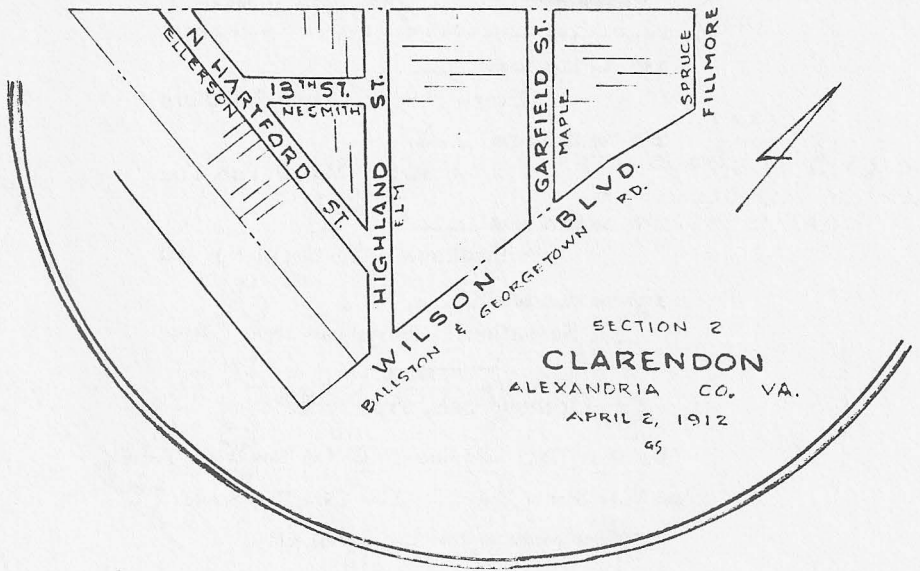
Copyright, 1900.

Largest Suburban Real Estate Operators in the World. Offices in 25 Cities.

The following incentives were used to stimulate the immediate development of Clarendon:

1. The first twenty-five people buying property who agreed to begin building by June 1 and to occupy their houses by November 1, were to be given cash prizes of \$100.00 to \$300.00.
2. Commuters to Washington were to be given free trolley rides for the first two years of their residence in Clarendon. The Aqueduct Bridge which was subsequently replaced by Key Bridge was only eight minutes by trolley from Clarendon.
3. All improvements including gravel roads and sidewalks were provided free of charge by the developer.
4. Lot owners by paying fifty cents a year per lot to the Clarendon Improvement Society were promised that there would be continued care of lots and streets keeping them in park-like condition.

The balance of Lot 5 containing almost nine acres was sold by Mary E. Nesmith on June 8, 1911 to George E. Garrett for \$10,000.00. Garrett subdivided this land which became Section 2 of Clarendon.²¹



The boundaries of the original Clarendon have spread out in all directions over the years, and it has changed from its rural-suburban status to being part of the Metropolitan Washington area.

It has been inferred that Clarendon was named in honor of the Earl of Clarendon. However, there is no proof that this is the case. It is interesting to note that Robert T.P. Storer of Beverly, Massachusetts advised me that his grandfather Robert Treat Paine, Jr. lived near a street named Clarendon in Boston. It was Paine who used the name Clarendon for the first time when he developed the twenty-five acre tract. Paine was a descendant of Robert Treat Paine one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

On the off chance that Clarendon was named in honor of the Earl of Clarendon I did a little more research and obtained the following information.

About two and a half miles east of Salisbury, England, are the ruins of Clarendon Palace. It was at Clarendon Palace in 1164 A.D. that the first important legislative enactments fundamental in the history of English criminal law were written. These enactments are often referred to as the Constitutions of Clarendon. Excavation in 1934-37 located the dais of the great hall and a tile kiln, the only medieval non-monastic example in England, but the site of the palace and the royal hunting box (small country house) are overgrown and visitors are not welcome.²²

Salisbury Cathedral was another of Henry III's great architectural works. He could

watch the progress of the building (1250-1258) from his nearby palace of Clarendon.²³

