

VIRGINIANA FILE

*PWC - Historic Sites  
(Leesylvania)*



VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

SURVEY FORM

See also Leesylvania 76-46 for a more detailed description & history of this site.

File no. 76-74  
Negative no(s). 4351

Photos #4905 are in Leesylvania Site 76-46 folder

Prince William Public Library  
Manassas, Va.

Historic name	Fairfax House Site	Common name	
County/Town/City	Prince William County		
Street address or route number	vic. of S.R. 610 and RF&P RR on Freestone Point		<i>Wilm-Bott's Museum</i>
USGS Quad	Quantico	Date or period	c1825
Original owner	Henry Fairfax	Architect/builder/craftsmen	
Original use	Residence	Hawaiian Steamship Co.	
Present owner	Daniel K. Ludwig & American <sup>2</sup>	Source of name	
Present owner address	c/o George Hartzog, Atty	Source of date	Published histories; court records.
	900 17th St., N.W., Washington, D.C.	Stories	
Present use	Being sold for development as a	Foundation and wall const'n	Stone foundation, brick chimneys
Acreege	510 acres, state park including Leesylvania Site	Roof type	Probably gable

State condition of structure and environs House is in ruins and should be considered an archeological site.

State potential threats to structure Vandals, thieves--brick-lined well already excavated by pot hunter

Note any archaeological interest House site, barn site(s), other sites of outbuildings, plus archeological resources of the Leesylvania plantation site, and possibly prehistoric archeological potential.

Should be investigated for possible register potential? yes  no  Included in Leesylvania nomination

Architectural description (Note significant features of plan, structural system and interior and exterior decoration. taking care to point out aspects not visible or clear from photographs. Explain nature and period of all alterations and additions. List any outbuildings and their approximate ages, cemeteries, etc.)

Only the stone foundation and the ruins of two brick end chimneys remain of the Fairfax house. There are also a brick-lined well near the house, some foundations of farm buildings, and the remains of a large well up the hill behind the house.

The Fairfax house was located about 500 yards east of the Lee house on Freestone Point. The house sat on a hill looking out over the river. It was a three bay, 2-story frame house on a high stone foundation with brick end chimneys. The chimneys were laid in five-course American bond. A 2-story veranda ran across the front, or river side, at the first floor level. The house had a central hall plan with parlors on either side. The stair, probably an open string with a single landing, rose on the left of the hall. Kitchen and dining room were located in the basement, which had a brick floor. The second floor contained four bedrooms. According to one source, the well which supplied water to the house in about 1900 was located behind the house further up the hill. Another source claims that a spring west of the house provided the water. There was a barn behind the house, and a privy containing eight seats. During and prior to the early 1900s, the river was used more for transportation than it is now, and there was a dock at the water's edge for mooring boats. The Fairfax cemetery, enclosed by a cast iron and stone fence, is located on a ridge about 200 yards north of the site of the Lee house, alongside the Lee cemetery. The stones of the Fairfaxes were moved to Loudoun County in about 1969. The house burned in about 1910 or 1920.

Interior inspected?

Historical significance (Chain of title; individuals, families, events, etc., associated with the property.)

The property on which this house was located was included in an over 2,000-acre estate situated between the Neabsco Creek on the north and Powell's Creek on the south. One of Prin William's earliest land grants, the estate was patented in 1658 by Gervais Dodson. In 1660, Dodson sold the land to Henry Corbin, who willed it to his daughter Lettice. Lettice married Richard Lee, and the land thus fell into the ownership of the Lee family. Court records show that the land was under tobacco cultivation before the end of the 17th century, but it has been assumed that, prior to Henry Lee II's arrival on the plantation in 1756 with his wife Lucy Grymes, no member of the Lee family had lived there previously. The house that

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It has been generally thought that the Fairfax house was built in 1825 by Henry Fairfax who had acquired the 500 manor parcel acres of Leesylvania, or "Lee neck," from Alfred Lee, who had inherited the land from his father, Charles Lee, the second son of Henry Lee II. Another informant asserts, however, that the Fairfaxes built their house either as an addition to or on the foundation of a much older house, called "Freestone House." According to the same informant, the Henry Lees II lived in this house when they arrived on Freestone Point and while their house was being built; and the Freestone House, an overseer's house, actual

(continued)

Fairfax House Site  
(Continuation Sheet)

Historical significance (continued)

predates Leesylvania. This is possible, the estate having been a tobacco plantation for many years before the Lees acquired it (and probably operated the plantation as absentee owners). There were other houses on the peninsula: between 1723 and 1741 half of the estate was sold off and divided into large farms. Henry Lee I re-assembled the original 2,000 acres in 1741 prior to leaving the land to his son. The other houses, among them an early log house and a manor house belonging to Francis Wright, were probably located on Powell's Creek.

