

History of Wellington Green

By John Bee

Beginnings

The story begins well before the 1700's when the Gladden Tract looked very much like it looked just a few short years ago -- woods. It was during this time that the lands of the Gladden Tract were used by Indians for hunting and camping grounds. Indian arrowheads and a stone axe have been found in and around the development. They were indeed here, but we don't know that much about them. The Indians freely roamed the land until the late 1700's, but after the Revolutionary War near the turn of the century, the Gladden Tract underwent some dramatic changes.

The Stanfords

The land was purchased by a family by the name of Stanford. The Stanfords owned not only Wellington Green but also portions of Clermont, Burgundy, and Wilton Woods as well. They established a small plantation and gave their home the name of Burgundy Farm. Their manor house was located off present day Norton Road where the Burgundy Farm Private School now is located. The woods all through Wellington Green and Burgundy were cleared and acres and acres of corn were planted. The Stanfords lived on Burgundy Farm many years and they eventually had two sons.

When Mr. Stanford died he didn't know which son he should leave his land to, so he solved the problem by dividing the land in half and giving each son a half. The eastern portion kept the name Burgundy Farm, while the western portion, which Wellington Green is in, received the name Evergreen Farm. The son who received Evergreen Farm sold the land soon after.

The Fowles

Around 1800, Evergreen Farm was purchased by the Fowles, a merchant family from Alexandria. Around 1870 they built a farm home known as the Evergreen House. The Evergreen House was not much more than 100 yards from the present-day homes of Wellington Ridge. In the 1850s, Ellen "Nellie" Bernard Fowles was born. On April 19, 1871 she married a former Confederate General, Fitzhugh Lee.

Fitzhugh Lee

Though Fitzhugh was twice as old as Nellie they had a happy marriage, not to mention seven children. One could consider Fitzhugh had been Nellie's "next door neighbor". Fitzhugh Lee was born in the Clermont Plantation House, which once stood in the extreme northern portion of the present day Clermont Woods Development. Clermont at the time was owned by General John Mason, the son of patriot George Mason. It was John Mason's daughter, Anne Maria, who was "Fitz's" mother. Fitz's father was Sidney Smith Lee, the son of "Light Horse" Harry Lee and brother of Confederate General, Robert E. Lee. Thus, Fitzhugh Lee was the first to have ancestors from both the Lee and Mason families.

Fitzhugh grew up on Clermont and at the age of fourteen he enrolled in an Episcopal boarding school in Catonsville, Maryland. There he excelled in academics and in 1852 he received appointment to the West Point Military Academy. At West Point however Fitzhugh did poorly and barely graduated. In 1859 Fitzhugh joined an army expedition on the Texas frontier, where on May 12 he had an encounter with a Comanche Indian. The encounter

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allegedly occurred at Crooked Creek in Ford County, Kansas. The two fired at each other at the same time. The Comanche shot an arrow, which hit Fitz in the chest and punctured his right lung while Fitz's bullet found its fatal mark right between the eyes of the Indian. Fitz eventually and somewhat miraculously recovered from his wound.

In 1861, as did many of the military personnel in this area, Lieutenant Fitzhugh Lee resigned from the U.S. Army to offer his services to the Confederacy. Fitz served in the First Virginia Cavalry under General "Jeb" Stuart. Fitz distinguished himself in battle and rose through the ranks quickly. By the time he was 31 he had become a General. When Stuart was killed at Yellow Tavern, Virginia, in the battle for Richmond, Fitz received command of half of Stuart's Cavalry forces. After the war Fitzhugh took a loyalty oath to the Union and became a leading advocate of southern reconciliation with the North. The *New York Times* wrote, on his death, "There is no man in the South and no man in the United States, who contributed more than Fitzhugh Lee to form, after the division of the Civil War, a more perfect union." Shortly thereafter, Fitzhugh married Miss Fowles and they lived together at Evergreen, which the Fowles family relinquished to them.

At Evergreen Fitzhugh organized his campaign for Governor of Virginia in 1885. Later that year Fitzhugh was indeed elected governor, thus becoming the only Northern Virginian ever elected to serve as Governor.

Gladden Tract

As time went on Evergreen Farm was sold to a Mr. Gladden in the early 1900's. It was then that Evergreen Farm became known as the Gladden Tract. On present day Wellington Ridge, Gladden Court is named after him. Gladden lived at Evergreen but the farmlands were not maintained and thus woodland began to grow back over them. One can tell that Wellington Green is surrounded by essentially young forest from the vast amount of coniferous trees. As time went on, soil geologists from Fairfax County surveyed the land and took soil samples. It was found that the Gladden Tract, as had most of the rest of this area, once was underwater and was part of the Atlantic shoreline in Prehistoric times, long before the Age of the Dinosaurs. Large quantities of Marine clay were found and fossils of prehistoric crustaceans known as trilobites can still be found there, but most importantly, large deposits of gravel were found in the land.

Virginia Concrete Company

When Gladden sold the land, the Virginia Concrete Company was more than happy to get its hands on it. It planned to use the Gladden Tract as a future gravel quarry. However, the company concentrated its mining efforts on such other properties they possessed like the sites of present day Manchester Lakes and Kingstowne. During this time a Mr. Cannon approached Virginia Concrete and purchased a small portion of the Gladden Tract where he developed a series of homes in Wilton Woods along what is now Cannon Lane. The Gladden Tract remained boundary-wise from then on basically the

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same as it is today, with the exception that the land which is now Clermont Park was still connected to it.

