

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY CELEBRATES 200th ANNIVERSARY

GREAT WAR DECISION NEAR MANASSAS

FAMOUS CONFERENCE AT CENTREVILLE

Where the Question of Invading the North Was Settled.

JEFFERSON DAVIS' VERSION OF IT

From Richmond Times-Dispatch, Washington, May 10, 1906. Editor Times-Dispatch: Sir:—The papers which I send you, although lengthy, I think ought, in justice to President Davis, to be published; and I think they will be read with interest.

All of the parties named are now dead. President Davis left the letter in my hands to use at my discretion. I think the time has now come when it ought to be given to the public, with the paper, "Council of War at Centreville."

I submit them for publication at your discretion.

Very truly,
MARCUS J. WRIGHT,
Council of War at Centreville, October 1, 1861.

On the 26th of September, 1861, General Joseph E. Johnston addressed a letter to the Secretary of War in regard to the importance of putting this army in condition to assume the offensive, and suggested that his excellency the President, or the Secretary of War, or some one representing them, should at an early day come to the headquarters of the army, then at or near Fairfax Court House, for the purpose of deciding whether the army could be reinforced to the extent that the commanding general deemed necessary for an offensive campaign.

His Excellency, the President, arrived at Fairfax Court House a few days thereafter, late in the afternoon, and proceeded to the quarters of General Beauregard. On the same evening General Johnston and I called to pay our respects. No official subjects of importance were alluded to in that interview. At 8 o'clock the next evening, by appointment of the President, a conference was had between himself, General Johnston, General Beauregard and myself. Various matters of detail were introduced by the President, and talked over between himself and the two senior generals. Having but recently arrived, and not being well acquainted with the special subjects referred to, I took little or no part in this conversation. Finally, with perhaps some abruptness, I said: "Mr. President, is it not possible to put this army in condition to assume the active offensive?" adding that this was a question of vital importance, upon which the success or failure of our cause might depend. The question brought on discussion. The precise conversation which followed I do not propose to give; it was not an argument. There seemed to be little difference of opinion between us in regard to general views and principles. It was clearly stated and agreed that the military force of the Confederate states was at the highest point it could attain

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Biographical Sketch of George Raymond Ratcliffe, Secretary of the Prince William Bi-Centennial Committee.

Ratcliffe, George Raymond, born in Prince William County and received his early education in the public schools of Dumfries, after which he entered William and Mary College. Later Mr. Ratcliffe graduated from the Spencian Business College and, after teaching a while in the Prince William schools, entered the National Bank of Manassas as a clerk. Possessing natural qualifications for successful banking business he advanced rapidly and became cashier of the Peoples National Bank which responsible position he now holds in addition to being vice-president.

Probably no banker in Virginia has held as many positions of distinction in banking circles as Mr. Ratcliffe. He has served as president and vice-president of the Virginia Bankers Association, vice-president for the State of Virginia of the American Bankers Association, state vice-president of the National Bank Division of the A. B. A.

He has also served as secretary-treasurer of the Bull Run Bankers Association, president of the Manassas Kiwanis and is an active, prominent member of the Masonic order, being treasurer of Manassas Lodge No. 182, A. F. & A. M. He is a member of Alexandria Chapter, Royal Arch Masons, Alexandria, Va.; of Old Dominion Commandery, Knights Templar; Alexandria, Acca Temple, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Richmond; Virginia Consistory, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, 32 degrees, Alexandria.

Mr. Ratcliffe is the only son of George Marcellus Ratcliffe and his wife, Mary C. Dowell. Both of Mr. Ratcliffe's parents were natives of Dumfries.

