

Plantations in Loudoun County

Springwood

Among the newcomers, in this post-revolution period, was Colonel Burgess Ball, a great-grandson of that dignified old aristocrat Colonel William Ball of Millenbeck on the Rappahannock, in Lancaster County, who had come to Virginia in 1657. During the Revolution Burgess Ball had served on the staff of General Washington, his first cousin, then as a captain in the Continental Line and later had raised and equipped a Virginia regiment at his own expense and served with it as lieutenant colonel. After the war, his health broken and his generous fortune seriously impaired by his expenditures for military purposes and by his extravagant hospitality at his home, Travellers Rest in Spotsylvania County, he in 1795, was obliged to seek refuge in what was still known in Tidewater as the Loudoun wilderness. On the 4th November, 1795, he purchased for £1741 (the proceeds of his back pay for military services it is said) from Abraham Barnes Thomson Mason, only acting executor and trustee under the will of Thomson Mason, a tract of 247 acres including the Great Spring and running to the Potomac. Here Colonel Ball either built a rustic lodge for his home or, as has been surmised, occupied and improved the old home of Francis Aubrey, calling his estate Springwood. On that same 4th November, 1795, there was purchased in trust for Colonel Ball from Stevens Thomson Mason by William Fitzhugh, Mann Page, and Alexander Spotswood "three of the trustees appointed by an Act of General Assembly to sell certain lands devised by James Ball deceased to his grandson Burgess Ball for his life," another tract of 147 acres about two miles north of the Great Spring for £441, current money of Virginia. Other adjacent tracts were purchased by Colonel Ball or by his trustees until he controlled a very large estate from the Great Spring to the Limestone Run of the most fertile land in the county. Far from his old military companions, he kept up a correspondence with them in his distant abode and many of them visited him there from time to time; for whether surrounded by the refinements of Travellers Rest or the wilderness of Springwood, Colonel Ball's lavish hospitality was a part of the very man himself. He died on the 7th March, 1800, and was buried just outside the graveyard surrounding the old chapel above Goose Creek on the hill above the Great Spring. This first Springwood dwelling was not on the site of the present mansion[170] but is believed to have been on the south side of the present road on what is now a part of the Big Spring estate, in recent years known as Mayfield. The existing Springwood residence was built by George Washington Ball, later Captain C.S.A., grandson of Colonel Burgess Ball, between 1840 and 1850. Louis Philippe is said to have been an overnight guest there and, during the Civil War, General Lee, a cousin of Captain Ball who had served on his staff, held a military conference in the present dining room. The estate was acquired in 1869 by the late Francis Asbury Lutz of Washington who substantially remodelled the mansion very soon thereafter. Since then it has been in the possession of the Lutz family, its present occupants being Mrs. Samuel S. Lutz, her son-in-law and daughter, Judge and Mrs. J. R. H. Alexander and

the latter's two sons.

Raspberry Plain

The genesis of Raspberry Plain, just north of Springwood, has already been given. As shewn in Chapter VII, the property had been originally acquired from Lord Fairfax by Joseph Dixon in 1731 and he had sold the farm which he had improved with a dwelling, orchard, etc., to Aeneas Campbell in 1754. Campbell, as we have seen, was Loudoun's first sheriff. He maintained the county jail and the ducking-stool at his home while he held that office. He sold the place in 1760 to Thomson Mason. So far the residence, long since vanished, was near the large spring, now a part of Selma. Mason is said by T. A. Lancaster, Jr., to have built a new house about 1771 (on the site of the present beautiful home). He then conveyed it to his son Stevens Thomson Mason, subsequently confirming his action in his will. Later, according to local tradition, another Mason descendant, Colonel John Mason McCarty was living there when he killed his cousin, General A. T. Mason in the famous duel in 1819, perhaps as a tenant, for the county records show that in 1830 the estate, then of about 250 acres, was conveyed by the executors of General Mason's will to George, John, Peter and Samuel Hoffman of Baltimore for \$8,500. It remained in the Hoffman family for over eighty-five years and until sold by the Hoffman heirs on the[171] 29th April, 1916, to Mr. John G. Hopkins who built the present imposing brick edifice of colonial architecture. The estate was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. William H. Lipscomb of Washington in 1931 and, until Mrs. Lipscomb's death, was the scene of many a gay and picturesque hunt breakfast given in honour of the Loudoun Hunt of which Mr. Lipscomb was Master.

