

## Bloom Hill Farm - haven for history buffs?

By HEIDI BAUMSTARK  
Observer staff

Considering its origins from the late 1700s, Bloom Hill Farm earns the distinction of being one of the oldest houses in the Manassas area. The property is located on Lucasville Road, which is named after the area once known as Lucasville.

Don Wilson, Virginian librarian in the RELIC Room at Bull Run Regional Library in Manassas, confirmed that the original part of the house at Bloom Hill dates to the 1780-1790 time period, making it one of the oldest in Prince William County. Today, the house and a little over an acre are for rent and sure to grab the attention of any history buff.

According to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey Form, Bloom Hill Farm includes 130 acres, and its history



Heidi Baumstark / the Bull Run Observer

Built in the late 1700s, Bloom Hill is one of the oldest homes in the Manassas area.

is linked with Clover Hill, an adjoining farm to the north. Bloom Hill was part of the land holdings of Rutt Johnson, an immigrant farmer from New Jersey who purchased approximately 100 acres in 1770 from Patrick Hamrick.

Johnson gave a portion of his property, which became Bloom Hill Farm, to his daughter, Sally Johnson, upon her marriage to Moses Cockrell. Then, the property belonged to J.J. Cockrell and then to Charles E. Brawner (born circa 1851), the son of William and Sarah Brawner.

Jacob and Virginia Conner purchased Bloom Hill in 1919 from heirs of Charles E. Brawner; the Connors sold it to the late Milton C. Forster in 1941. As an interesting side note related to the

Brawner family, Jim Burgess, museum specialist at Manassas National Battlefield Park, explained that the house on Brawner Farm (on VA Route 29, Lee Highway) was occupied by a tenant farmer named John Brawner. The land was actually owned by Augusta Gaines Douglass (her maiden name was Gaines—the same family who established Gainesville). She leased the farm to Brawner, following her husband's death before the Civil War, while she returned to live with her mother in Gainesville. According to documents in the RELIC Room, Charles and John Brawner were cousins.

Two Conner brothers, both born in the 1920s, wrote a book about living at Bloom Hill. Alvin Conner, M.D. and his younger brother, Carroll Conner wrote, "People and Places in Lucasville, Virginia" and describe life on the farm and the interaction with their black and white neighbors. Some neighbors included the Chapmans, Browns, John and Archie Valentine (two former slaves) and David Schrader, who joined the Confederate army as a young teenager.

The book describes the Chapmans as "proud, strong people of dignity who managed their affairs better than many of the white families." The book describes neighbors' helping each other in work and in crises, but there was "no visiting except for the children who were welcome in all the homes."

Nearby is the historic Lucasville School that served the black children in the community from 1885 to 1926. A historical marker in front of the school shows a photograph of Emma Chapman, a former slave at Clover Hill, owned by the Johnsons. "Many Chapmans lived in this area and likely attended



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Lucasville School," the marker states. The school was moved from its original location to its current site at 10516 Godwin Drive.

In relation to the Civil War, Burgess noted that some of the wounded from the First Battle of Manassas (July 21, 1861) were taken to private homes somewhat remote from the battlefield. In fact, according to Burgess, "We have in our museum collection a cased photograph of Private Felix Butler of the 4th Alabama Regiment who was wounded on July 21, 1861, and died from wounds on Oct. 8, 1861, at Brentsville," but the exact location is not specified. Could he have died at Bloom Hill?

Also, the Confederate army was camped in the area between August 1861 and March 1862; the house may have been set up to treat the sick from camps. "It is not outside the realm of possibility that the house was used as a field hospital, though there is no specific information documenting this," Burgess

clarified. Before the Civil War, tradition noted that the house at Bloom Hill was used as a tavern in the late 18th to 19th century. Traces of an old north-south road from Manassas to Brentsville are visible in front of the house on the east side. Morgan Breeden, of Brentsville, confirmed that there was, indeed, a pre-Civil War road from Brentsville to Tudor Hall (now, Manassas) that extended to Centreville.

The Conners' book describes two carriage stones, near the old colonial road, to assist passengers in and out of carriages.

The book also states that the original house at Bloom Hill was a story-and-a-half and was first used as a stagecoach way station, a place where stagecoach drivers could stop and shelter overnight. Later, an addition to the house was added to the east side after the Civil War. The cook house, slave quarters and a well were to the west; sleeping quarters for the cook and her family were in the loft above the kitchen. These additional buildings have gradually disappeared.

The Conners write about simple country memories such as

fishing in streams, catching tadpoles and picking wild blackberries, "washtubs" of sweet cherries and juicy mulberries. "[The mulberries] were so good that we ate them fresh off the tree and with milk and sugar..."

The house is for rent and listed with Mary Ann Bendinelli of Weichert Realtor in Manassas. "It's a bit of a rural property. The property once had an outdoor kitchen. It still has all original wooden floors and three staircases leading to the second level," Bendinelli said.

She confirmed that the current owner's research shows Bloom Hill was part of Clover Hill Farm owned by the Johnsons.

"Mr. Johnson sectioned-off a portion to make Bloom Hill and gifted that portion to his daughter [Sally Johnson Cockrell] upon marriage. It's such a cool house," Bendinelli said.

Rich with stories and centuries of history, this house might be the perfect home for anyone who appreciates Prince William County's heritage. For details call the Bendinelli Team at 703-368-6677 or go to [BendinelliTeam@number1expert.com](mailto:BendinelliTeam@number1expert.com).

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