

HISTORY OF CENTREVILLE AND VIRGINIA RUN

By Priscilla Knight

The written history of Centreville and Virginia Run goes back to the 1600s when British colonists and fortune hunters came to the New World for opportunity, adventure and prosperity. From the first settlement in Jamestown in 1607, colonists spread north, west and south.

In 1649, King Charles II of England granted Northern Virginia land to seven wealthy noblemen. In 1719, Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax, took possession of all this land. Henceforth, the Virginia Assembly formed Fairfax County in 1742.

Newgate Settlement Becomes Centreville

A colonial settlement grew where an old Indian trail brought settlers to a spot high on a bluff with vistas of mountains, and beautiful valleys carved by fresh water streams (runs) and colored by meadows of wild flowers. The earliest patents for land go back to 1725. In time, Willoughby Newton became owner of the entire area that would become the village of Centreville. By 1749, he owned more than 6,400 acres. He would lease land to tenant farmers and convicts released from English prisons. In 1760, the land which is now Virginia Run was owned and farmed by Tyler and James Waugh and their tenant farmers.

The Colonial farmers' hard work brought them a prosperity they never would have had back in Europe. They also were appreciating their freedom of limited self-rule. The wealthier land owners were not like the idle European aristocracy. Eighteenth century Americans thought idleness was as sinful as drunkenness or gluttony. Almost everyone from slave to plantation owner worked from dawn to dusk. Crime was almost unknown.

A French nobleman, Michael Gillaume Jean de Crevecoeur, came to America in 1759. He wrote in his book about American life about the general prosperity he found. "Here there are no great lords with everything and a horde of common people with nothing. Here are no kings, no courts, no luxuries, and no poverty...Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men whose labor and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."

Enough travelers came through Centreville that an inn was needed. Local tradition says Newgate Inn (later called Eagle Tavern) was built in 1749. The inn's owner probably named it for the Newgate section of London known for its market and debtor's prison. Prisoners could send out invitations for social gatherings and dances in their rooms. They could purchase alcoholic beverages from the gaolers for these occasions.

By 1773, the village was referred to as Newgate. Thomas Jefferson published the first map that identified the town as Newgate in 1787. In time, Newgate residents wanted to break away from the prison connection. They asked the Virginia General Assembly to rename the town to Centreville. The General Assembly officially chartered the new town of Centreville in 1792.

Colonial Days and Revolution

Centreville truly was the centre (English spelling) of activity. Officials who traveled from the County Court House in Old Town Alexandria to Leesburg, Winchester, Warrenton and other western towns would rest in Centreville, which was at the centre of their journey. Shenandoah Valley farmers transported their tobacco and produce to the Occoquan and Potomac River ports through Centreville on Mountain Road, which is now called Braddock Road. George Washington stopped at least four times to sleep in tavern inns, or "ordinaries" such as "The Ordinary of the Black Horse" or "Eagle Tavern." Thomas Jefferson rested in Centreville on his way from Charlottesville to Washington for his Presidential Inauguration.

On October 25, 1798, Anthony Thornton ran an advertisement in the *Alexandria Gazette* for his tavern. The ad said:

The Subscriber takes this method of informing the Public that he continues to keep a House of Entertainment for Travellers at the Sign of the SPREAD EAGLE in the Town of Centreville, Virginia, where Travellers meet with Peace and Plenty, at his former prices. He at the same time returns his grateful acknowledgments to those traveling Gentlemen who have hitherto favoured him with their custom, and begs a continuance of their favors, which he hopes to merit, from his attention to business and desire to give satisfaction. (Centreville, Virginia: Its History and Architecture, page 21)

Obviously, Mr. Thornton had not heard of short and pithy ads!

The importance of tobacco in Fairfax cannot be underestimated. Plantation owners' wealth grew the more tobacco they grew to satiate the huge European demand for the weed. After the tobacco was cut, workers and slaves packed the plant in great casks called hogsheads, tied them to ox teams and rolled them down rudimentary trails to the Occoquan and Potomac Rivers. Ships would carry the tobacco to England. Several of the main roads in Fairfax today were once these "rolling roads," such as Rolling Road, and Ox Road. Braddock Road and Union Mill Road in Centreville were rolling roads.

