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"Fare Fac - Say Do"

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The Fare Facs Gazette

The Newsletter of Historic Fairfax City, Inc.

Volume 1, Issue 3

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The History of the Powell/Ostrander House

by William Page Johnson, II

The old home located at 4101 Orchard Drive, Fairfax, Virginia is thought to be at least 200 years old. It was once part of the immense Ravensworth Land Grant of 21,996 acres issued to Col. William Fitzhugh of Stafford County, Virginia in 1694. About 1750 the Ravensworth tract was divided between two of Col. William Fitzhugh's grandsons. Present-day Braddock road was the line of division. Grandson William Fitzhugh received all patent land south of Braddock Road and grandson Col. Henry Fitzhugh received all lands north of Braddock Road. The land remained in the Fitzhugh family for over one hundred years when one thousand, three hundred thirty-two acres (1,332) comprising the extreme northwest portion of the original land grant was sold to Augustine J. Smith and Henry Rose of Fairfax County, Virginia in 1796. One year later, one thousand acres was purchased by Richard Ratcliffe, founder of the Town of Providence, now the City of Fairfax. Richard Ratcliffe devised 493 acres to his son Robert in 1811. Robert Ratcliffe retained ownership of the property until 1836 when he sold it to John Powell.

Then came a succession of speculative absentee owners who undoubtedly leased the land. Owners Robert Proctor and Owen Westcott were New Yorkers. In 1858, the property was sold to a Grocer from Ulster County, New York, Elisha C. Ostrander. He operated a Grocery business in N.W. Washington, D.C. with a partner John W.

Yewell. This may have been the origin of the story associating the Powell/Ostrander farm with the Willard Hotel. According to a brief history in *Northern Virginia Heritage*, by Eleanor Lee Templeman c. 1959, this land comprised the Willard Hotel Winery. "...the winery supplying them [The Willard Hotel] and this gardner's cottage were in existence by 1820...."

Although a native of New York, Elisha Ostrander was arrested in 1862 by Union forces on suspicion of being a "disloyal person" and held for two weeks at the Old Capitol Prison in Washington, DC. It is unclear where he and his family spent the balance of the Civil War, but by 1874 he was operating a grocery business in Washington, DC. In 1875, the Ostrander's sold the farm to fellow New Yorker, Manville Augustus Austin, and his wife, Julia O. Austin. Another interesting footnote occurred with the purchase of the farm by the Austin's. This deed description of references the western boundary as *Roberts Road*. This is the earliest known reference to Roberts Road, thus making it one of the older roads in the City of Fairfax.

Manville Austin was the son of Valorous & Amanda (Hodges) Austin and a Metropolitan Police Captain. He and his family undoubtedly lived on the farm intermittently until he retired from the police force around the turn of the century. The Austin's owned the Farm for 31 years.

Again, there were a series of speculative owners until the property was ultimately sold to Harry and Emma Clark in 1916. The Clark's were members of the Vienna Presbyterian Church. Harry Clark was on the Fairfax Town Council in the 1930's and Emma was a teacher at the Fairfax School (now the Fairfax Museum and Visitors Center).



The Powell/Ostrander House c. 1800?

House History... - continued from pg. 1

In 1926, the Clark's subdivided their 100-acre farm to create one of the first true subdivisions in Fairfax. Three new Fairfax streets were created in the new subdivision: Orchard Drive, Forest Avenue, Virginia Avenue and Dwight Avenue. Dwight Avenue was named for the Clark's *daughter - Dwight!* Forest Avenue was so named because this 25-acre portion of the farm was covered in timber. Orchard Drive was so named because it bisected an 11-acre apple orchard and a vineyard. The origin of Virginia Avenue has yet to be determined.

Sadly, "Jim Crow" was alive and well in the 1920's in Fairfax. The Clark's placed the following restrictive covenants on their new subdivision: "This Subdivision is made, however, under and upon the express conditions that neither said lots nor any interest therein, shall ever be sold, leased, devised, given, granted or conveyed to any one not of the Caucasian race...." Thankfully these covenants are no longer legally enforceable. An additional requirement was that you had to construct a house costing not less than \$4,500.00. The average value of a home in Halemhurst today is \$268,700. For those not doing the math that's an appreciation rate of about 6000%!

In 1936, the house and nearly two acres was sold to Elizabeth C. Murray. Mrs. Murray was very active in Democratic politics and even ran for Congress in the early 1940s. When she died the property was conveyed to her son, Girard Lowery, the present owner.

