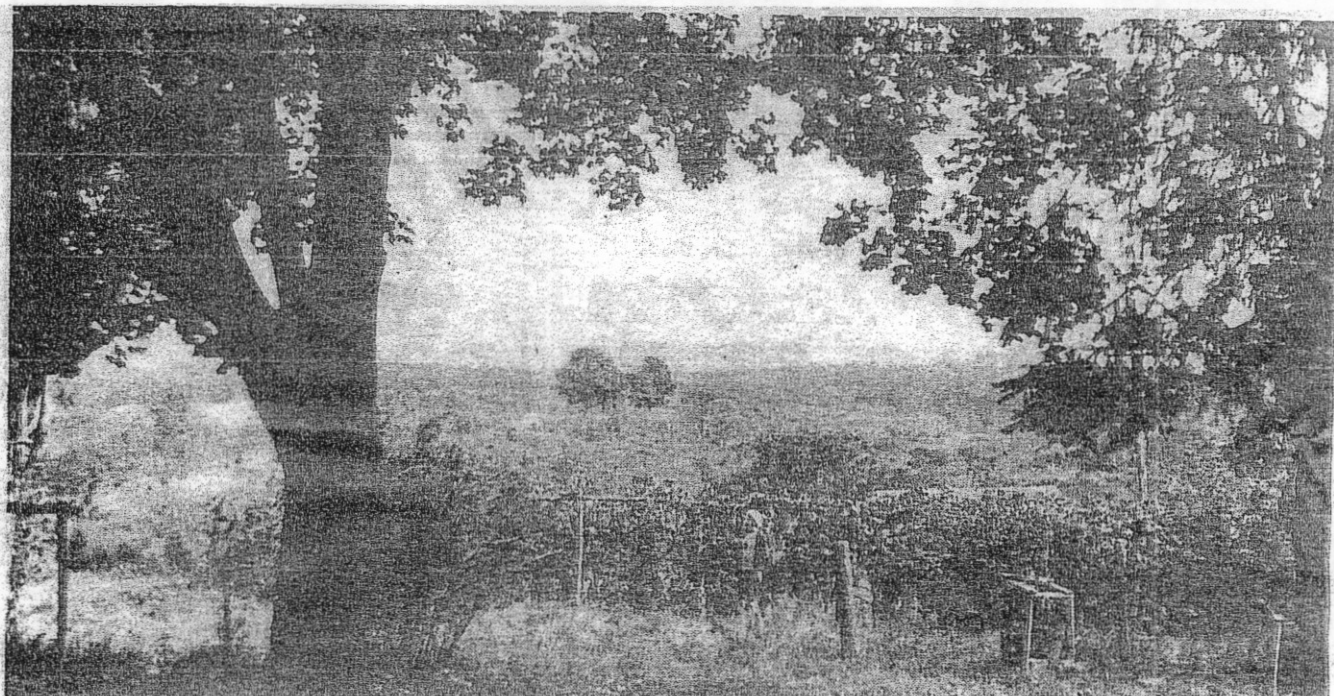


HISTORIC SITE FILE: BELLE AIR - GRAYSON
PRINCE WILLIAM PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
RELIC/Bull Run Reg Lib Manassas, VA



1931 view from Grayson's Bel Air in today's Marumsco Woods; apple orchard, grape vines, rose arbor

'Unimpeached integrity'

By EILEEN MEAD

Plans for restoring Revolutionary war hero William Grayson's grave in Marumsco Hills are presently at a standstill pending public access to privately owned lands, according to Sandra Kinsey, county Bicentennial coordinator.

As a Bicentennial project, the county has appropriated \$10,000 for a monument to be placed at the site and \$2,500 for renovation of the existing tomb.

Ms. Kinsey recently acquired some photographs and papers relative to the tomb and several of Grayson's relatives have been located through Mrs. Bessie W. Gahn.

Grayson's obituary in Fredricksburg's Virginia Herald read, "Dumfries, Va. March 14, 1790 — On Friday the 12 instantly died at this place on his way to Congress, the Hon. Col. William Grayson, Senator of the United States. His remains were this day attended by numerous circle of his acquaintances, deposited in the family vault, at the Rev. Mr. Spence Grayson's. By the death of this gentleman the public as well as his own family have sustained an ineparable loss."

NOTES FROM Howe's Historical Collections of Virginia say of Grayson, "He was first appointed a member of Congress from Virginia in 1784 and

continued a number of years. In June, 1788, he was a member of the Virginia convention that was called for the purpose of considering the present constitution of the United States. In this assembly, rendered illustrious by men of the first talents, he was very conspicuous. His genius united with the eloquence of Henry, in opposing the adoption of the constitution. While he acknowledged the evils of the old government, he was afraid that the proposed government would destroy the liberty of the states.

