

USES, HISTORIC
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Prince William Public Library
Manassas, Va.

REFERENCE

Bel Air Plantation Five More To Be Seen

Six of eastern Prince William's most interesting homes, including historic Bel Air Plantation, will be open to visitors Sunday as the Trowel Garden Club conducts a house tour to raise funds to carry out its commitment to landscape the front of Potomac Hospital.

Tickets and a map will be available at the Lazy Susan on the day of the tour, which is to last from noon to 5 p.m. Five local florists are providing flowers for the homes, and each is also handling tickets. Tickets may also be purchased at any of the homes.

A contemporary home in Graham Park Shores, designed and constructed by its owners, Mr. and Mrs. Jordan W. Bailey, features cabinets and furniture built by the owner. It is located at 3202 Riverview Drive, Triangle.

Also in Graham Park Shores is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Dunlap, 1841 Cedar Drive, Triangle. The upper level is decorated in Victorian fashion, with the lower level in country English. Throughout the house are antique clocks, paintings, lamps, brass and pewter.

Featherstone Farm, 14735 Featherstone Road, Woodbridge, is the residence of Mr. and Mrs. John W. Woodward Sr. The Colonial home overlooks the Potomac and was a hunting lodge for the Hoover family and later a working farm.

Two homes on Swan Point Road, Woodbridge, overlook the Occoquan River. The home, seen by motorists crossing the Occoquan on I-95 southbound, is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Grover J. Manderfield. It was built to minimize maintenance, both inside and out, and to provide space for a large, active family. It is located at 1098 Swan Point Road.

Next door at No. 1100 is the multi-level home of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Fisher. Mrs. Fisher's yoga studio has a wall of mirrors. The dining room, three stories in the air, features a view of the woods and river, and a Mediterranean room has a 25-foot cathedral ceiling.

destroyed. They put in heat, water and electricity.

One of the four upstairs bedrooms was turned into a bath and closet, another bath was built in what is used as an office on the main floor, and modern kitchen conveniences were installed in the ground floor.

Like many Virginia homes of its time, Bel Air has a large hall running from front to back. The main entrance steps and porch, seen first from the access road, were rebuilt by the Florys in what they believe to be the style of the original. They replaced a porch with columns which were added to but didn't fit with the rest of the house.

From the double doors one looks through the hall to the carriage entrance and onto the bowling green. Off one side of the hall are the office and the library, while the "red room," called that because it is now painted in a red color closely matching the original, is off the other side.

The Washington Guest Chamber, where George Washington and his bride Martha spent a night on their honeymoon on the way to Mount Vernon from Williamsburg, opens onto the red room.

The red room, probably used as a dining room on festive occasions, is now furnished with pieces dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. Much of the furniture has been inherited by the Florys, while other pieces have been purchased or received as gifts.

There was no furniture in the house when they bought it, Mrs. Flory said, but they have collected enough to furnish the entire 14 rooms as they could have been furnished when Bel Air was a thriving plantation.

It is still a working farm. The Florys raise Black Angus cattle and grow hay for the cattle. And the gardens have been rebuilt from thicket to lush green lawns with bright spring flowers and sturdy trees, visible from the many windows.

One window is partly covered by the stairway, which leads to the top floor. In one of the four remaining bedrooms, Parson



ENORMOUS FIREPLACE ONCE USED FOR COOKING — A focal point of the dining room on the ground floor of Bel Air Plantation is this huge fireplace

that is supported by a 20 foot wide chimney, now used for warmth and pleasure.



RESTORED MANSION — Bel Air Plantation was restored by its present owners Dr. and Mrs. William E. S. Flory over the past 25 years. It has a pre-Georgian front with an unbalanced window placement. One of the chimneys is 20 feet wide and more than two stories high. (JM Photos by Ann Holiday).



AN OFF CENTER HALLWAY — The hallway of Bel Air, as seen looking toward the main entrance, is placed off center and runs from front to back of the house.

a 25-foot cathedral ceiling, exposed massive beams and a floor - to - ceiling stone fireplace.

Bel Air Plantation on Delaney Road just off Minnieville Road near Dale City, represents nearly a quarter century of loving restoration by Dr. and Mrs. William E. S. Flory. A plaque affixed to an exterior wall dates the manor house at 1740, but Mrs. Flory said it is believed the stone lower portion antedates that by as much as 50 years. It possibly supported a frame or log structure, which is believed to have been fortified against attack from Indians.

The present brick structure, built in 1740 by Charles Ewell, had not been regularly inhabited for about 18 years when the Florys purchased it in 1948.

A new roof had been placed on the house in 1940 after a group of women from Manassas had walked through the overgrown woods to look at the house and were caught in a thunderstorm. They reported "rainwater pouring down the grand stairway" in an interview with the local press, which, Mrs. Flory said, shamed the owners into repairing the roof.

Later, the Florys replaced the roof with one closely resembling the original red tile roof.

The family was living in an old Alexandria home when they bought Bel Air. They planned to use their new old home for weekends.

Mrs. Flory described Bel Air's condition at that time as about like Rockledge in Occoquan is now - run down and overgrown. Vandals had made repeated attacks, and chair railings and mantels were found in the woods.

The vandalism didn't stop when the restoration started, and the Florys soon found it necessary to move into Bel Air to keep their work from being

remaining bedrooms. Parson Mason L. Weems is believed to have written his stories about George Washington. This room is now used as a study.

The ground floor has sweet access to the gardens, as the main floor is raised high off the ground. One end of the ground floor is used as a dining room and family room. One wall is dominated by a huge fireplace, whose chimney is 20 feet wide and has five flues. All the fireplaces in the house work.

Through a pantry is the kitchen, spacious enough for a dining table, and off the kitchen is a storeroom. The downstairs floors are brick.

The plantation has a graveyard, although none of the headstones were left when the Florys took over. Dr. Flory's parents are buried there, as are Parson Weems and many of the Ewells.

The house is said to be haunted by at least 11 ghosts. Two ghosts have been "seen" in one room and guests have refused to sleep in the guest room because of the ghosts. Mrs. Flory said, firmly stating she has not seen any ghosts herself.

Stories are told, however, that there is a brightly lit midnight feast in the library when a member of the Ewell family dies.

Skeptics and believers will have to see for themselves Sunday on the tour.