Belmont

Ludwell Lee, a son of Richard Henry Lee, built Belmont in 1800 and lived there until his death in 1836. He rests in its garden. Soon after he died the estate was acquired by Miss Margaret Mercer who, born in 1791, was the daughter of Governor John Francis Mercer of Cedar Park, Maryland. Miss Mercer conducted a school for young ladies at Belmont until her death in 1846. She was a woman of broad education with pronounced views on the abolition of negro slavery and she it was who built the nearby Belmont Chapel on a part of her estate. After passing through the hands of many owners the property was purchased in 1931 by Colonel Patrick J. Hurley, Secretary of War under President Hoover, and since then he and Mrs. Hurley have made it their country home. For several years he has invited the Loudoun Hunt to hold its annual horse show there.

Coton

Across the highway Thomas Ludwell Lee, cousin to Ludwell Lee, about the same time built his home Coton, naming it after an English home of the earlier Lees. On Lafayette's visit to America in 1825, he was a guest of Ludwell Lee and a great festival, in honor of his visit, was staged at

both Belmont and Coton. It is said that after nightfall a double line of slaves, each holding aloft a flaming torch, was stationed between the two mansions to light the way of the celebrants as they passed from one house to the other. The original mansion has long since disappeared save for parts of its foundations. A second mansion was later erected on another part of the estate and in turn was destroyed by fire. The present stone dwelling, the third to bear the name, was erected by Mr. and Mrs. Warner Snider, the present owners of the estate, in 1931.

Oatlands



George Carter, great-grandson of Robert Carter, the "King Carter" of early Colonial days, received in 1800 from his father, Councillor Robert Carter of Naomi Hall, a tract of 6,000 acres south of Leesburg, a small part of the vast Carter holdings. Upon this land during the ensuing two years he built Oatlands, the most pretentious and elaborate of the Loudoun homes of that day. George Carter did not marry until attaining the discreet age of sixty years when he took as his bride Mrs. Betty Lewis, a widow, who had been a Miss Grayson. Both George Carter and his wife are buried in the gardens of Oatlands. The estate was acquired in 1903 by the late William Corcoran Eustis of Washington and is now the country home of his widow under whose care both residence and extensive gardens retain their justly celebrated charm and beauty. Mrs. Eustis, a daughter of the late Levi P. Morton, at one time Governor of New York and later Vice-President of the United States, has long been the Lady Bountiful of Loudoun. None of the

county's residents has ever equalled her benefactions to its poor and to its public institutions of every kind.

Rokeby

Rokeby, on the old Carolina Road south of Leesburg, so long the home of the Bentley family, also belongs to this period. It acquired its claim to fame during the War of 1812 when, in 1814, President Madison, in expectation of the capture of Washington, sent many of the more valuable Federal archives, including the Declaration of Independence and, it is said, the Constitution of the United States, to Leesburg for safekeeping whence they were removed to Rokeby and stored for two weeks in its vaults. It is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Nalle who, upon its purchase by them many years ago, made great changes in the old building.

Foxcroft



When, in the year 1914, Miss Charlotte Noland purchased the lovely old estate of Foxcroft, four miles north of Middleburg, there began a new era both in its interesting story and in the educational standards of Loudoun. No modern institution of the county has spread more generally knowledge of its charms than the famous school which Miss Noland then founded; and it is particularly appropriate that the institution should owe its inception and development to one who in singular degree is a representative of Loudoun's founders. Those Loudoun citizens of

today who trace their descent to one of the earlier Nabobs of the county feel a complacent satisfaction therein; but Miss Noland unites lineal descent not only from Francis Aubrey and Philip Noland but from Colonel Leven Powell and Burr Harrison, the earliest explorer, as well, thus inheriting an early Loudoun background believed to be unique.