Mr. Ratcliffe's father lived his entire life among his ancestral surroundings in Dumfries, Va., and was widely known as the "historian of Dumfries." While Mr. George Ratcliffe's father was yet a young man in 1822 the court house was moved from Dumfries to Brentsville and Mr. George Ratcliffe loved to relate stories told him by his father of the history of Dumfries. He spent many of his leisure days in reviving memories of the quaint old town and it was he who directed Mr. Ellis to Rippon Lodge. Mr. G. Raymond

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RIPPON LODGE

Rippon Lodge is perhaps the oldest, and yet probably the least known, of all the colonial country houses still standing in Northern Virginia. It was built about 1725 by Richard Blackburn, of Rippon, the oldest cathedral town in England, which, in that day, was spelled the same way as its namesake in Virginia. In the burying ground, a short distance from the house, there are many family tombs, among them that of the builder, who died in 1757, and upon whose monument, in quaint old English style, is a long legend telling the story of his military commands and public service in the colony. It was Col. Thomas Blackburn, the son of Richard, who was the contemporary and comrade-in-arms of George Washington, for Rippon Lodge, it seems, was built before Washington was born. Indeed, it is said in Hayden's Virginia Genealogy, that Richard Blackburn was an architect, or builder, and that he designed Mt. Vernon for Lawrence Washington and the old mahogany stand and drafting-board, possibly the one upon which these plans were drawn, is still at Rippon Lodge.

In the time of Col. Thomas Blackburn the families at Mt. Vernon and Rippon Lodge were on intimate terms, and George Washington in his diaries speaks frequently of his visits with Mrs. Washington and others, to the Blackburns, often staying over night. A daughter of Col. Thomas Blackburn (Ann Blackburn) married Bushrod Washington and a granddaughter (Jane Charlotte Blackburn) married John Augustus Washington. These ladies of Rippon Lodge thus became, each in turn, the mistress of Mt. Vernon, and sleep in the mausoleum there.

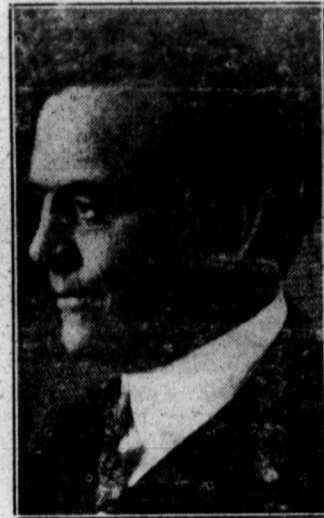
The old estate of Rippon Lodge originally covered many thousands of acres of which there is now left about one thousand in the present ownership. The main body of the house, as it stands today, with its steep Georgian roof, its huge chimneys, its paneled hall and dining-room, its wide floors and wicker doors, is as perfect, except for the added beauty of age, as it was more than two centuries ago. To this has been added some conscientious restorations and some frank improvements for modern comfort.

Rippon Lodge is steeped in early American history. The first military company in anticipation of the Revolution, was

organized in Prince William County, and the leader in the movement, as well as the head of the troops, was Thomas Blackburn, of Rippon Lodge. Later, all the volunteer companies in Virginia were put under the command of the then Col. George Washington, and this post he held until he was elected Commander-in-Chief of all the American forces. In the old books, magazines, newspapers and letters of colonial days, now recoverable in public and private collections, there are many stories of Rippon Lodge—stories of duels and adventures in the wilderness; of the guard-house, with its iron-grilled windows, which still stands to recall the time when Col. Blackburn quartered a regiment of continental troops on the place; of the "tea-bushes" still growing on the lawn, which are a living reminder of the protest in all the American colonies against the English Stamp Act, when a number of Virginia settlers imported into the colony a hardy plant from Bermuda, which was used as a substitute for tea.

