

ried the granddaughter of Charles Ewell.

Weems, a preacher and author, is most famous for his tales of the young George Washington throwing a coin across the Rappahannock and telling his father "I cannot tell a lie" when asked about a felled cherry tree.

The Washington biography, as well as other books by Weems, were penned at the Bel Air Plantation; the author is buried in a family cemetery in the side yard.

The house passed through many hands and in 1890 the walls of the foundation separated. Workers attempted to repair the damage and to restore the house.

"They surrounded the walls with forms and poured in concrete," Flory said, "but they didn't put up any braces" and the walls continued to buckle. By 1915 the house, along with the plans to restore it, was abandoned.

For the next 33 years, people pilfered some items from the house and destroyed others. Hunters camped in the house and used window frames or furniture for firewood. The wife of a neighbor who had supposedly been taking care of the house "stripped it bare of all its original furnishings," said Flory, adding that nothing was ever recovered.

There was also a rumor that somewhere in the walls of the house was \$50,000 in gold. Treasure hunters tore into the walls but never found the gold, which was not hidden there anyway, said Flory.

... beams and chipped away the old clay that held the large stones together. The stones were then cemented together and put back into the foundation.

"We were kind of camping until we got around to doing work on the interior," Flory said. The kitchen, located in the basement, served as the main room while the Florys renovated.

"When we finally started down here, we found out that the two beams holding everything up were dryrotted and only had about [two inches] left," Flory said.

He said the rest of the restoration process consisted not of one setback but instead "was just a series of emergencies."

"The Park Service wanted to buy it [in the 1940s] but couldn't raise the money," Flory said. "They said it would take 20 years to restore and I said, 'I can do it in 10.' I finished 30 years later."

Flory and his wife, who died three years ago, worked weekends and nights on the house. "It took virtually everything we had. When we ran out of money, we'd stop for a while."

He is not sure just how much money they put into the house, Flory said, adding that "I really don't want to know."

"It's my wife's and my contribution to the community," he said.

The house was made a Virginia Historical Landmark in 1968 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Since the completion of the restoration, there have been few prob-

hear them, and there seems to be a pattern. It's usually a thirtyish

seen one.

"Then again, they usually see them around Halloween."

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

Re: Bel Air -

2 Bel Airs in Prince William County.

Info ca. 2007

Grayson Bel Air

2338 Longview Drive

Woodbridge, Va.

Owner is Pam Kovach of Good Shepherd Housing.

Grayson vault is still on this property.

Good Shepherd is planning to restore the vault and wants to develop the land

1-3 acres for homeless working people.

Some want to preserve the hilltop as is as a memorial of Spence + William

Grayson and as a place of peace + relaxation. It is a beautiful spot

with many large + ancient trees. The wood frame house now standing was added

onto the original foundation (pre-civil war)

in the early 1900's. At present residents of

2nd copy

The house are renting it from Good Shepherd.

These residents are clients of the Prince William Mental Health and Social Services which is a separate entity from Good Shepherd.

Ewell Bel Air is located on General Washington Drive off of Minnieville Rd. S. west of Cardinal Drive. A plaque stands at the head of the driveway which ~~also~~ commemorates the Ewells and the author Weems. A sign on the drive-way says private - no trespassing. I am told the mansion still stands on the property but is privately owned.