

# The Gainesville

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Times Staff Photo/Shamus Ian Fatzinger

**MOVING DAY:** The 18th-century Bushy Park House was moved early Saturday, June 19, from Catharpin Valley Estates to a new site just off Route 15, where it will be renovated and incorporated into the design of the new Gainesville library.

## A house for the ages

### Bushy Park House to find new life as library

BY JENNIFER COOPER  
Times Staff Writer

For more than 200 years, a small white two-room house sat on the eastern side of Catharpin Road near Thornton Drive in Gainesville.

Last month, the structure, known as the Bushy Park House, got a new home. Rather than raze the building to make way for new homes at Catharpin Valley Estates, developer U.S. Homes negotiated an arrangement with Prince William County to move the house to the corner of Route 15 and Lightner Road. There it will become a children's reading room next to the future Gainesville library.

Brendon Hanafin, historic preservation manager with the Prince William County Department of Public Works, said the county had an opportunity to not only save but to reuse a nice old house.

Described as a one-and-a-half-

story frame house with a stone foundation and a metal gable roof, heavy hewn beams and stills support the core of the house. Unlike many old homes that must be dismantled and painstakingly numbered to put back together at a later date, this building was moved intact. Only its roof was removed for its June 20 ride from Catharpin Road to Lightner Road to ensure it did not hit any power lines along the way.

"The fact that it survived is impressive," Hanafin said, noting that it would have been a home typical of someone in the middle class.

Hanafin said helping to protect the house over the years were its high foundation, solid roof and three layers of siding. "It's just a great old house that deserved to be saved," he said. Not only was the developer supportive, Hanafin said, but the county was also assisted by developer Toll Brothers, which is

building homes near the library's new location, and local businessman Mike Garcia of Garcia Homes.

Dick Murphy, library director for Prince William County Public Libraries, said he first learned of the opportunity to save the Bushy Park House during a meeting of the task force on historic properties set up by the county. He realized he might have a use for it as a children's reading room and small historic display space.

"This is not a bad way to preserve the building," Murphy said. "We're thrilled to be able to save the house."

An archaeological report for the property conducted by Thunderbird Archaeological Associates Inc. in October 2002 found that the building is in excellent shape. "Except for the 20th century exterior siding

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# HOUSE

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and the several small additions, [the house] has not been changed much," the report states.

Hanafin said the move and associated expenses, such as removal of both asbestos and additions to the home, cost approximately \$50,000. Future renovations of the building will be included in the cost of the new library, which is not expected to go to a bond referendum until the fall of 2006.

Murphy said the plan would be to leave the house as a stand-alone building and retain as much as possible of the original building. The new Gainesville library would be built adjacent to the Bushy Park House.

Prominent on the landscape, the house was built around the time of the American Revolution and is one of the few remaining structures in Prince William

County dating from that period. The archaeological report found that the house and some 7,000 acres were owned by members of the Page family, which lived in Spotsylvania County. Though they did not live in the house, it was likely built sometime between 1760 and 1780.

Around 1800, the family began to sell off large tracts of the land and house in Prince William County. By 1822, the house and 376 acres were owned by Susan F. Graham, who renamed the property the Bushy Park Farm. The site changed hands several times and was eventually owned by Alexander and Margaret McMullin. They deeded the property, then called Bushy Hill, to their grandson William A. Buckley in 1879.

Buckley lived in the home with his wife, Maybell (also spelled Mabelle), and their eight children until his death in 1914. A year after his death, his wife and seven surviving children deeded the property to B. Lynn

Robertson for the payment of two liens on the property totaling \$4,000 and \$2,700.

A short time later, Robertson was drafted into the U.S. Army for service in World War I and sold the house at a public auction. The house again changed hands several times and underwent several minor additions and was last occupied in 2001.

And, while it is the home's architecture and age that make it historically significant, it does have an interesting story concerning one of two Confederate soldiers who were buried on the property after the Second Battle of Manassas.

One of the soldiers, Lt. Col. Daniel Alexander Ledbetter of South Carolina, was carried to the property after being mortally wounded near Sudley on Aug. 29, 1862. Almost 20 years later, Ledbetter's son learned of a poem by W.A. Buckley titled "Two Men Wearing Gray," which led him to his father's grave on the Bushy

Park property.

Ledbetter's remains were later moved to the cemetery at Sudley Church, according to the archaeological report. It is unclear whether the second man's grave, Col. Miles M. Norton, remains on the property.

Mike Andrews, librarian for grants and special projects for the Prince William County Public Library system, said he hopes to weave this rich history into children's programs, using one of the home's two rooms for history displays and the other as a reading room.

"It would be a way to get the historical significance across ... to show what the house has been through," Andrews said.

The concept of linking a library with local history is completely new for the county, Andrews said, but it provides endless educational opportunities. "This is a chance for us to have a link to the past," he said.