As is the case with so many of the older houses of the county, the age of Foxcroft and the identity of its builder are uncertain; but the local tradition is that it is one of the earliest of the many old brick houses to be found in that part of the county and that its builder was one Kyle who had married a daughter of the Balls. The story goes on that Mrs. Kyle lost her mind after the birth of one of her children and that for a long time thereafter she was enchained in the garret of the old house until, during the absence of her husband on a journey, she freed herself and fell to her death down the stairs. Another local story is that the building of the house was under the supervision of William Benton, the land-steward and friend of President Monroe who, it is said learned brick-making in his native England, discovered good brick-clay in the Middleburg neighborhood and made the brick for most of the early brick houses in that part of the County.

With these local stories as a guide, an examination of the county records show a John Kile to have been a purchaser of land as early as 1797 and also a deed to John Kile from William Shrieves, then of Kentucky, on the 8th February, 1814, of 189 acres "on the waters of Goose Creek" for £320. The description, running as it does from one marked tree in the forest to another, requires a long search and careful plotting to definitely place the property, but it suggests the Foxcroft estate. That these Kiles or Kyles were quite certainly people of standing is indicated by their marriages. John Kile, Jr., presumably^[174] the son of the first John Kile, married Winney Powell, a daughter of Elisha Powell and her sister Mary became the wife of Pierce Noland.^[133] It all goes to suggest that the old Foxcroft mansion was built by John Kile from brick made under the supervision of William Benton sometime during the 1820's.

Foxcroft School has become so much a part of Loudoun that it is as difficult to picture the Middleburg neighbourhood without it as it would be to think of Middleburg without its famous fox-hunting. The school has eighty-five students, representative of the most prominent families in the United States from coast to coast, with students from abroad as well and there is always a long waiting list of applicants for admission. A healthy outdoor life is combined with carefully planned study. The young ladies are all expert riders, follow the Middleburg Hunt at its numerous meets and every year, since 1915, have their own horse show in May at Foxcroft which is always a brilliant affair.

Llangollan

Llangollan was built about 1810 by Cuthbert Powell, (1775-1849) a son of Colonel Leven Powell from whom he had inherited the land upon the latter's death at Fort Bedford, Pennsylvania, on the 6th August, 1810. Few families in Virginia are more deeply rooted in her history than the

Powells. Captain William Powell, who, as a gentleman adventurer, accompanied Captain John Smith to Virginia in 1607 is claimed in the family chronicles to be one of the clan. Whether he was kinsman to that Nathaniel Powell who was with Smith in his brush with the Manahoacs on the Rappahannock in the summer of 1608 does not appear. After spending some years in business pursuits in Alexandria, Cuthbert Powell returned to Loudoun where he served as a justice, represented the county in the Virginia Legislature as a Whig and was a member of Congress from 1841 to 1843. Chief Justice Marshall once described him as "the most talented man of that talented family." In 1930 Llangollan was acquired by Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney of New York[175] who have greatly enlarged the old stone mansion and made the estate the home of one of the most famous racing establishments in America. They organized in 1932 and hold there each year the Llangollan Gold Cup races.

