



VIRGINIANA FILE OCT 28 1980

PWC HISTORIC BUILDINGS (Bel Air)

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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Historic House
3-14-74*

VA 000 *Bel Air Mistress Has Never Seen A Ghost*

Prince William Public Library
Prince William County, Va.



By MARGARET ELIAN CLARK

Some say that Bel Air Plantation near Dale City is haunted, but Mrs. Ann Flory who has lived there with her husband, William since 1949 said she has never seen a ghost.

"There is a legend that the spirits return on the night following the anniversary of the death of any member of the Ewell family who used to live here as early as 1740. They are said to have a midnight feast—strange lights shine through the windows and all," Mrs. Flory related.

When asked if she had ever looked for evidence of this she smiled. "No, but we had visitors at one time who refused to occupy our guest room after saying that on three consecutive nights, something or someone had pulled all of the covers off the bed when they were asleep. They insisted that they were unwelcome in that room."

Driving through the gates of Bel Air

daughter married Parson Mason Locke Weems, the first biographer of George Washington. They lived at Bel Air for a time, but Mrs. Weems "longed for the bright lights of Dumfries," according to Mrs. Flory. "We are in the process of trying to restore the Parson Weems house in Dumfries in time for the Bicentennial in 1976," she added.

Mrs. Flory, a member of Historical Dumfries of Virginia, took out a 60-day option in order to try to save it. "Otherwise it would have been demolished," she said.

A busy woman, Mrs. Flory is immersed in her work as chairman of the Bicentennial Committee for both Dumfries and Pohick. "It's almost serendipity to be confronted with two such challenging projects at one time."

Mrs. Flory is not a stranger to organizing on a large scale. She was once employed as director of compensation for the Post Office

...gives the same mysterious and thrilling feeling as that of reading "Jane Eyre," for the first time. The

Department where she was responsible for over 700,000 people. "Being involved as volunteer is a little different. she

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narrow path twists and turns until suddenly the two and one-half story house with its pre-Georgian front looms up at the top of the hill.

Mrs. Flory, who is soft spoken and interesting enough to be a Bronte heroine, greets the visitor with a warm handshake that dispels any anxiety about being transported so suddenly into the 18th Century.

The house has 14 rooms. The main floor was constructed in 1740 by Major Charles Ewell, and it is believed that the stone walls of the ground floor were erected at an earlier date. The walls are as thick as three feet in some areas, and it boasts a huge 20-foot outside chimney on the southwest side.

The first restoration of the home was around 1875, and it required only minor structural alterations. It has been described as a "modern dwelling, which retains its integrity as a pre-revolutionary building.

Mrs. Flory has furnished it tastefully with some family pieces that date as late as the 19th Century. An impressive portrait hangs in the hall showing a young and beautiful girl who was a personal friend of Mrs. Flory. It was painted by Paul Bartlett and at one time hung in the Chicago Museum.

In 1795, Colonel Jesse Ewell's

mused. "You have to think up creative ways to interest people in wanting to help."

Parson Weems' biography on George Washington "was a great influence on Abraham Lincoln," said Mrs. Flory, opening a cabinet of rare editions and newer volumes of books.

The spirits of Bel Air may have also wanted recognition because when she reached for the biography by Parson Weems, a blue and white book fell off the shelf, knocking her on the forehead. When the book was retrieved, its title—"Virginia Ghosts"—stood out in eerie bold letters.

Course Being Offered On Single Parent Life

The Fairfax Chapter of Parents Without Partners and Fairfax County Adult Education are offering a course on Single Parent Life beginning Tuesday, April 16, 8 p.m.

The class is a series of six discussions dealing with the problems of the newly separated, divorced or those facing possible separation.

For information concerning registration call the Annandale Adult Center, 256-8448.

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