"His principal objections to it were that it took from the states the sole right of direct taxation, which was the highest act of sovereignty; that the limits between the national and state authorities were not sufficiently defined; that they might clash, in which case the general government would prevail; that there was no provision against raising such a navy, as was more than sufficient to protect our trade, and thus would excite the jealousy of European powers and lead to war; and that there was no adequate checks against the abuse of power, especially by the President, who was responsible only to his counsellors and partners in crime, the members of the Senate.

"After the constitution was adopted, Mr. Grayson was appointed one of the Senators from Virginia, in the year 1789 his colleague was Richard

Henry Lee. His great abilities were united with unimpeached integrity."

THE HOME of the Rev. Spence Grayson was known as Bel Air which causes confusion in history since the Ewell family residence (near Dale City) was also called Bel Air.

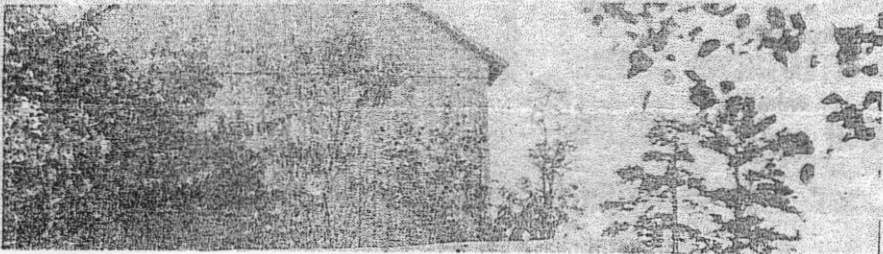
The Grayson vault which holds the remains of William Grayson as well as the remains of Rev. Spence Grayson was desecrated during the Civil War by the soldiers who had blown up the mill on the Occoquan.

A Miss Anne Dunnington, whose father, Charles Colquhoun Dunnington inherited Old Graham Park from John Graham, once recalled visiting the Grayson Bel Air and looking into the old vault and seeing the skeletons and bones. "It was a most terrible, gruesome sight, one that I could never forget," she said. Miss Dunnington inherited her mother's girlhood home, Cherry Hill, on the Potomac.

Sherwood Stonnell purchased the Grayson Bel Air and built a frame house over the foundations of the old Grayson mansion. He covered the old tomb with stone and cement.

Grayson Bel Air was supposedly used as a field hospital by the soldiers who later burned it and dynamited the vault. Neighbors told of gathering up the bones which were scattered over the hillside and reverently placed them back in the vault after the marauders left.

MRS. BESSIE Wilmarth Gahn took a photograph of the old vault in 1931, and a shot of the view from Grayson's Bel Air. At that time one could see all the way to the Potomac River and the Maryland shores. The view picture shows the rose-covered gateway leading to the old grape arbor and a very old apple orchard which stretched down the hill to the valley. The



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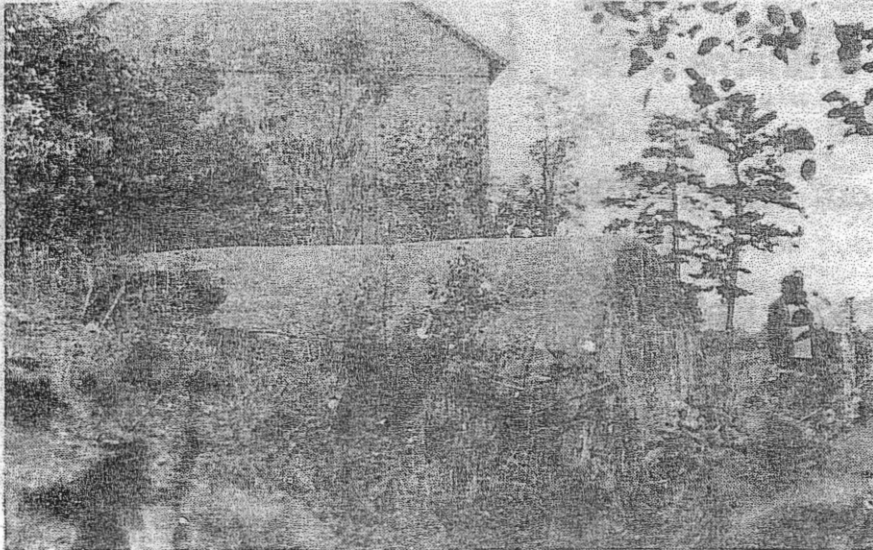
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Deeds in the Prince William Courthouse show that on April 12, 1762 Spence Grayson leased from Benjamin Grayson 1,000 acres or more for one year "yielding and paying therefore the rent of one Pepper Corn at the feast of St. Michael the Arch Angel." The lease was testified by John Graham, Clerk of Court.

Col. William Grayson evidently lived at Dumfries where he owned a large tract of land facing on what was then Cameron Street.



Grayson's tomb as it looked in 1931

SEE POTOMAC VIEW
see Belle Air