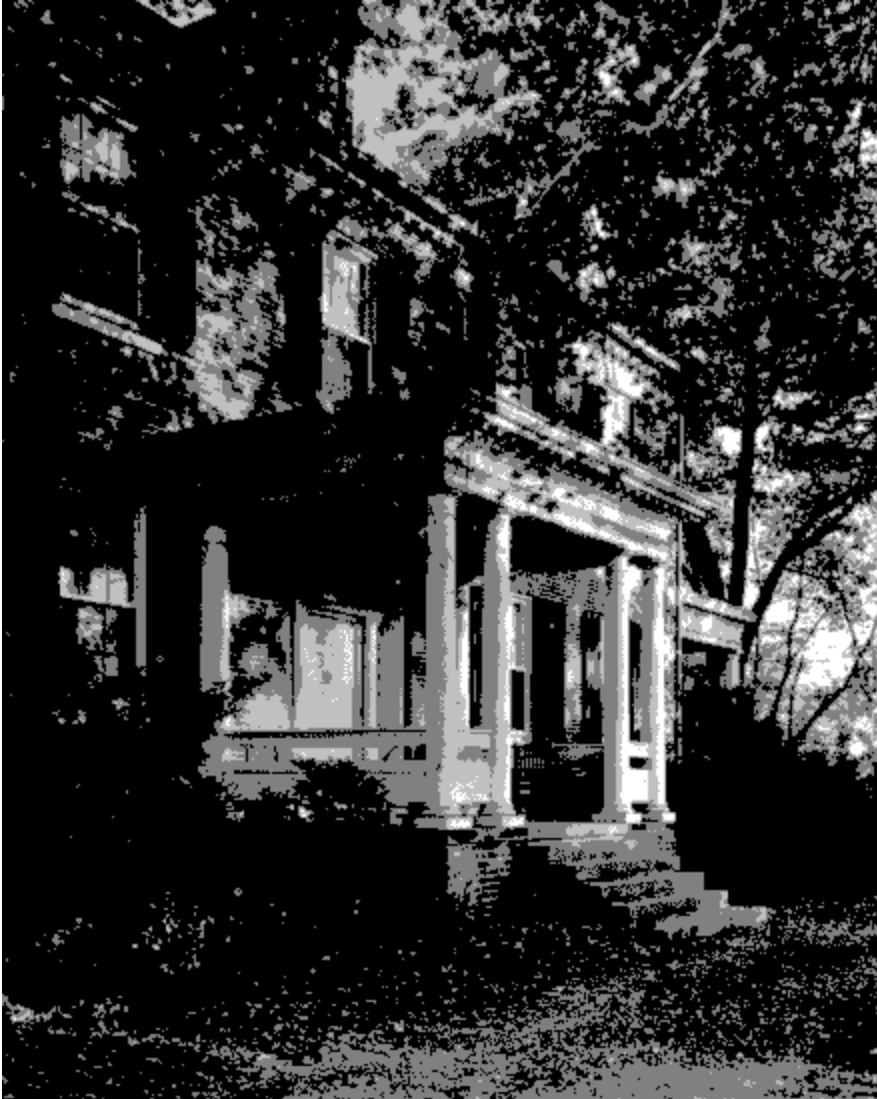
Morrisworth

The 750 acres which originally composed Morrisworth were given by William Ellzey to his daughter Catherine who married Mathew Harrison of Dumfries. After his death his widow, with her children, took possession of her patrimony and in 1811 built thereon the main part of the stone mansion. There she resided for the remainder of her life and reared her large family. Her children continued to own the estate until they sold it about 1870 to their kinsman Dr. Thomas Miller of Washington who, dying about two years later, never resided there. He left the property to his daughters, the mansion and about 550 acres going to Miss Virginia Miller and Mrs. Arthur Fendall. In turn these ladies deeded the estate in 1900 to Mrs. Fendall's son Thomas M. Fendall, the present owner, who, in 1915, added the south wing to the house. Mr. and Mrs. Fendall have greatly enlarged and developed the gardens, specializing in iris to such an extent that Morrisworth has become widely known not only for the beautiful scene when the five thousand plants are in bloom but for the many new varieties of iris originated there.

Chestnut Hill

Chestnut Hill near the Point of Rocks, so long identified with the Mason Family, is another of the mansions built about 1800. Samuel Clapham, the son of the second Josias Clapham, was the builder on land he had acquired in 1796 from his father. It came to Thomas F. Mason through his marriage to Betsey Price, a granddaughter of the second Josias as related in Chapter VII. It is now owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Coleman Gore.

