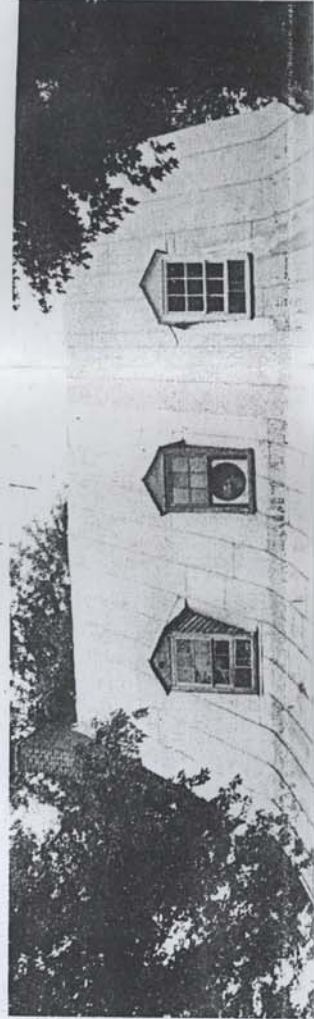




John, Laura and Nancy Niedernhofer reglaze windows in home's dining room



*Just musing*

with Marilyn Muse

# Park Gate: out of obscurity

You might say Gail and Dean Niedernhofer of Aden are much like the colonists who helped settle Virginia.

When they came to live at Park Gate, near Nokesville, a historic house built in the mid 1700's, they literally camped there with no electricity, heat, air-conditioning, washer-dryer or any other convenience of the 19th century.

Now, two months later, they are at a landmark in the restoration which has a time frame of five years. The foundation has been shored up, the walls have been torn down and there is now electricity but Gail still doesn't have a kitchen sink.

Cooking for three children and a husband is made a little easier since Gail got one product of today, a microwave oven.

"It's really great, I can work on the

house right up to dinner time," said Mrs. Niedernhofer about the fast-cooking oven.

While the house will have up to date bathrooms and a working kitchen, the couple are keeping the rest of the house true to the period when it was built. Parkgate was once the home of Thomas Lee and Mildred Washington Lee, niece of George Washington. Her father was John Augustine Washington.

Every board that has come out of the house has been saved (when possible) and have bucketfuls of the nails, which were taken out of the house.

The boards and woodwork have been numbered to simplify them going back into the same place.

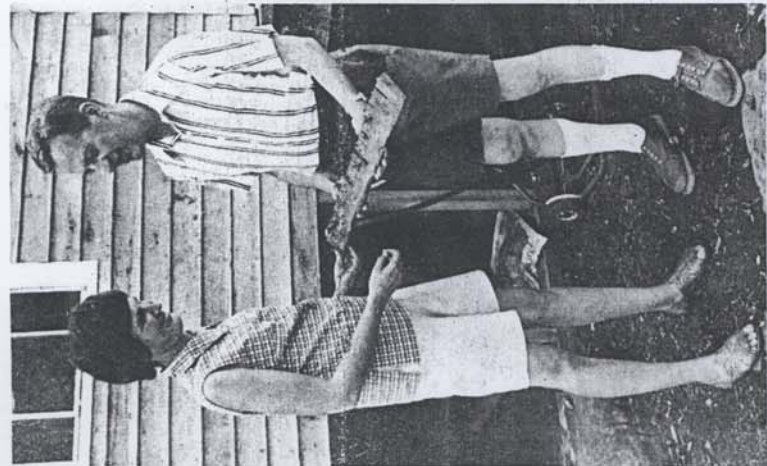
When the Niedernhofers bought the house it was in such disrepair that builders told them they'd be better off if they just had the house bulldozed down and start all over new. Insurance companies kept cancelling their insurance because of the bad shape of the house.

Already the Niedernhofers have spent more than even they had estimated it would cost to restore the house.

