

Moor Green, Mr. and Mrs. Cox' Home Believed to Have Been a Block House

Old Homes of
Prince William

Part II

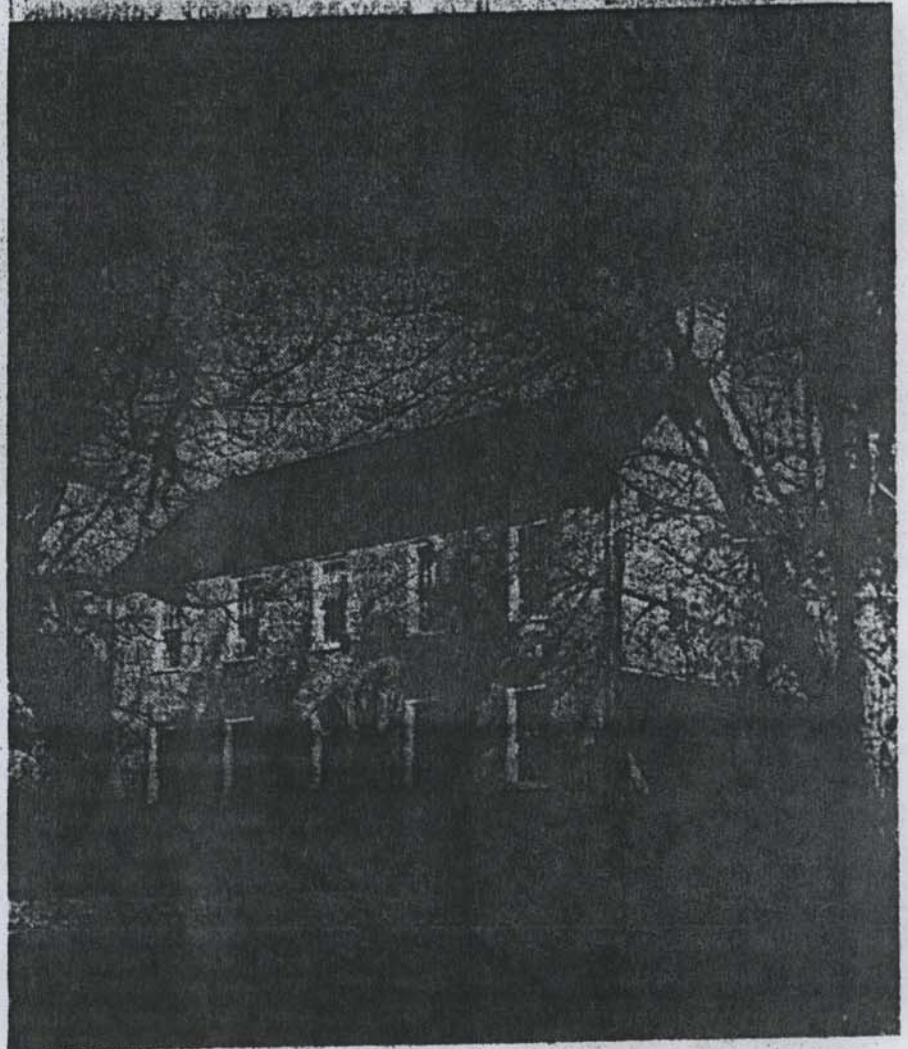
BY MARY ANNE PETERS

The Georgian facade of Moor Green, well-known family home of Mr. and Mrs. John Watson Cox, with its somnulent aura of by-gone times and events, looks westward across softly rolling land that slopes gradually downward to Broad Run. Land that was once dotted with Indians coming and going to their village situated across a field from the big house and at other times with the bitter fruit of war, is now sprinkled with quietly grazing dairy cows that peacefully keep the moorsward clipped like a lawn.

The house of mellow brick stands three stories high, fronted by a terrace outlined in handsome box. Its design of only one room deep, following the traditional medieval architecture found in the oldest English homes, allows maximum sunshine in all the rooms except where the kitchen ell interferes.

A medallion on one of the outer walls establishes a firm date on the age of the house as 1756. However, parts of the house show evidences of an earlier history. The garden front and two end walls are Queen Anne as opposed to the later Georgian style on the front shown above, and are laid in common bond which was not generally used after 1738. It is believed that the place started life as a block house, the present fence marking the site of the stockade, and that when its front wall was damaged it was rebuilt to look as it does now. The interior panelling was installed in 1756.

The wide, hospitable green door opens into a spacious hall which ends in a door opening onto the garden terrace. Off the hall to the left is the parlor, whose most striking feature is a handsome mantel. The mantel, basically Queen Anne in style, is overlaid with geometric designs of Indian origin.



in this case the whole building was demolished.