Legend has it that Major General Edward Braddock used Mountain Road to Winchester in 1775 during the French and Indian War. It had rained so much that his military caravan became stuck in the Centreville clay. To lighten the load, Braddock had two brass cannons and \$25,000 to \$30,000 worth of gold coins buried. Braddock died from battle wounds soon after and the buried treasure was forgotten. No one has ever found it—if the story is true. No telling what you'll find in your backyard!

Fairfax County's favorite sons, George Washington, Richard Bland Lee (of Sully Plantation) and George Mason, established Fairfax as a center of leadership, courage, and intellectual enlightenment. George Washington became commander-in-chief of the Continental Army at the start of the American Revolution. Richard Bland Lee served as a Fairfax County judge, and was elected to represent Virginia in the first Congress. He was pivotal for selecting Washington, D.C. as the new Capital. Robert E. Lee was related to him. George Mason wrote the Virginia Constitution of 1776 and the Virginia Declaration of Rights, which served as the model for the U. S. Constitution's Bill of Rights. The new United States elected George Washington the first President.

After the deaths of these Founding Fathers, Fairfax County's population and fortunes declined. More than one hundred years of tobacco growing had depleted the soil of necessary nutrients. The Industrial Revolution, starting in the 1840s, brought new farming technology to Fairfax, and the county's economy started to improve, but Centreville's economy did not. Little River Turnpike and the new Orange & Alexandria Railroad took travelers north of Centreville. The turnpikes through Centreville were not as well-traveled. In 1835, the *Gazetteer*, a geographical dictionary, reported the following:

Centreville P.V. (Post Village) derives its name from its central position...Its situation is elevated and highly picturesque affording one of the best mountain prospects in the state of Virginia. It has always been remarkable for the salubrity of its air, and the health of its inhabitants...For some time past this village has been declining but the spirit of industry and enterprise at present manifested by its inhabitants justifies the hope of a more favorable state of things. Population 220 of whom 2 are attorneys and 3 physicians. (Centreville, Virginia: Its History and Architecture)

Despite hope of prosperity, Centreville's population and economy continued to decline.

The Civil War Destroys Centreville

The American Civil War from 1861 to 1865 turned Fairfax upside down. The expansion of the railroad system brought Northerners seeking new markets to Fairfax. They and many Virginians loyal to the United States opposed secession from the Union. In fact, the Fairfax delegate to Richmond voted against secession. The Secessionists prevailed 88 to 55 and Virginia prepared for war. Northern and Southern scouts and patrols constantly reconnoitering across Fairfax terrified so many people that many of them moved their families with little preparation. Some “New York Staters” fled before Confederate troops arrested a large number of them and put them in prison in Richmond. Southern sympathizers also fled in fear from Federal troops moving into Northern Virginia.

No town in Virginia was caught more in the crossfire than Centreville. The War Between the States turned Centreville into a wasteland. The roads that brought travelers through the town also brought troops. The Confederates garrisoned a regiment in the village in June 1861. Centreville was strategic because of its high plateau, easy access, and proximity to Washington, D.C. In July, Federal General Irvin McDowell started moving 37,000 inexperienced soldiers to Centreville to intercept Confederate troops coming northeast from the Shenandoah Valley.

On that trip to Centreville, Union Major Sullivan Ballou wrote his wife his last letter home, which documentary producer Ken Burns made famous in his television series “The Civil War.” Ballou’s letter conveys the reason why many of the more 600,000 soldiers killed in the war were willing to die.

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days – perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more....

I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American Civilization now leans on the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and sufferings of the Revolution. And I am willing – perfectly willing – to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt....

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me unresistibly on with all these chains to the battlefield.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And as hard as it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together, and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood, around us. I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me – perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar, that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed. If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name.

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the gladdest days and in the darkest nights...always, always, and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; as the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again....

Major Ballou was killed two weeks later at the First Battle of Manassas, Bull Run.

The Union army made camp in Centreville on July 18. A skirmish that night left 83 Union soldiers dead and turned Centreville churches, inns and homes into makeshift hospitals. Utter chaos broke out as wounded, hungry and thirsty soldiers crowded into these facilities. The skirmish did not prepare the surgeons for what soon awaited them.