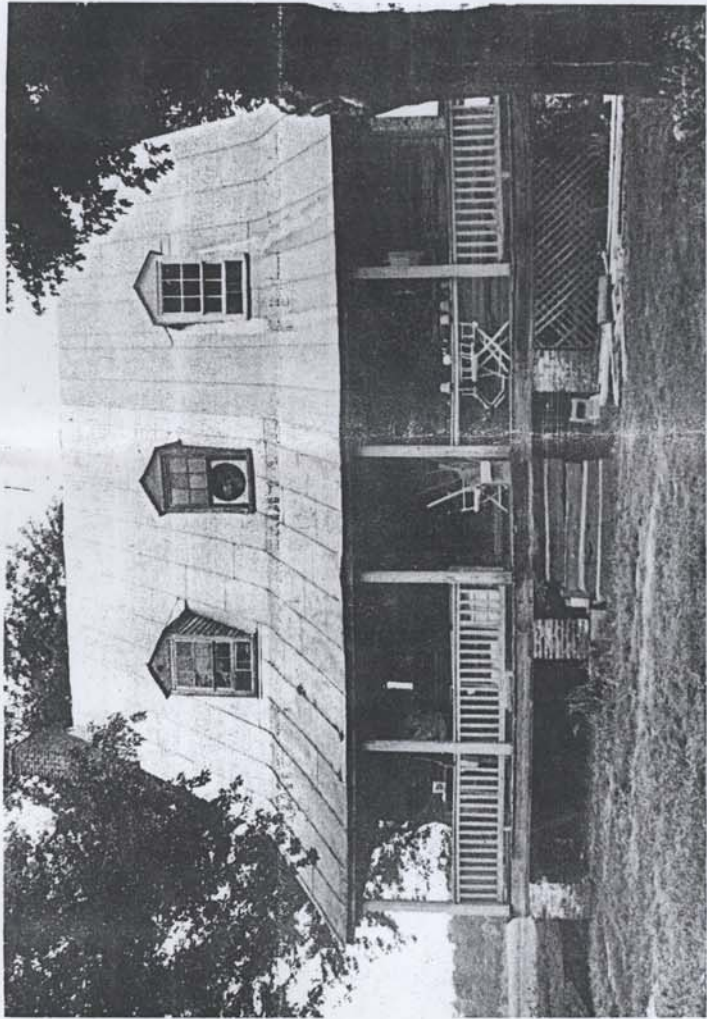
But, they aren't discouraged. Since both collect antiques, she furniture, he vintage cars, restoring an early day home was a natural extension for the couple who had previously lived in a new home in Fairfax County. Niedernhofer is employed by the government as an automotive engineer for the Department of Transportation.

Mrs. Niedernhofer has spent endless hours at the county courthouse in





Gail and Dean Niedernhofer with weathered board



Park Gate, built in 1750's, destined to be showplace

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"I hope to get closer to the date that the house was actually built, some sources say 1739 and some 1750," said Mrs. Niedernhofer, who is presently retired as a medical technician. She has researched back to 1805, the year Thomas Lee, a Dumfries lawyer, died. He had purchased the property from Daniel Brent and came to live there with his bride in 1789.

The house, said Mrs. Niedernhofer, was well-established at the time of his death and had a great number of slaves which would only have been needed if it was a large plantation.

While some county historians debate that the house was actually the main house on the plantation, the Niedernhofers don't believe the house was ever a tenant house.

"It's just too elegant and too much of a house for that time when the average person had nothing but log cabins," said Mrs. Niedernhofer. "Its been written that anyone 50 miles or more from water was truly a pioneer when you think of the primitive conditions that existed then, this must have been very grand."

Still standing near Park Gate is a two-story cabin, one of the former slave quarters.

George Washington on a southern tour in 1791 told of stopping in Dumfries where he was wine and dined and afterwards "visited and drank tea with my niece, Mrs. Thomas Lee." Mildred Washington Lee, Thomas Lee's first wife, is buried at Park Gate. Lee, who was the eldest son of Richard Henry Lee, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and uncle of "Lighthorse" Harry Lee, left Park Gate to his second wife, Eliza Ashton Brent. Park Gate once had about two thousand acres and was part of the Brent dividend of the Brent Town proprietary. The Niedernhofers said, however, no other foundation has been found and the oldest house near-by is Fleetwood, which is still standing. The Niedernhofers have 40 acres with Park Gate, which is located on what is now called Park Gate Drive, after the home.