The first Earl of Clarendon, Edward Hyde, (1609-1674) was a lawyer, a statesman, and an historian. He wrote the *History of the Rebellion*, and the *Clarendon Papers* in which he discussed various important acts of Parliament. He was appointed High Chancellor of England by Charles II in 1657. He was made Chancellor of the University of Oxford (1660-67). The estate of Cornbury was presented to him by the king when he was created viscount. He was mortgagee of the royal domain of Clarendon (from Charles II) from which he took his earldom. He became Earl of Clarendon on April 20, 1661. In 1667 he was impeached for high treason and spent his remaining years in Rouen, France. His body was brought to England and buried in Westminster Abbey.²⁴

One interesting sidelight that I found was that Thomas Ludwell, Secretary of State in Virginia under Berkeley in 1666 was writing to Lord Arlington of the Board of Trade and Lord Clarendon and Lord Berkeley of Stratton on such subjects as the organization of government in Virginia, the fear of proprietary government, tobacco problems, the exploring expedition of 1669-70, and the conjectures as to the proximity of the western sea.²⁵

In all there have been eleven earls of Clarendon, four with the surname Hyde, and seven with the surname Villiers. The present Earl of Clarendon is George Frederick Laurence Hyde Villiers who was born on February 3, 1933.²⁶

Perhaps some day material will come to light that will conclusively establish a stronger connection.

Notes and References

¹Cornelia B. Rose, Jr., *Arlington County, Virginia: A History*, (Arlington: Arlington Historical Society, 1976), p. 4-7.

²Arlington County Deed 102, p. 138-139.

³Prince William County Deed B, p. 104-105.

⁴W. W. Hening, *Statutes at Large*, (Richmond: Franklin Press, 1819), Vol. 5, p. 66.

⁵Rose, *Arlington County*, p. 47.

⁶Harrison Williams, *Legends of Loudoun*, (Garrett and Massie, Inc., 1938), p. 38.

⁷Fairfax Harrison, *Landmarks of Old Prince William*, (Berryville, VA: Chesapeake Book Co., Reissue 1964), p. 153-154.

⁸Fairfax County Will Book A, 1742-1752, 1752-1767, (Berryville, VA: Virginia Book Co., 1982), p. 5,6.

⁹Beth Mitchell, *Beginning at a White Oak*, (McGregor, 1977), p. 257.

¹⁰Fairfax County Northern Neck Land Grant NNF: 214.

¹¹Frederick Tilp, *This Was Potomac River*, (The author, 1978), p. 95-96.

¹²Oliver W. Holmes, ed., *Records of The Columbia Historical Society of Washington, D.C.*, (Washington: The Society), Vol. 53-56, p. 187.

¹³Arlington County Deeds N2-U2, p. 321-325.

¹⁴Nan Netherton, *The Story of Theodore Roosevelt Island*, Unpub. p. 37.

¹⁵Arlington County Deeds N2-U2, p. 321-325, p. 477-479.

- ¹⁶Arlington County Deed V2, p. 81-83.
- ¹⁷Arlington County Deed 141, p. 526-527.
- ¹⁸Arlington County Deed D3 K3, p. 398-399.
- ¹⁹Arlington County Deeds Q3 T3, p. 152-154, 238-241; X3-Z3, p. 19-23, 364-366; A4, p. 314-315.
- ²⁰Arlington County Deeds U4, p. 416-420; V4, p. 388-392; U4, p. 492-500; 1-2, p. 138-139, 475-476.
- ²¹Arlington County Deeds 129, p. 197; 132, p. 279-280.
- ²²Stuart Rossiter, *England, Blue Guide*, (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1980), p. 150.
- ²³William Seymour, *A Historical Guide to the British Monarchy Sovereign Legacy*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980), p. 78.
- ²⁴Hon. Vicary Gibbs, ed., *History of The House of Lords and All Its Members From The Earliest Times*, (Great Britain: St. Catherine's Press, 1913), p. 263-266.
- ²⁵Richard Beale Davis, *Intellectual Life in the Colonial South 1585-1763*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1978), p. 825.
- ²⁶*Debrett's Illustrated Peerage* p. 249.