There are found about the place, even to this day, many relics of the long ago. The old King's Highway, sometimes called the Potomac Path, was the earliest coach and post road between Northern and Southern Virginia. The wide, deep-rutted imprint of this road, now floored with fern and lined with laurel, like a cut upon the face of nature that has healed, may still be traced for two or three miles across the present lands of Rippon Lodge. Up and down this highway rode Washington and Lafayette and Rochambeau, and in their coaches all the gentry of the neighborhood—the Masons, the Scotts, the Lees, the Graham, the Fairfaxes, the Graysons, and also, in more modest fashion, trudging Parson Weems, peddling his books. So along this road came the victorious troops after the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, camping on the way and celebrating the independence of the colonies. It was in the woods near this route, and perhaps at some old camping site, that there was recently found an ancient Hessian bayonet. So there has been discovered at Rippon Lodge an old brick tunnel, leading from the cellar to a neighboring ravine, filled in and grown over with trees for many generations, but recalling the days of

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Biographical Sketch of Hon. Wade H. Ellis, Chairman of the Prince William Bi-Centennial Committee.

Ellis, Wade H., Lawyer, the son of A. C. and Kate Blackburn Ellis, was born at Covington, Ky., December 31, 1866. He was educated in the public schools, the Hughes High School and the Chickering Institute at Cincinnati. Attending Washington and Lee University he won his Bachelor of Laws degree there in 1889. Miami University conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws on him in 1904 while same degree was given him by Washington and Lee in 1909 and that of Doctor of Letters by Lincoln Memorial University in 1923.

Mr. Ellis was admitted to the bar in 1890. In addition to his legal work he ventured into the newspaper field becoming the editor of the Cincinnati Tribune and the Commercial Tribune from 1895 to 1897.

His newspaper work showed his aptitude for politics and he entered that field with the result that he became the Attorney General of the State of Ohio. He remained in this office until the latter part of 1908 when he became Assistant to the Attorney General of the United States under the Roosevelt administration. In the early part of 1910 he left this high post to resume private practice. He is a member of the firm of Ellis, Houghton, Ferguson & Gary with offices in Washington and Cincinnati.

Some of the special features of his legal work and among the important cases in which he has appeared personally as attorney are as follows: "The Minimum Wage Case" in which he appeared before the Supreme Court of the United States, argued and won this nationally famous case in which the right to force a minimum wage was held invalid. This case was argued in March and decided in April, 1923.

He was appointed by the Supreme Court of the United States as Special Master to report the findings of law and fact in the historic controversy between New York and Massachusetts involving title to valuable lands on Lake Ontario. This case dated back to the time of many Indian treaties.

He was a member of the Committee on Law Enforcement of the American Bar Association and with Marcus Kavanaugh and former governor of New York Charles S. Whitman visit-

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Celebration Organized at Historic Rippon Lodge on May 10.

HON. WADE H. ELLIS CHOSEN AS CHAIRMAN

The Celebration of Prince William County's Two-Hundredth Anniversary was organized May 10, 1931, at historic Rippon Lodge, the home of Hon. and Mrs. Wade Ellis.

The meeting held at that time was representative of all sections of the county and it was decided to organize both for the County Celebration and the Washington Bi-Centennial, which begins activities immediately following Prince William's anniversary. The same committees function for both events, and therefore will continue through the year 1932.

Mr. Ellis initiated the organization of Prince William County's Celebration of its Bi-Centennial and its participation in the national celebration in 1932 by the designation of an executive committee, with power to select the personnel of the standing committees.

The executive committee, appointed on May 10, consisted of E. H. Hibbs, Prof. R. C. Haydon, Ewing Wall, W. H. Lamb, C. C. Lynn, L. Ledman and C. E. Nash.

While the assembled guests were being addressed by Senator Atlee Pomeroy, Hon. R. Walton Moore, Hon. Sol Bloom, Hon. Wade Ellis, Hon. Harley P. Wilson and Rev. C. A. Langston, Rector of Pohick Church, the executive committee went into session and after a comprehensive survey named the following standing committee chairman, who were authorized to associate with themselves the personnel of their committees:

Hon. Wade H. Ellis, general chairman.

G. Raymond Ratcliffe, Sec'y. Harry P. Davis, treasurer. R. D. Wharton, publicity. Fairfax Harrison, history and research.

Thos. H. Lion, legislation. E. H. Hibbs, co-operation with Bi-Centennial Commission. (Mr. Hibbs announced his associates to be C. E. Nash and H. Thornton Davies).