The couple hope to turn the plantation once again into a working farm and have sent away soil samples to the state.

Park Gate is already listed in county historical listings and the Niedernhofers are taking steps to have it listed in the national register.

"I think the name Park Gate has dwindled into obscurity but we're here to

# 31 clubs in county extension

The Prince William County Extension Homemakers Clubs now total 31. Extension Homemakers is a community or neighborhood organization with elected officers and usually meet once a month. The club provides an informal adult education program to members under the leadership of Extension Agents. In Virginia there are some 24,000 members.

Persons interested in more information about extension clubs may call the Extension Office at 361-8889.

Clubs in Prince William County and the meeting times are as follows: Bradley Forest, new club, Bradley-Noreen Reynolds, 3rd Monday night, president Terry

**Cosmetology taking patrons**

Stonewall Jackson Senior

Landon; Brentsville, 2nd Tuesday night, president Shelby Hollyfield; Buckhall, daytime, 3rd Monday, at Cannon Branch, 2nd Monday night, president Laura Lipscomb; Catharpin, 1st

Wednesday, 10 a.m., president June Gray; Dale City, 2nd Tuesday, 9:30 a.m., president Lynda Cornwall; Georgetown South, 2nd Tuesday night, president Kathy Bremer; Greenwood, 2nd Wednesday, daytime,

president Sharon Embrey; Hickory Grove, 1st Wednesday, 9:30 a.m., Lorraine Forbes.

Also, Lake Ridge, 2nd Wednesday, 9 a.m., president Arlene Tolin; Longview, 2nd Monday, 8 p.m., president

Ruth Slusher; Manassas Homesippers, 4th Thursday, 1 p.m. Manassas Senior, 2nd Wednesday, 1 p.m.

president Jackie Corbin; Marumasco Hills, 3rd Wednesday, A.M., president Betty Abshire; Montclair, 2nd Wednesday, 9:30 a.m., president Sally Lebowitz; Nokesville Junior, 4th Tuesday, 8 p.m., president Hazel Shepherd.

Nokesville Senior, 2nd Thursday afternoon

president Lucille Trout; Parkside, 1st Monday, 7:30 p.m., president Florence Tyre; Riders, 4th Tuesday,

7:30 p.m., president Clara Konzelmann; Robnel, 3rd Monday, 8 p.m., president Mary Guenera; Sudley Road, 2nd Wednesday, afternoon, president Irene Espenshade; Sudley Night Owls, president Elizabeth Hickman; Tri-Dale, 3rd Wednesday, 9:30 a.m., president Elizabeth Walthall; Woodbine, 1st Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., president Nell Hall; Woodbridge, 3rd Thursday, A.M., president June Bennett; Willowbrook, president Joan Kelly; Ridgewood Estates, president Christine Wargo.

The dress shop opening was the outgrowth of a fashion career that started when she was 15. It was highlighted in June of this year when Mrs. Gerald Ford donated to the Smithsonian Institution First Ladies Hall a gown designed for her by Frankie Welch.

The long princess silhouette a course in creative design for the clothing department of the University of Maryland.

The long princess silhouette

## Trowel Garden Club

### will tour Bel Air

The Trowel Garden Club held a cold plate luncheon recently and discussed programs for the months ahead.

Mrs. Anne Flory will be

Judges Look For," is also planned. Hostesses for the September luncheon, which featured home-grown vegetables and jellies, were:

## Frankie Welch show is set at Quantico

The 13 original states are among the 100 various scarf designs sold in her Alexandria shop.

A popular item of her shop is the versatile hostess gown for women of all sizes and ages. It is called a Frankie and can be tied in eight to 12 different ways, each giving a different look. The fluid and wide sleeved gown is available in a wide variety of fabrics.

