

Effingham was built on a portion of the 30,000-acre Brent Town Tract. This grant was made in 1686-87 by James II to three entrepreneurial Londoners, ^{Richard Foote, Nicholas Hayward, and Robert Bristow,} and a Catholic pioneer, George Brent. The venture began as an attempt to create a religious haven in the backwoods of an area that became Prince William County. The primary objective was to settle a large territory some miles away from the already-inhabited Tidewater regions of Northern Virginia.

Sometime after 1738, the descendants of the four original proprietors divided the Brent Town Tract. George Brent's descendants took the northeast quarter. The Bristows took a northern tract adjoining the Brents. The Haywards took the southeast quarter, and the Footes took the southernmost parcel, ^{now} lying in Fauquier and Prince William Counties. Effingham was built on a part of the Hayward share of the Brent Town Grant. Effingham's supposed builders, the Alexanders, came from Tidewater Stafford County, along the Chotank Creek. They migrated, along with the Footes, Fitzhughes, Stuarts and others, to the middle piedmont lands in the vicinity of Cedar Run and established around Brent Town an aristocratic community

of fine mansions, English gardens, and cultivated fields. Tobacco and slavery were the mainstays of the economy. Dumfries, a few miles to the southeast, was the market and exporting port and social center. Effingham's builder, Col. William Alexander (1744-1814), was a great-grandson of John Alexander, who, in ~~the late~~ 1669, owned a 6,000-acre patent on Hunting Creek. ~~Later~~ This tract later became the site of an early tobacco warehouse and eventually of the city of Alexandria. ~~Colonel Alexander~~ Colonel Alexander was married to Sigismunda Mary Massey in 1765. It is supposed that Effingham was built for the Colonel and his bride. Their son Lawrence inherited Effingham in 1814, and in 1828 he sold it to John Macrae. In 1829, William Foote purchased the plantation from John Macrae. In 1833, Allen Howison purchased the estate, then totaling 622 acres, from William Foote.

Effingham has had a succession of owners since the Howison purchase. The present owners acquired the property,

which now amounts to about 680 acres,
in 1955 from C. Kenneth and
Margaret A. Francis.

A graveyard at Effingham contains
markers for Lucy and Benjamin Farrow;
William Alexander; Lucy, James,
Elizabeth, Allen, and Amanda Howison;
Harriet W. D. Beadle; William Alexander Dade;
and Daniel McLean.