Spies gave Confederate generals advanced warning of McDowell's movements. On the morning of July 21, 1861, Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston positioned his troops along Bull Run near Manassas Junction just west of Centreville and Virginia Run. Troops under three other Confederate generals, including Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, joined the ranks in Manassas as the Union army engaged them.

Both sides thought the war would be over after one battle. So assured were Washingtonians that the Union army would defeat the Confederates, that many ladies with parasols and gentlemen headed for Centreville to watch the first major encounter of the war. The Union army initially overwhelmed the Confederates. When Southern soldiers started to retreat, Gen. Jackson stood tall and firm on his horse. One soldier shouted to his fellow Southerners to look at Gen. Jackson, standing "like a stone wall." They stopped retreating and fought with such renewed fury that the Union lines broke. The overconfident Union soldiers made a hasty retreat...right into the ladies and gentleman who were throwing picnic baskets into their buggies turning for Washington. The Confederates let out a terrifying high pitch scream—the "Rebel Yell"—as they chased the scurrying Northerners back to Centreville. This disorderly retreat became known as "the great skedaddle."

The dead and dying poured into the little village on wagons. A soldier from Massachusetts described the scene:

...(Centreville) had been the great focus of interest: for here the wounded had been gathered and here likewise the dead were buried. It would seem that, in a well-known Virginia town on the high road, only thirty miles from the capital, boards enough might have been found to make into rude coffins...but they could not be; and as it was necessary to bury them immediately, they were wrapped and covered with their own blankets, and thus consigned to the earth. In this poverty-stricken town, it was impossible to find supplies of any kind or description... (Centreville Virginia: Its History and Architecture, page 54)

Despite their victory, the Confederate army was too exhausted to pursue the Union army. But, in October, Gen. Johnston ordered his force of almost 40,000 soldiers to Centreville to build what became the largest military earthworks ever constructed up to that time. A veteran of the encampment wrote about the experience in 1870:

Arriving at Centreville about midnight (Oct. 16, 1861) the boys threw their tired frames upon the ground and slept soundly...Our camp was located on the hill to the west and south of the village... Ere the sun slumbered in the west, the hills and valleys around the little village of Centreville, were occupied by Regimental and Brigade camps. As the darkness increased, the skies above were lighted with the glimmer of a thousand camp fires; the lively song of the happy soldier...could be heard upon every hill and in every vale... and the fields around were converted into drill ground for thousands of Confederate soldiers. (Centreville Virginia: Its History and Architecture, page 55)

They spent the harsh winter of 1861-62 in the heavily fortified camps, drilling and building the earthworks. They fooled Union scouts by placing Quaker guns—logs shaped like cannons and painted black—in the embrasures. Many soldiers' families joined them in the primitive camps, where they scrounged for food and firewood. In order to stay warm, the soldiers built almost 1,500 log huts from local trees. Many of these huts were erected where Newgate Shopping Center is today. By the end of the war, every tree from Centreville to Fairfax Court House (Fairfax City) was cut down. The entire region looked like a muddy desert.

Legend has it that John S. Mosby and his band of nine Confederate raiders sometimes hid in Centreville homes during the war. One member of his gang was Centreville resident Robert Spindle. Mosby practiced law, a graduate of the University of Virginia. He joined the Confederate army as a private under Gen. J.E.B. Stuart. His tactical brilliance, speed, cunning and cool bravery earned Mosby the nickname “the gray ghost.” Mosby’s gang sabotaged, harassed and kidnapped Union forces throughout the war in Fairfax County. It may have been Mosby’s guerrillas who blew up the train bridge that crossed Cub Run. The remains of the bridge can be seen just east of the Virginia Run Estate lots near one of the Cub Run trails.

In spring 1862, Gen. Johnston withdrew his army south to defend Richmond. According to the book *Fairfax, Virginia: A City Traveling Through Time*, page 24, the withdrawal of thousands of soldiers revealed the magnitude of destruction to Centreville. “In less than one year, the devastation wreaked by soldiers living in primitive camps and relying mostly on their immediate surroundings for survival left the region a stark and hollow image of its former self.” A Union soldier described Centreville and surrounding areas in a letter home to Pennsylvania in April.