In 1965 Virginia Concrete commenced gravel-mining operations in the Gladden Tract. Unfortunately for the company, it waited too long. In the 1940's and 50's our area had experienced a population boom. The Gladden Tract was now surrounded by six major housing developments, each of which had a well-organized civic association, and each of which was full of angry citizens who did not want a gravel mine in their neighborhood. The Civic Associations of Clermont Woods, Wilton Woods, Ridgeview Estates, Winslow, Burgundy, and Franconia banded together and voiced their complaint to the county. After receiving the complaints the county imposed an injunction on Virginia Concrete to halt all mining operations in the Gladden Tract.

Evergreen House

Meanwhile the old Evergreen House had become run down and was in a state of decay. In 1969, a school principal and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. R. Barton Cooley became concerned for the fate of the old house especially for Evergreen's beautiful, marble mantled fireplace. Mr. Cooley approached Virginia Concrete and purchased the house for the small sum of \$1,000. However it cost Mr. Cooley \$25,000 to get the house moved off the Gladden Tract to the lot it now rests on which is located on the end of Cannon Lane. Mr. Cooley began the first serious work to restore Evergreen.

In 1972 Mr. and Mrs. Cooley sold Evergreen to Mr. and Mrs. Don and Ardyce Kinsley. The Kinsleys have ever since been continuing to restore the house to how it originally appeared when its residents were Fitzhugh and Nellie Lee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Kinsleys for providing me with so much interesting information! The Kinsleys are the people who have done the real research into Wellington Green, Evergreen and Fitzhugh Lee. They graciously took me through their home where I saw the beautiful marble mantled fireplace and the room Fitzhugh Lee was sitting in when he received word he had been elected Governor of Virginia. I don't know if the Kinsleys want everybody in the whole world coming to their house but a drive by would certainly be worth your while.

Clermont Park

Continuing in 1965, a disappointed Virginia Concrete Company put the Gladden Tract up for sale. Due to the "Baby Boom" at the time, a concern arose that there were not going to be enough schools in our area to handle the growing number of students. Edison High School had recently been completed but many felt we might need an additional high school. The Fairfax County Public School System purchased 40.6 acres of the Gladden Tract along Franconia Road as a future site for the new school. Later when the population began to level off there was obviously no need for the new high school, so the land was relinquished from the school system to the Fairfax County Park Authority. The park authority built a baseball diamond on it and a soccer field, and eventually the four sets of ball fields

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we have today. You now know that piece of land as Clermont Park.

Lehigh Realty Company

The remaining lands of the Gladden Tract were purchased by the Lehigh Realty Company of Alexandria. The Company promised to develop the Gladden Tract into a beautiful 350 home subdivision to be called "Randwick." As time went on, little development was noticed but about 100,000 cubic yards of earth and gravel were removed from the Tract. The local civic associations became suspicious that Lehigh was actually conducting another gravel mining operation. Complaints were voiced to the county again and the county investigated, intervened, and halted a second gravel mining operation, which was only using "Randwick" as a cover.

During the 1970's the Gladden Tract was all but abandoned as the local civic associations wanted to make certain that something like the "Randwick" scandal never happened again. The Gladden Tract was all but woods with the exception of the mined out area and the dirt service road that connected it with Franconia Road. The mined out area was unfortunately used by many as a garbage dump. But the surrounding forest was basically undisturbed. Cub Scouts even used the area for hiking. Near present day Churchman Court there used to be a little swamp that in the springtime, used to be just full of tadpoles. Children used to go out there and catch them in jars. Children also used to go down to the little creek that still runs through the development and turn over rocks in the stream and catch crayfish. The creek used to also, believe it or not, have fairly good fishing. Deer were also seen

taking drinks out of it. Deer still frequent the area even today.

In the mid-1970s, Lehigh Realty worked behind the scenes developing a planned townhouse community on the Gladden Tract. The plan called for very small townhouses to be built in three small high density clusters. Much of the buildable land bordered on Clermont Woods. To achieve the necessary density, the townhouses had to be located all along the Clermont Woods boundary, 25 feet from the Clermont property lines. The three story units would block the sun from the Clermont homes until late in the morning.

Edward R. Carr, Inc.

The Clermont Woods Community Association became aware of the Lehigh plan and quickly marshaled its forces to spread the word into the surrounding neighborhoods. Joe Alexander, the Lee District Supervisor at the time, was under the impression that all of the community associations were in agreement with the Plan; this was not the case. After several meetings with Carl Sell, the Lee District Planning Commissioner, follow-on meetings with Joe Alexander, and a Planning Commission hearing, the need for a revised plan became evident. In the hearing, one of the Clermont speakers said, "there may only be five flies in Fairfax County and that is not dense, but when the five flies are on my nose, that is dense." The point was well taken.

In 1982, a reputable developer, Edward R. Carr Inc., finally came forward with an acceptable plan for the development of the Gladden Tract. A

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natural buffer zone was created, the townhouses were turned so that they were perpendicular to the Clermont boundary, the density was significantly reduced, and the new plan was acceptable to all concerned. Work was started on a townhouse development to be called "Wellington Green". The name, "Wellington Green," is taken from "Wellington," a name commonly used for Carr properties and the "Green" is from "Evergreen," the former farmhouse. The development is located in two areas. Wellington Green in the western portion and Wellington Ridge in the eastern section. Both areas are connected by a pedestrian trail. The development also has two playgrounds and a tennis court.

Editorial Comments

This history was written by John Bee, 5608 Clermont Drive, with significant contributions by Mr. and Mrs. Don and Ardyce Kinsley. Mrs. Kinsley has published an article on Fitzhugh Lee, which appeared in the November 1985 - January 1986 edition of the *Fairfax Chronicles*. You may wish to read it for more information. John Lynch of Ridgeview and later Clermont Woods, and Bob Drake of Clermont, also provided information to John for this endeavor. Bob recently reformatted and updated the history.