The peninsula, it is said, was fired upon by the British during the Revolution and possibly the War of 1812. A previous tenant of the Fairfax house relates a story that is associated with the house concerning a small basement window through which a cannon ball supposedly entered the house, but no documentation exists to confirm this story.

In 1847, Col. John W. Fairfax, Adjutant to General Longstreet, inherited part of the estate. Fairfax is said to have lived in the house until well after the Civil War. During the War, Confederate troops were probably camped at Freestone Point to guard the heavy artillery guns which had been placed on the cliff at Freestone Point in the Confederates' successful blockade of the Potomac in 1861 and 1862.

After the Civil War, Leesylvania, or Lee Neck (Military Maps of c1864 identify the southern tip of the peninsula as Brushy Point), as the Fairfaxes called the peninsula, was leased to the Quakers. Little is known of the Quakers' stay, but they allegedly cut down all of the trees. A dispute arose, a lawsuit ensued, and the property was returned to its Fairfax owner.

From the late 1890s and into the early 20th century, the tract may have been owned by an Omaha, Nebraska, department store owner named Hayden and his partner, Mr. Sherry (sp.?), although the property may have had several owners during that period. In any case, during the early 1900s the house was occupied by a Mrs. Wigglesworth and then by the Davis family. Mr. Davis leased the land from Hayden, cut the timber for his lumber business, and farmed the land. Prior to the Wigglesworth and Davis tenancies, the property was used as a private hunt club by Hayden and Sherry, and the Fairfax house was the hunting and fishing lodge, though it has been recorded elsewhere that guests arrived by and stayed in private railroad cars on the RF&P track, which was constructed through the property in 1872. There was a RR station at Neabsco then.

Sometime after the Davises moved out of the house in about 1910 or 1920, it burned. It was suspected that bootleggers who were then occupying the house and illegally making whiskey on the property deliberately started the fire to avoid being apprehended. Another source has it that the fire was caused by sparks from a passing train. (bootlegger's story) ← Not a chance

Sometime between the time the Davises left the house and when it burned, the property, possibly as much as 1,000 acres, was bought by a man named Crane, who was foreman at the trash plant at Cherry Hill. Crane allegedly sold or leased the property to a company that cut all the timber on the peninsula.

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In the mid-to-late 1950s, Freestone Point was bought by Arlington Attorney J. Carl Hill, who, with the Freestone Holding Corp., attempted to develop a resort on the point. Hill installed over 100 slot machines in a ship, the S.S. Tolchester, moored to a wharf off Freestone Point but theoretically in Charles County, Md., which owns the Potomac to the highwater mark. The Tolchester, also known as the S.S. Freestone, was touted in local newspapers as a "restaurant-club, cocktail lounge and slot machine haven." A luxury hotel and other attractions were planned for the \$14 million dollar recreation and vacation resort Hill hoped to build on the 500-acre site on Freestone Point, with parking for 10,000 cars. Gambling and liquor by the drink were illegal in Virginia, and in 1958,

Fairfax House Site  
(Continuation Sheet - page 2)

Historical significance (continued)

before the resort could be fully developed, Maryland, under pressure from Virginia officials, passed a bill outlawing gambling casinos operating off Virginia's shore line. Freestone Holding Corp. went bankrupt, ending the Point's most notorious period in history. A subsequent owner, the Hawaiian-American Steamship Co., controlled by shipping magnate Daniel K. Ludwig, recently donated half of the value of the parcel to the State of Virginia for development of Leesylvania Park.

Published sources (continued)

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Ratcliffe, R.J., "Leesylvania History," in Manassas Journal-Messenger, 19 Nov 1964.

Templeman, Eleanor Lee, Virginia Homes of the Lees (1973).

, Arlington Heritage (1959), p.

Templeman, Eleanor Lee and Nan Netherton, Northern Virginia Heritage (1966), pp. 20, 23.

Wills, Mary Alice, Confederate Batteries Along the Potomac (1978).

Wills, Mary Alice, "Freestone Point," in Echoes of History, Jan 1974, pp. 13-14.

Prince William County Parks and Recreation Department, "Freestone Point, A Proposed County Park" (no date, prob. 1970), proposal and map.

Numerous newspaper articles in the late 1950s about the "floating gambling casino."

Several newspaper articles about Ludwig and the part-donation of the Leesylvania tract to the State.