...The Rebels have spent immense labor in fortifying that position. It is surrounded on all sides by forts and Earth works of great size and strength, between the Junction and Bull Run nothing but one Fortification after another is to be seen. All their winter huts are still standing...All the Country from Manassas to Fairfax (Court House), and further for what I know, is one vast barren waste: not a fence to be seen as far as the eye can reach, the land is horribly cut by thousands of wagon roads turning in different directions: the timber was all cut off last winter and used for fuel so I know that there is not enough timber left to fence the land.

After the withdrawal, Union forces took control of the region and held it for the remainder of the war. After the rout at Bull Run, President Abraham Lincoln replaced Gen. McDowell with Gen. George McClellan. After months of McClellan’s unwillingness to fight, Lincoln finally persuaded McClellan to try to capture Richmond. Although his troops outnumbered the Southern troops, his hesitancy and extended battle lines allowed the Confederate army to hold Richmond and push back McClellan.

On June 1, 1862, Robert E. Lee became commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. That month, Stonewall Jackson brilliantly began moving his army north through the Shenandoah Valley, pursuing and attacking Union units more than twice in number. Back in Washington, the commander of the Union army consolidated forces for another march towards Richmond. Generals Lee, Jackson, and J.E.B. Stuart would halt them again in Manassas.

Gen. Stuart received information about Union plans from a beautiful 20-year-old young lady, Antonia Ford. She was later arrested and put in prison in Washington. Joseph Willard, a 41-year-old Vermonter, had come to Washington to join his brother’s hotel enterprise. He was placed in charge of female prisoners. He fell in love with Antonia, freed her from prison and married her. The Willard Hotel is one of Washington’s most famous and posh hotels to this day.

Both the Confederate and Union armies converged in Centreville and made camps in preparation for battle. Once again, all the eyes of the torn nation looked towards little Centreville and Bull Run to determine the fate of the nation. The Second Battle of Manassas occurred on August 29-30, 1862. Once again, superior southern generals outsmarted Union generals, but this time Union soldiers fought well and their lines did not break. After another awful hand-to-hand battle in pouring rain near present day Rt. 50, Ox Road and Fair Oaks Mall, the Union army retreated to protect the Federal city.

Gen. Lee moved his army to Maryland. The withdrawal of Confederate troops from Centreville revealed even more devastation than had occurred nine months earlier. Vermonter William Knight’s letter to his wife describes conditions.

Fairfax Court House Dec 12th/62

Dear Jane,

I will now try to give you a short history of our journey from our old camp We were called out a 2 o'clock this morning, struck tents at four & was on our way at five The ground was froze quite hard...The roads were lined with dead horses & mules & what we see everywhere here deserted plantations & mutilated buildings...I am so lame tonight I can hardly move. We have marched about 18 miles today & this afternoon the ground has thawed & the mud is ankle deep.

Centerville Dec 14th/62

Dear wife, We started from Fairfax Court House yesterday at eight o'clock and moved towards centerville. The road all along we found strewn with broken muskets knapsacks &c We crossed the battlefield of Chantilla. The men on our side appeared to be buried well but those that appeared to be on the rebel side were scarcely covered up. I saw one that was thrown into a ditch head to the south, his head was above the surface of the earth. This looks rather hard to a green Vermonter I tell you We marched 14 miles yesterday 6 miles farther than we need to get to the same place we are living on half rations for we have not got wagons enough to bring supplies to us. I tell you Jane when I think of those old farmers up there in Vermont sitting in their easy chairs beside a comfortable fire & grumbling about the hard times I wish they could take our places through one march such as we have just had. A march of 26 miles in two days, half fed (for I had only one lb of bread & few apples that the Adjutant gave me for two days rations) seventy lbs on their backs through mud & mire & then let them talk about hard times....

(Unpublished letter from William Elbridge Knight to his wife, Jane Rhoda Martin Knight, provided by Judith M. E. Fugate, St. Cloud, Florida, *Fairfax, Virginia: A City Traveling Through Time*, pages 27-28.)

