

# Crumbling barn is all that's left of Yorkshire Plantation

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## Places

MANASSAS — All that is left of the Yorkshire Plantation, a once proud Southern estate that achieved historical significance during the Civil War, is the overgrown ruins of its barn.

Now the crumbling ruins face an uncertain future as modern-day development threatens to encroach on the site where Confederate Gen. Pierre G.T. Beauregard made his field headquarters during the First Battle of Manassas on July 21, 1862.

According to records on file with the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, the barn was built in 1856, but establishment of the Yorkshire estate dates back to the late 18th century.

Richard Blackburn, who erected Rippon Lodge in eastern Prince William, probably built the Yorkshire mansion. In 1733, he purchased 764 acres adjoining "King" Carter's Bull Run Tract from Mark Chilton, according to records. Blackburn enlarged the estate and later sold it to his son, Col. Thomas Blackburn.

Thomas Blackburn sold 145 acres of the estate to Bernard Hooe in 1800 and later passed the remainder of the property on to his sons-in-law, Bushrod Washington and Henry Smith Turner.

Washington and Turner in 1826 sold the estate to Hooe's son, John, who in 1854 sold it to Virginia McLean, wife of Wilmer McLean. At that time, the estate totaled more than 1,200 acres.

The McLean farm gained historic

prominence during the Civil War, primarily because of its strategic location near Bull Run.

During the spring and summer of 1861, the Confederate army erected strong fortifications on the south side of Bull Run near McLean's Ford and Mitchell's Ford.

The Yorkshire area fell under heavy cannon fire from Union forces at the onset of the first major land battle of the Civil War. Records show that the McLean house was hit at least once by cannon fire as was the barn, despite the presence of a yellow hospital flag flown above the structure used by Confederates as a field hospital.

It was an artillery duel between Union and Confederate forces that prompted the shelling of the McLean house. A single Yankee cannonball hit the chimney of the kitchen, ruining the midday meal of the McLeans and spurring Wilmer McLean to move his family to a safer location.

The McLeans returned to the Yorkshire house after the battle, but again evacuated it in the wake of Second Manassas in August 1862.

Ironically, less than two years later McLean's new home in Appomattox served as the site where Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant.

Around the turn of the century, York-



Courtesy of Central Library

After the barn was leveled in 1958, its stone foundation is all that remains.

shire became part of a 2,000-acre estate created by Alexandria brewer and financier Robert Portner.

After Portner's death, I.J. Breeden acquired the estate between Bull Run and Manassas and later subdivided, sold or developed most of the land.

In 1958, a severe storm leveled the wooden superstructure of the McLean barn. No one knows what happened to the house.

In recent years, new sewer systems and road improvements in the area promise accompanying rapid development.

"It is likely that if this small parcel is not reserved soon, it will be sold and a house or houses will be built on the site," warns the Historic Landmarks Commission. "Acquisition of this small parcel and cleaning up of the barn ruin for use as a small historical park would ... preserve the only remnant of the McLean Plantation which came to light during the Civil War."

McLean Barn

Prince William Library  
Virginia