The Quantico Officers' Wives' Club (OWC) will have its first luncheon of the season on Wednesday, October 6 at Harry Lee Hall. A social hour beginning at 11 a.m. will precede the luncheon which will be served at noon.

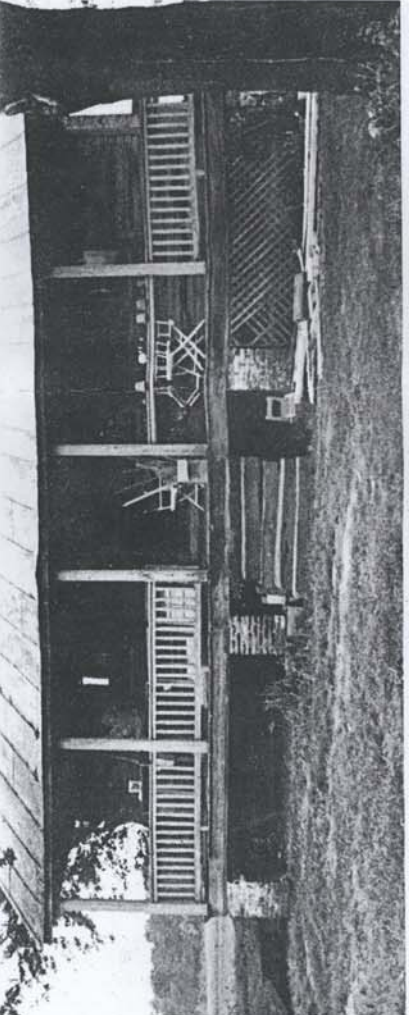
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Mrs. Welch is best known in the fashion world for scarf and fabric designs. She designed the Marine Corps scarves which are sold by the OWC. Mrs. Welch has designed scarves for well-known political figures and groups. Her Bicentennial Presidential Scarf and the Bicentennial Scarf of

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The long princess silhouette gown was one of Mrs. Ford's favorites and she postponed donation until Mrs. Welch made her a duplicate.

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Mrs. Anne Flory will be host for next month's meeting which will be in the form of a nature walk at her home, Bel Air Plantation. For the November meeting, Mrs. Edgar Rohr and Mrs. Frank Cox will conduct the program. Weems Since the Botis Weems Museum in Dumfries is a club project to help beautify the club decided to decorate it for the Christmas holidays and hold a Christmas tea there. A program on conservation and visit by Mrs. Floyd Collins, who will speak on "What

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Every square inch of the split lean-to frame house, now painted a faded cream yellow, has to be scraped before getting coats of its original color, white. The steep gable roof swoops down over a front veranda. The tin roof will be replaced with a cedar shingle roof like the original. Double doors, with old-fashion screens (original) open onto the living and dining

—See PARK GATE, Page B-4

## Needlework on exhibit

A needlework exhibit, "Creative Stitchery," will be held at the Fredericksburg Savings and Loan Building, 400 George St., Fredericksburg, October 10 through October 12.

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## Hood College scholar

Mary Margaret Evans, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Evans of Oakwood Drive, Woodbridge, has been named a Hood College scholar. A graduate of Fairfax Christian School, Ms. Evans is one of 70 Hood students who were recognized the honor by earning Convocation Honors for outstanding scholarship for two consecutive years.

## Cosmetology taking patrons

Stonewall Jackson Senior High Cosmetology Department will begin taking appointments for the school year 1976-77. The first week of operation was September 13 and 14 and will be every Thursday and Friday thereafter.

At a minimal price services offered are shampoos and sets, cuts, colors, perms, manicure, facials, frostings and many others offered in professional salons. All services are supervised by instructors. Persons may call 368-2106 for appointments.



cooperation with the Bicentennial Commission hope to have the trail ready so anyone who desires may hike all or part of the trail on a day to be set in October of our Bicentennial year.

## Cub Olympics to be Saturday

Prince William District Cub Scout Olympics will be held Saturday at 1 p.m. at Woodbridge Middle School. The winning packs representative will go on to the council meet the following Saturday. Last year Prince William won the council event.

proximately one-half mile between the reservoir and a farm house that once stood during the Civil War along Wolf Run Shoak Road, which is off of Bacon Race Road.