Chain of Title

4101 Orchard Drive, Fairfax, VA

1986-	Girard R. Lowery, Jr.
1936-1986	Mary L. Chilton and Elizabeth C. Murray
1926-1936	Samuel F. and Harriett H. Cooper
1925-1926	Fairfax Shield & Mary L. McCandlish
1925-1926	B.H. Swart
1916-1925	Harry N. & Emma Askew Clark
1911-1916	Thomas R. Keith
1911-1911	Charles W. King, Jr.
1906-1911	F.A. & Jessie F. d'Astre
1875-1906	Manville Augustus & Julia O. Austin
1858-1875	Elisha C. & Margaret A. Ostrander
1856-1858	Owen & Emily Westcott
1851-1856	Robert & Jane E. Proctor
1845-1851	William E. Newcomb
1836-1845	John & Nancy Powell
1811-1836	Robert & Mildred Ratcliffe
1798-1811	Richard & Locian Ratcliffe
1797-1798	Augustine Jacqueline & Henry Rose
1796-1797	Battaille Fitzhugh
1783-1796	Giles Fitzhugh; unmarried
? -1783	Col. Henry & Sarah (Battaille) Fitzhugh
1701- ?	Henry & Susanna (Cooke) Fitzhugh
1694-1701	William Fitzhugh ("Ravensworth Patent")

From the Desk of the President-

Fairfax, Virginia, August 2003-

Message from the President:

It was a pleasure to see so many of you at our General Meeting on May 22. Our program "Road Show – And Tell" was a big success. Listening to our Fairfax family descendants show, and talk about their precious heirlooms was spellbinding. We have had many requests to do this again, so if you have an heirloom you can share with us, please give me a call.

Our Fall program will be held on October 30. Please "save the date" on your calendar. It will be at Old Town Hall and we promise you a very interesting program.

I hope your summer has been a pleasant and relaxing time for you. Although our Board did not meet in August, many of the Committees continued their project work. One in particular, the Blenheim Committee was in full force working on finalizing the master plan for the Blenheim Site. The plan will go before the City Council on September 9th for final approval. Investigation of the Blenheim family cemetery as well as the Ratcliffe Cemetery has also begun.

HFCI was represented at Fairfax City's Independence Day Parade by the 17th Virginia Infantry, Co. D, Fairfax Rifles and captured 3rd place in the Color Guard category. The Ratcliffe-Allison House and the Museum and Visitors Center were open and had 350 visitors, and over 5, 200 visitors since the opening of the new exhibit in April. One of our Board members, Dolores Testerman, was honored as "Volunteer of the Year" on August 6th by the Inter-Service Club Council of Fairfax. Our Homes Tour Committee met at Karen Stevenson's historic home "The Barbara Lee" to say good-bye to Co-Chair Marjorie Peterson who is moving to Williamsburg. The Committee also gave the final report on the 2003 Historic Homes Tour and began making plans for the next tour which will be held in 2005.

Thank you for your continued support of HFCI. Membership applications are still coming in and if you have not yet joined, please see the attached membership form and send it in today! Without your support we could not continue our work of preserving and promoting this wonderful history we share in our Fairfax community. And, as always, feel free to call me at 703 591 5305 or e-mail me at hilcarn31@aol.com if you have any questions or suggestions. Please join us at our Board meetings, which are held every 2nd Wednesday of the month in Room 306 at City Hall.

Hildie Carney, President
Historic Fairfax City, Inc.

Getting To Know You

Board Member Dolores Testerman



Dolores is our "senior" Board member and 2003 Volunteer of the Year, an honor bestowed on her by the vote of the Board and the InterService Club Council organization of Fairfax.

Dolores was appointed to the HFCI Board in March 1988. Her tireless efforts in just about every activity make her a "most valuable member." Dolores served as secretary for eight years and then went on to chair the Membership Committee and still holds that position after 12 years! She is a charter member of the Fairfax Museum Committee and serves as a volunteer there twice a month.

Dolores's talents are appreciated at every HFCI function from working at the Fall Festival, serving as head docent for the Historic Homes Tour, docent at Civil War Days, making cookies for the general meeting, and riding a float in the 4th of July parade.

Dolores is married to John (Bud) Testerman, has two daughters and one grandson. Before retiring, she worked for the Fairfax County Circuit Court for 29 years. Dolores's talents are also enjoyed in various other organizations including the Woman's Club of Fairfax, the Fairfax County Retired Employees Association and others.

Dolores, we salute you and thank you for all you do!

Advertisements

FOR SALE.

Fine White Leghorn Roosters
from the stock of White & Rice,
Yorktown, New York.

Price Seventy-five Cents.

Address: **M. A. AUSTIN,**
Box 43 **Fairfax, Va.**

HFCI MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/ RENEWAL

HISTORIC FAIRFAX CITY, INC. is a non-profit corporation (501©(3) organization)

Membership Classifications:

- Class A Individual\$25.00
- Class A-1 Additional Household Member\$10.00
- Class B-1 Non-profit Organizations\$35.00
- Class B-2 For profit Organizations\$50.00

Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership application and check made out to Historic Fairfax City Inc. for: \$ _____

Name or Organization: _____

Telephone #: _____

Contact name: _____

e-mail: _____

Address: _____

Return to: Historic Fairfax City, Inc.,
Attention: Membership Committee
10209 Main Street
Fairfax, VA 22030

Announcements

Fall General Meeting of Historic Fairfax City, Inc.

Thursday, October 30 at Old Town Hall at 7:30PM.

Open to anyone. Please plan to attend.

The above ad was placed in the Fairfax Herald edition of 11/24/1905 p. 3, c. 1 by Manville A. Austin.

"Committed to Excellence"

Return Address - Historic Fairfax City, Inc.
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