Prof. R. C. Haydon, education. Dr. Wade Payne, rules and regulations.

Walter Clarkson, telephone and radio.

Mrs. Annie G. Cline, prizes and awards.

Mrs. E. H. Marsteller, pageantry.

C. C. Lynn, transportation.

L. Ledman, Kiwanis.

Mrs. Walter Sanders, Woman's Club.

Mrs. J. B. T. Thornton, school leagues.

J. L. Dawson, board of supervisors.

D. J. Arrington, school board.

W. R. Free, jr., agriculture.

On July 6 a second meeting was held at Rippon Lodge at which time plans were materially advanced. It was decided to hold the outstanding feature of the Prince William Bi-Centennial at Woodbridge, Va., on Sept. 25, at which time a tablet would be unveiled marking the site of the first Prince William Court House. The monument was generously contributed by

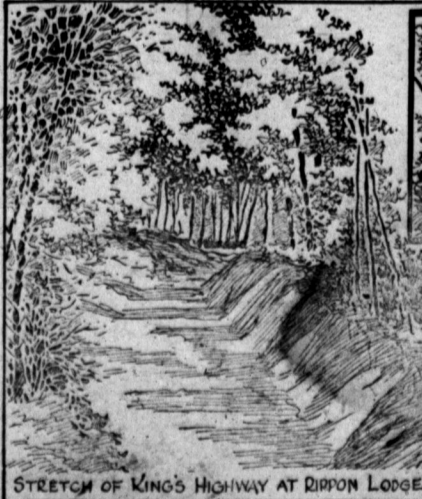
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GEORGE WASHINGTON'S TRAVELS

By James W. Brooks.

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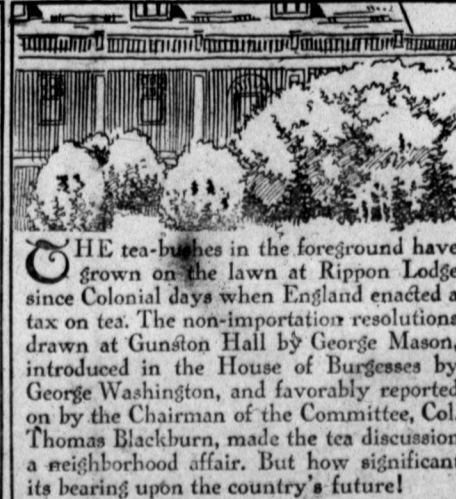
Historically Correct Sketches by CALVIN FADER



STRETCH OF KING'S HIGHWAY AT RIPPON LODGE



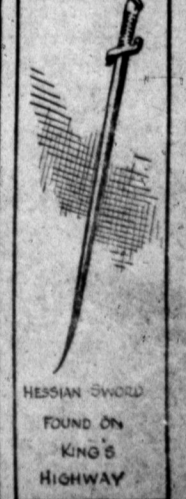
WHEN traveling between Mount Vernon, Fredericksburg and Williamsburg, Washington was a frequent guest at Rippon Lodge, a house built about 1725, later the home of Col. Thomas Blackburn, "friend and comrade in arms of Gen. Washington", reads the tablet placed at the entrance by the Mount Vernon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Rippon Lodge, near Dumfries on U. S. 1, was also the family home of Mrs. Bushrod Washington (Ann Blackburn) and Mrs. John Augustine Washington (Jane Charlotte Blackburn) each in turn the mistress of Mount Vernon.



THE tea-bushes in the foreground have grown on the lawn at Rippon Lodge since Colonial days when England enacted a tax on tea. The non-importation resolutions drawn at Gunston Hall by George Mason, introduced in the House of Burgesses by George Washington, and favorably reported on by the Chairman of the Committee, Col. Thomas Blackburn, made the tea discussion a neighborhood affair. But how significant its bearing upon the country's future!



WASHINGTON'S BEDROOM



HESSIAN SWORD FOUND ON KING'S HIGHWAY