They also cleared a cemetery with the earliest date being 1818. They made permanent records of tomb and foot stones, which were found intact.

While the Scouts were clearing they ran into many problems such as clearing the wrong road, thick bushes and very large cedar trees.

The Scouts who participated in this were, Mike Bishop, Scott Wentzek, Jon Coon, Bruce Tilly, Ray Houser, Tom Jenkins, Robby Clark, Terry Carmack, Ed Hatchel, David Spicer, Mike McDonald, Charlie Jenkins,

were waving goodbye as they were staying for another week at Camp Baird for the training course that Wilton Elmore had taken the week before.

## Troop 2514

Two field trips kicked off the new school year for Girl Scout Troop 2514 of Dale City which meets at Bel Air School.

The first trip was to Washington to see the evening performance of the Young Americans on the grounds of the Washington Monument, as well as the Kodac sponsored film, "Washington, the Man."

# Park Gate

—Continued from Page B-1

rooms. Fireplaces in the ten room house had been covered over and are being re-opened. Much of the bricks are laid in the Flemish-bond method and the arches in the fireplaces are in the Keystone design. The walls, which are being torned down, were made of a mixture of lime, horsehair and mud. The plaster walls had dozen of coats of whitewash on them and the woodwork was in different colored paint. Beautiful original paneling is in both the living and dining rooms.

The Niedernhofers plan to keep the walls white with colored trim; or reverse it and have the walls different colors and the trim white.

Wallpaper wasn't in use when the house was built and won't be used.

"We're not purist in the sense that everything has to be just the way it was when the house was built because that gives no precedence to those other people that lived here and made changes," said Niedernhofer. "There is a certain amount of importance of living in the house with the changes that have been made."

One change that was never made was the addition of closets in the big rooms and the Niedernhofers won't be adding them either. They'll be using large wardrobes in all of the bedrooms. The couple plan to furnish the house with antique Victorian furniture that they have collected over the years.

The upstairs floors are the original wide, random-width floors. The bedroom flooring in 10 year old John's room is made up of only eight boards, cut from virgin pine. "I can't even imagine a tree that big, they used the heart pine cut out of the center of the tree," said Niedernhofer. The floors downstairs were damaged about 100 years ago and had new flooring laid over them.

The huge beams in the house were handhewn and the lathes handsplit. The bricks on the house, are believed to have been handmade and fired by slaves. The foundation of the house is of native stone.

"Think of the unlimited manpower that was needed to make all those nails and wood pegs for the joints," said Niedernhofer.

Niedernhofer believes they bought the house just in time or else restoration would have been impossible. When the house was jacked up by railroad jacks, it was found that the sill beams had been eaten up by termites.

The couple has had the help of neighbors and relatives in the restoration process.

"My brother who is an architect and has an old house of his own (1810) has been my guiding hand in seeing that things are done correctly in saving the house," said Niedernhofer. Mrs. Niedernhofer's father is on hand, too, doing some of the carpentry work.

Neighbors Clay Wood and Winfield Ross have also been instrumental in the restoration. General contractor is Carter Kehoe of Bealeton, who has accepted the spirit of the restoration, too.

Even the three Niedernhofer children have pitched-in to help. Laura has re-glazed windows; John has pulled out many a nail in the house; and Nancy is a great go-forer.

Once the house is finished, the couple would like to have it open to the public on special occasions, like Garden Week.

The restoration has meant a lot of planning, measuring and doing things in the right sequence.

"It is important to get things done in the right order so they won't have to be done over again," said Mrs. Niedernhofer.

"Everybody told us not to try to save it, but it has really been a fun adventure for us and it really has been good for our family," said Mrs. Niedernhofer.

"The kids have learned that work doesn't have to be painful but that it can be very satisfying and rewarding."

She said daughter, Laura, 11, remarked to her the other day that other mothers teach their daughter things like sewing and cooking but she had taught her "great things like mixing cement and laying bricks."



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