On April 9, 1865, Gen. Lee surrendered to Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in Appomattox, Virginia. More than 600,000 soldiers had died. Many times more suffered injuries and amputations. Centerville suffered too. An account of the war's destruction on the village was written in 1865:

Centerville is even more of a desert. Once a village of rare beauty, perched upon a gentle slope of a high ridge and commanding a view of fertile valleys for many miles, war swept it...its ruins lie about, invested with all the saddening influences of perfect desolation....
(Centerville, Virginia: Its History and Architecture, page 59)

So desolate was Fairfax's landscape after the war that even in the late 1880s the newly completed Washington Monument could be seen 20 miles away in Burke.

Not much had improved years later. The Washington "Sunday Star" described Centerville in its August 16, 1914 edition:

Centerville is not a stirring place. It does not feel a single busy throb. It is stagnant and drowsy. Some men say "it's dead." If ever a village was killed in war it was Centerville. Perhaps it was choked by smoke of burning powder or smothered by the sulphurous gas from guns; perhaps it was blighted by the rain of shell or overcome by the horrors that it saw. Today it bears wounds and scars. Its wounds are bullet-pitted walls and shot-riven trees. Its scars are sunken graves and vine-veiled redoubts.

A dozen houses compose the hamlet... They bear a feeble and listless look, and were they sentient things they would likely say: "Centerville is a little slow just now, but oh, my! If you had been here about fifty years ago you would laugh at us for being a bit shaky and out of joint now." (Centerville, Virginia: Its History and Architecture, pg. 59-60.)

Growth in the Twentieth Century

Centreville remained a sleepy, rural village largely removed from the rest of the world until the 1930s. President Franklin D. Roosevelt increased the size of the Federal Government to counter the Great Depression. The new programs, bureaus and agencies brought an influx of employees to Washington, D.C. The automobile made it possible to work in the city and live in Fairfax. It took 140 years, from 1790 to 1930, for the population of Fairfax County to double from 12,300 to 25,000 residents. It almost doubled again by the time the United States entered World War II in 1941—the year Centreville homes and businesses got electricity.

More government programs for fighting the war brought an influx of workers and their families to Fairfax. After the war ended in 1945, many former soldiers and sailors made Fairfax their home. Between 1945 and 1950, the population doubled again to 100,000. By 1970, the county's population had grown to more than 450,000. The county was changing from an agricultural and dairy farm county to a suburb of Washington, D.C.

Since 1970, Fairfax has attracted seven Fortune 500 companies, hundreds of trade associations and foreign-owned companies, and become headquarters for many more businesses. The communications and technology businesses boomed, as did the service industries which serve them. Soon, Fairfax residents had one of the highest standards of living in the world and one of the highest median family incomes in the nation.

With all this growth, people wanted new homes.

Developers Plan Virginia Run

In the mid-1980s, home mortgage interest rates started to fall from 16 and 17 percent. As interest rates decreased, the demand for new homes increased. Kettler and Scott (KSI) developers wanted to develop a planned community along Pleasant Valley Road. Dulles International Airport and high tech businesses opening along the Route 28 corridor made Centreville an ideal location for new homes. KSI's large sales brochure said :

There is a part of Fairfax County where living well still means a certain grace and style. Where the beauty of the land is still something to cherish. Where winding lanes and sweeping green lawns still lead to grand homes and warm hospitality. It is here that Virginia's finest homebuilders have joined with one of America's most respected land development companies, to create "Virginia Run." An elegant community in the tradition of Old Virginia, for a new generation of Virginians...

It's the kind of community where you'll meet friends at "the club" for tennis, where neighbors gather for cookouts and bridge clubs, where children play and grow up together. Driving down a lane, jogging along a path, even riding by on a horse, you'll pass one another with a smile and a wave. The warm host and the generous neighbor: They're a part of the way Virginians have always lived, and you'll find them here still.

To add to the 18th century feel, Kettler and Scott named many of the streets in Virginia Run after James River plantations and Colonial Williamsburg places. So, let's go back into history.

Virginia Run Street Names Have a History

Eagle Tavern Way and Lane

Both of these streets owe their names to the historic Newgate Inn, where George Washington ate at least four times. Slaves were sold under its sign which displayed an eagle. Because they couldn't read, they nicknamed the inn "Eagle Tavern." The name stuck by the 1790s.

