

Effingham Is a 200-Year-Old Landmark

Prince William County is a treasure house of old colonial homes. "Effingham," once the home of John Alexander, stands as a magnificent type of colonial architecture.

"Effingham" was bequeathed to Colonel William Alexander, great-grandson of John Alexander, who secured a grant of about 6,000 acres, which included Hunting Creek, where the city of Alexandria now stands. During the intervening years many land changes and transfer of titles to the farms and estates were made, Effingham being no exception.

Situated near the crossroads of the village of Aden, the house has a commanding view of lush pasture lands with woodland forming a curtain drop towards the southern exposure. Too, here one sees the terraced gardens which enhance the beauty of this historic mansion.

This terraced garden is reported to have been the only one of its kind during the days Effingham was in its prime. The present owners are restoring these gardens to their former existence.

It is thought that Effingham was built about 1765, or perhaps earlier, thus making it a 200-year old house.

The structure is two-storied, of rectangular shape with a gabled "A" roof with an extension forming a porch. This extension is supported by attractive columns, thus giving the house a colonial appearance.

The lines of the structure are somewhat broken by the pairs of narrow chimneys at each end of the building. These are reminiscent of the period when Effingham was built.

Where the original foundation was at one end of the house is still visible.

Supporting the house from the basement are huge hand-hewn beams—16x16—under the entire structure, with heavy supports and framework

all tying into the large beams.

Effingham has nine rooms together with basement and attic. Much of the trim throughout the entire house is of stained oak and chestnut, while some of the panelling and doors are stained a soft walnut tone.

The decorative moldings and detail work are unique. It is thought that this was all hand wrought. The two partially hidden stairways to the second floor were considered a necessity in days gone by.

Throughout the entire home the owner has collected, or had designed, the most suitable furnishings, wall coverings and paintings, together with every adornment in perfect conformity to the period when Effingham housed persons of Revolutionary fame.

The crystal chandelier, corner cupboards, grandfather clocks, brasses, besides other decorative accompaniments, makes one feel glad there are still those who appreciate and value these historic treasures. The hall is wide and handsome leading from the front to the back door.

Close by the main building stands the original smokehouse. This is of square design, covered with clapboard and a four sided roof.

Once inside, the odor and smoke and oils from the meats have permeated the entire building. Also, quite noticeable is the salt which has formed on the beams during the curing process. Hams and other cuts of meat cured in those days were at their best after being cured for a year or more.

A little further on the lawn is a well which now has a hand pump to replace the old windlass bucket type, but the original catch basin cut from a solid native sand stone remains intact, even complete with the drain.

Among one of the many necessities of that area was the blacksmith's shop. Not only were these smithy shops used in the shoeing and the

making of shoes for the horses but for all types of iron fixtures for use on the place—hinges, latches, locks, hoes, rakes, farming equipment, besides the many repairs which necessarily would have to be made.

The present owner of Effingham wanted the old smithy shop on the place. Consequently, he went to considerable work to have the original shop rebuilt, largely from stones from which the

former one lay so long in a heap.

In the family graveyard nearby are grave markers dating back in the 1700s. This burying ground is protected by an attractive stone wall and kept in a good condition.

The large cedar and locust trees scattered here and there over the lawn are mute evidence of the age of the place. Trees of this variety are known for their toughness

and longevity. Cedars of certain types have been known to thrive and live for more than 200 years.

There has been erected an attractive guest house, with an inviting swimming pool close by. Too, the huge man-made lake, well stocked, is an attraction for guests, and with the thoroughbred cattle roaming over the rolling pastures make the entire place a most attractive picture, as well as an enviable retreat.

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