The charming stair case in the main hall leads to bedrooms on the second floor and finally winds its way up to more on the third. Heavy blood stains on the wide old flooring of the third floor recall the time during the Civil War when the place was used as a hospital, probably by both sides.

Another interesting, but no longer visible, feature of the house is a hidden stairway leading from the floor of the cellar to the water level of an old well, which was evidently used by members of the household to obtain water without exposing themselves to possible at-

folks". Myrtle planted by slaves also covers the spot. In place of the usual marker his old fiddle was put at the head of his grave, the top of which was still visible within the personal memory of the present owner.

The old approach to the house was the logging road that went South through the woods toward Manassas and westward across the green toward Brentsville, fording Broad Run. At a vantage spot above the ford the ruins of triangular-shaped earthworks of a redoubt still remain to mark the place where Confederates guarded the ford. Shells, bayonets and bullets have been found on and about the spot.

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Across the hall and through the dining room to the rear is the kitchen ell, set several feet below the rest of the house, its ivy-wreathed windows looking out onto the garden terrace. It was once the plantation office and library, and the small between-stories room above it was once the weaving room, now used as a study

The kitchen in other times was a separate building a few yards from the outside entrance to the dining room. Old flagstones that made up the walk leading to it can still be found sunk deep in the covering grass and overgrown by the roots of a huge oak. This building also sheltered the house slaves, and since it was the Union Army's practice to force the slaves to leave by burning their quarters,

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Another interesting, but no longer visible, feature of the house is a hidden stairway leading from the floor of the cellar to the water level of an old well, which was evidently used by members of the household to obtain water without exposing themselves to possible attack from Indians by going outside. Access to the stair was sealed off when the present owner in rehabilitating the place had to lay a concrete floor in the cellar to protect it from the inroads of moisture.

Away from the house but within the fence-stockade is the old family cemetery studded with sunken slabs, half-hidden by masses of myrtle, which time and weather have unfortunately rubbed bare of markings. A large rectangular depression marks the place where are buried those who died in the house during its service as a hospital during the Civil War. Over the fence beyond the cemetery is a deep pit which not many years ago still held the ruins of what gave evidence as being an ice house.

The slave burial ground is several slopes away but can be clearly marked from the house by the tops of the dark sentinel cedars, one of which was planted at the head of the grave of each male slave. Slabs of the same material as those in the family cemetery were put next to the cedars, and now several are almost completely enveloped by the base of the trees. It is interesting to note the lapse of time between the deaths of the slaves by the progress of growth or decay of the trees.

There is a touching story of an old slave thought to have been named Raphael, who played the fiddle and organized a small dance band which catered to the balls given in the house and events around Brentsville, then a thriving social center. He must have been beloved by the family, since when he died he was buried apart from the grave of the other slaves, and in the spring his grave still blossoms with narcissus that was supposedly planted by the "white

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The story of the land, which is also the story of the general area of Moor Green, seems to date from 1689, when it belonged to the daughter of Lord Culpeper who married Lord Fairfax. Surveyed in 1694 and again in 1699, the land was divided and after passing through several hands was finally bought by Luis Renault (Reno) in 1711. The land remained in the family until 1900 when it was sold. In 1941 it returned to a branch of the family when Mr. Cox bought it, he being descended on his mother's side from the original owners.

Mrs. Viola D. Proffitt of Manassas recalls that her grandfather, Lucian Alexander Davis, who was a Captain in the Prince William Cavalry during the War Between the States, had a narrow escape at Moor Green.

Captain and Mrs. Davis were stopping momentarily at Moor Green when a slave reported that yankee infantrymen were fast approaching the estate. Thinking the Unionmen were looking for him, Captain Davis escaped.

Mrs. Davis was resting at the home before journeying to Bowling Green to be attended by an uncle who was a physician there. Believing her to be a Confederate spy, she was captured by the North and taken to Alexandria. She was rescued by a Mrs. Holland who moved under the cloak of British protection and taken to Mrs. Holland's home in Alexandria where a son was born to the Davis'. However, the birth was premature and the son died shortly after birth.

Following the war, Captain Davis was Clerk of the Circuit Court in Prince William for 16 years.

STATE NEWS in brief

MORE CATTLE, MORE MEAT, PRICES HOLD

Three farm items made public during the week by Federal and State statisticians: More Virginia cattle were slaughtered in the first 10 months of 1953 than ever before; the drought was responsible, and also the record numbers of cattle on farms. Milk production in October was 4 per cent higher in the state than in October of 1952; the increase in volume more than offset the slight reduction in prices. There has been a steady decline in farm prices during 1953, but the drop halted in October, and prices have increased a little since then.

VIRGINIA LAST IN OLD-AGE AID

Among the 48 states and the District of Columbia, in the amount

Mother Didn't Forget Our

PRE-TESTED
Polly Parrot
SHOES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

