

A walk back in time

By EILEEN MEAD

It was a bright, crisp morning and local historian Don Curtis kept up a good pace as he led three visitors through the overgrown woods of the Leesylvania Plantation on Freestone Point, pointing out landmarks.

Approximately 508 acres of the land along the Potomac in Prince William County, including the historic plantation, have been offered to Virginia for a state park by the American - Hawaiian Steamship Corporation, present owner of the land.

At the crest of a hill overlooking the Potomac, the Lees had built a mansion in 1747, Curtis said.

"Plantation owners always picked the highest crest for their home to afford a view of the river sailing ships as they came in, an important asset to their business," Curtis said.

On a neighboring crest was a moss covered graveyard of the Lees. The stones have been moved to Leesburg by family members for preservation. Some had been destroyed by vandals.

Nearby, on another crest, is the burial site of the Fairfax family which in later years, built a mansion on another hill crest closer to the river.

The tall chimney of the Fairfax mansion juts out of the trees looking like the ruins in a Civil War movie.

The fireplaces from each of the three floors are still intact and nearby there is a bricked-in well which served generations of residents until steel piping was used to run water to the home.

Dips in the ground close to the high cliff overlooking the water, indicate gun emplacements during the blockade of the Potomac during the Civil War.

Curtis said artillery pieces were brought from Ft. Monroe in Norfolk for the blockade.

Tall, richly foliated holly trees surround both mansion sites. It is apparent they were planted years ago by the homeowners.

On lower land, there is a long, white sandy beach. A rotting pier jutting out into the river marks the spot where vacationers used to walk out to gambling boats docked in Maryland waters in the late 1950's.



Staff photo by Jim Newman

Chimney remains from Lee home

by trees.

Swimming pools and tall floodlights had long ago been shotup by vandals.

It is so quiet in these beautiful

that he had entered another era. The feeling of history was so strong there.

"Can you imagine this area

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