Flowerdew Hundred Court

According to *Plantation Homes of the James River* by Bruce Roberts, the term "hundred" may have been used "because one hundred settlers was the ideal number of people for a plantation, or because the first division of land made by the Virginia Company for ancient planters was one hundred acres." Flowerdew Court was named for Temperance Flowerdew, wife of Sir George Yeardly, Virginia governor in 1618. He owned 1,000 acres along the James River where he erected America's first windmill in 1621 to grind corn and wheat. Through the years, the plantation's name has also been spelled Flower de Hundred.

Jordons Journey Drive

Englishman Samuel Jordon came to Virginia with his family in the early 1600s. In 1619, he patented land and founded Jordon's Journey (not Journey) Plantation in present Prince George County. According to *Genealogies of Virginia Families*, Jordon served as burgess for Charles City. His family survived the 1622 Indian massacre, because he fortified his house "and lived in desight of the enemy." He died in 1623.

Martins Brandon Way

John Martin's Brandon Plantation still thrives east of Flowerdew Hundred along the James River. John Martin, a spirited Englishman, traveled to Virginia with the Jamestown settlers in 1607. Martin defeated hunger and hardship, but he liked to argue too much. Jamestown's new governor, Lord Delaware, banished Martin in 1610 from the settlement. He and his followers did not perish, and in 1616, Martin received from England a 7,000 acre grant and charter for Brandon Plantation. The 1622 massacre of settlers and a raging fire left Martin in debt. He died a pauper in 1632.

The plantation became a profitable agricultural and commercial center under new ownership. The Harrison family bought Brandon in 1720, and their friend, Thomas Jefferson, designed Brandon estate. This working plantation is open to the public during Historic Garden Week each April.

Martins Hundred Drive

In 1618, 220 settlers looking for land and adventure left England for Virginia. They developed Martin's Hundred Plantation near Jamestown on the James River. Its headquarters, called Wolstenholme Towne, comprised a fort, church and homes. Indians attacked Wolstenholme in the Massacre of 1622. They killed or carried off settlers and destroyed the village. The 21,500 acre plantation was later divided into smaller tracts and sold.

In 1976, while digging for 18th century dependencies (slave quarters, etc.) at Carter's Grove Plantation near Williamsburg, archaeologist unearthed a 15th century suit of armor and other remains of Wolstenhome. These fascinating artifacts are on display at the museum at the sight.

Meherrin Court and Drive

There used to be a town called Centerville in southern Virginia, near the Meherrin River. Centerville no longer exists, but the town of Meherrin does in Lurenborg County. The Meherrin River meanders through several counties into North Carolina. Virginia Run's Meherrin also meanders.

Smiths Trace, Smithfield Place and Court, and Smithaven Place

Virginia Run would not tell the story of Virginia's first settlements if it didn't acknowledge the most famous settler—Captain John Smith. Who hasn't heard the story of how the beautiful, young Indian princess, Pocahontas, saved Smith's life after her father, Chief Powhatan, ordered his execution? After that close call, Smith built a fort directly across from Jamestown in 1609 as "a haven in case the Indians attacked Jamestown." Get it: *Smithaven*. The fort became known as Smith's Fort Plantation.

Chief Powhatan, leader of more than thirty tribes in Tidewater, was wary of sharing his land with pale-faced men in tights. But, when Pocahontas fell for another one, John Rolfe, Powhatan gave the happy couple rights to the plantation land as a wedding gift in 1614.

The plantation's restored 1760s home and beautiful gardens are maintained by the Garden Club of Virginia. It is open to the public from mid-April to September.

Trace

Bromfield Trace, Gristmill Square Trace, Pebblebrook Trace, Pelhams Trace, and Smith's Trace have an old southern nomenclature. Trace simply means "path."

Wetherburn Court and Drive

Henry Wetherburn operated two popular taverns in Williamsburg, Va., before his death in the 1760s: Wetherburn's Tavern and Raleigh Tavern. Wetherburn's Tavern featured a "great room" which was used for town meetings, scientific lectures and elegant balls. Today, the taverns are popular tourist sights in Virginia's old colonial capital.

Let the Building Begin!

