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County ponders fate of historic house

Structure dating to 1700s
could be moved six miles

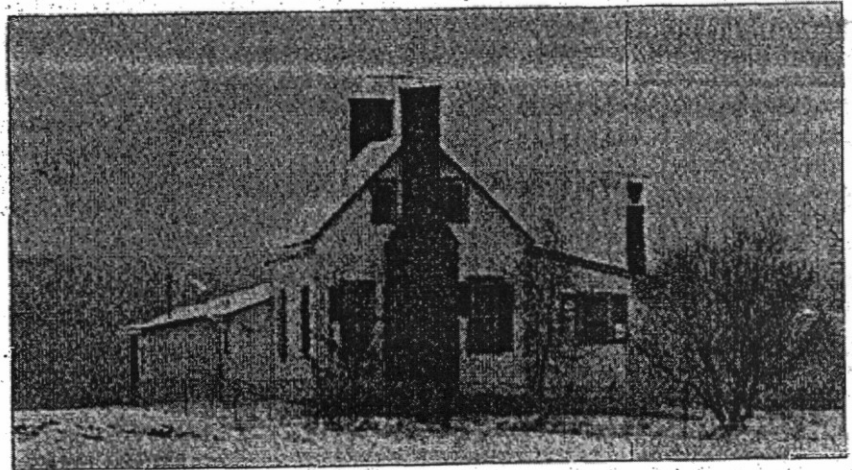
By MARIA HEGSTAD
mhegstad@potomacnews.com



A historic Catharpin farmhouse threatened by development may be relocated to Gainesville, if county officials decide to move it to the future site of a new Prince William County library.

The Library Board of Trustees will discuss the possibility of moving Bushy Park farmhouse six miles to the proposed new library site near U.S. 15 and Lightner Road at its meeting tonight.

Library Director Dick Murphy is advocating incorporating Bushy Park into the site of the



Dylan Moore/News & Messenger

Prince William County is considering moving this historic farmhouse.

HOUSE



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proposed Gainesville Area Library, which will be a full-service library with circulation, information, reference and children's services. Planning is expected to begin in fiscal year 2005, with design beginning in fiscal 2006, according to the county's proposed 2002 Fiscal Year Capital Improvements Program. Murphy envisions using the historic home as a children's story area.

"It may not work. It may be too expensive," Murphy said.

Bushy Park is "threatened by development," said County Cultural Resources Coordinator Bob Bainbridge. Unless the county is able to preserve Bushy Park, it "most likely" will be bulldozed, he said.

Bainbridge said he has been working on esti-

mates with home movers. Murphy described the basic structure of Bushy Park as "in pretty good shape."

Bushy Park was built in the mid to late 1700s by Matthew Whiting, who owned the nearby plantations of Stone Hill and Stepney, Bainbridge said. The original one-and-a-half-story building included two downstairs rooms and a loft with two more rooms upstairs. The beams were hewn by hand, and stones for the foundation and two chimneys were quarried locally. Over time, several additions were added to the house, which was rented and lived in until a few years ago, Bainbridge said.

The property was then sold to US Home real estate developer, Bainbridge said.

"The county asked US Home to carve out a 10-acre parcel — we were going to explore the possibility of purchasing [Bushy Park] ourselves," Bainbridge said. "Then the library director expressed interest."

For many years, Bushy Park and its sur-

rounding 243 acres also included two Confederate officers' graves. Lt. Col. Daniel Alexander Ledbetter, of Townville, S.C., and Capt. Miles M. Norton were brought to Bushy Park after sustaining wounds in the second battle of Manassas, August 1862.

Ledbetter's family did not know the location of his grave site until 20 years later, when a poem printed in the Manassas Gazette newspaper was reprinted in the newspaper of their South Carolina hometown. Written by W.A. Buckley, who lived at Bushy Park during the Civil War and witnessed the Confederate soldiers' deaths at the farm, the poem described the grave sites. Ledbetter's son traveled to Manassas in 1880 or 1881 to find and mark his father's grave. Both soldiers were later moved to the cemetery at Sudley Methodist Church in Catharpin.

Staff writer Maria Hegstad can be reached at (703) 368-3101, Ext. 121.