In 1987, the first bulldozers started to turn farmland into Virginia Run. They uncovered Civil War artifacts, including at least one cannon ball.

The first family moved into Virginia Run in October 1987. Soon, the twelve original builders couldn't build homes fast enough when 1988 rushed in. They raised their prices almost every month. One builder did so well that he closed his sales trailer and took his company to the Caribbean for a week! It seemed that Virginia Run's 1,200 some acres would become "built out" in short order.

Northern Virginia builders competed for lots on the southern side of Barnesdale Path in order to enter the *Festival of Homes* showcase. In October 1988, bus loads of tourists came into Virginia Run to see the latest, most dramatic homes built in the Washington metropolitan area. The builders' fully decorated homes competed for best designs, kitchens, bedrooms, landscaping, etc. Many of the homes featured two-story foyers and great rooms, enormous master bedroom suites with fireplaces, sunrooms and the finest building materials. Some of these homes would sell or list for almost one million dollars—an enormous price for Centerville in 1988.

In 1989, Kettler and Scott placed a two page center-fold ad in the Style section of “The Washington Post.” It featured an old painting of a white horse held by the reins by a groomsman in colonial garb. The heading said, “Living at Virginia Run Hasn’t Changed in 150 years.” The text said, in part:

*The more the world changes, the more valuable are the things that don’t. Nothing bears this out so eloquently as life at Virginia Run.
Preserved is the picturebook feel of the woods and flowering meadows of Old Virginia...The 20th century intrudes, of course, but tastefully.*

Of course life had changed in 150 years. Prior to the Industrial Revolution in 1840, only a handful of gentleman farmers like Lord Fairfax and Robert “King” Carter (the wealthiest man in Colonial Virginia) lived in nice homes. More than ninety percent of Virginians lived in shacks with dirt floors. Virginia Run thrown back in time would have been owned by one man, and the rest of us would have been subsistent tenants or slaves living in shacks. How wonderful! Basically, Virginia Run would soon comprise hundreds of plantation home replicas where weekend farmers grew geraniums and “servants” delivered pizza for dinner.

The 1988 real estate river of gold turned into molasses in 1990 when the country’s economy took a downturn. Some of the original twelve builders in Virginia Run started to go out of business. Other builders bought foreclosed building lots from banks. The Board of Trustees (BOT) and Architectural Review Board (ARB) worked with the new builders so that their homes would harmonize with existing homes.

Virginia Run, The Estates

The governing boards made the first major revisions to the ARB Guidelines in 1991 and 1992 as lots in the Virginia Run Estates section were being sold. These fifteen five-acre lots needed different guidelines. Virginia Run’s theme was horse riding and fox hunts. Would these new owners keep horses? How many? The governing boards decided only two horses per lot. Many other guidelines were modified.

Most Estate purchasers wanted custom designed homes with selected custom builders. The ARB worked with the homeowners and their individual architects and builders to make the new homes “harmonious” with each other and with the rest of Virginia Run, as required by Virginia Run’s governing documents.

Storms Hit Virginia Run

In June 1996, an F-2 tornado ripped through the Estate section. The tornado mowed down hundreds of trees, blew out windows, blew off roof shingles and siding, and shredded screened porches. No one was hurt. Neighbors from unaffected streets in Virginia Run rushed over to the Estates to help.

In April 1999, a powerful hail storm hit. Insurance companies declared all of Centreville a disaster area, because almost every house needed a new roof and siding. Homes in Virginia Run looked new after the roofers and siding companies finished their work.

The Ridings is Annexed into Virginia Run

Owners of land just north of Virginia Run wanted to develop their acreage. In the late 1990s, the owners started meeting with the Virginia Run Board of Trustees to discuss plans. After months of negotiations, the Board was satisfied that annexation would benefit Virginia Run and asked the community to vote. Homeowners voted to annex the land. Certain provisions were made to protect privacy for existing homes, and protect forests and wildlife. Early in the 21st century, builders started constructing homes in The Ridings. The number of Virginia Run homes went from 1354 to 1405.

Today, Virginia Run continues the traditions which made Virginia great: hard work, service, concern for neighbors and community, recreation, relaxation...and just plain fun!

Virginia Run is a wonderful—*and historic*-- place to call home.