Rockland



Rockland, four miles north of Leesburg, was built by General George Rust in 1822 on land acquired by him in 1817 from the[176] heirs of Colonel Burgess Ball and is unique among the county's old estates in that today it still is owned by a descendant of its builder, Mrs. Stanley M. Brown, who before her marriage was Miss Elizabeth Fitzhugh Rust, the only child of the late owner, Mr. Henry B. Rust. Mr. and Mrs. Brown, with their children, spend each summer at Rockland. The 419 acres of the present estate border for a long distance on the Potomac and are regarded as equalling in fertility any land in the county. During the War Between the States the old house witnessed the alternate passing and repassing of the armies of the North and South in front of it along the old Carolina Road. Hospitality and gracious living have long been

synonymous in Loudoun with the very name of Rockland.

General George Rust (1788-1857). The builder of Rockland. General George Rust (1788-1857). The builder of Rockland.

Exeter

The plantation that became Exeter was inherited by Mary Mason Seldon; a sister of Thomson Mason, from their mother Ann Thompson Mason. This Mary Mason Seldon married, first, Mann Page and upon his death took as her second husband her first cousin Dr. Wilson Cary Seldon who, born in 1761, had served as surgeon in a Virginia artillery regiment during the Revolution. Though she had children by Page and none by Seldon, the latter secured this land and between 1796 and 1800 built the main frame dwelling with its pleasing design and interesting detail. The large brick extension in the rear was added by General George Rust about 1854 during his ownership of the estate. By his second wife, Dr. Seldon had a daughter, Eleanor, and it was at Exeter on the 16th February 1843, that she married John Augustine Washington, the last of his family to own and occupy Mount Vernon. When the War Between the States broke out, he at once volunteered for service, became an aide on the staff of General Lee with the rank of lieutenant colonel and was killed in a small engagement, which otherwise would have been unimportant, at Cheat Mountain, now West Virginia, on the 13th September, 1861. In 1857 Exeter was purchased by the late Horatio Trundle. It was inherited by his son Mr. Hartley H. Trundle who with his family resides there.

Selma

Selma, another part of Mrs. Ann Thomson Mason's great purchase of "wild lands," saw its first mansion built between 1800 and 1810 by General Armistead Thomson Mason, United States Senator from Virginia (affectionately known as "the Chief of Selma") when he was killed by his cousin, John Mason McCarty, in the famous duel at Bladensburg on the 6th February, 1819. He had inherited the land from his father Stevens Thomson Mason of Raspberry Plain. The property was purchased in 1896 by the late Colonel Elijah B. White, who afterward represented the Loudoun district in the Virginia Senate and was for many years a prominent Leesburg banker. He was a son of the much-loved leader of White's Battalion in the War of 1861. Upon his purchase of the estate, Colonel White built the present stately mansion, so famed for its hospitality, in which he incorporated parts of the older house, burned some years before. Selma is now owned by Colonel White's widow (who before her marriage was Miss Lalla Harrison) and his daughter, Miss Elizabeth White. It long has had the reputation of being one of the most fertile and successfully managed farming estates in the East.

Aldie Manor

Aldie Manor, in the present town of Aldie, was built by Charles Fenton Mercer and named for

Aldie Castle in Scotland, the home of the Mercer family. The town in turn was named for the estate and the Magisterial District in which both lie is named for Mercer. The mansion has long been owned and occupied by the diZerega family.

Morven Park

Morven Park was acquired by Governor Thomas Swann of Maryland who, about 1825, built the imposing mansion there. It was inherited by his daughter who became the wife of Dr. Shirley Carter and for many years much of the neighbourhood's social life centered about it. In 1903 this estate of over 1,000 acres was purchased by Mr. Westmoreland Davis, later Governor of Virginia, who now resides there and carefully supervises the many and varied agricultural activities of his domain.

Oak Hill, North Front. Built by President James Monroe in 1820. Now the home of Messrs. Littleton. Oak Hill, North Front. Built by President James Monroe in 1820. Now the home of Messrs. Littleton.

Oak Hill



But to the nation the best known of all the old homes of Loudoun has always been Oak Hill. When James Monroe, after long years of service to his country, came to look forward to his

retirement, he owned a large tract of land on the Carolina Road nine miles south of Leesburg, long in the possession of his family, which had occupied a dormer-windowed cottage there. On a gentle elevation on the plantation, President Monroe, in the year 1820, erected the great brick house, three stories in height with its porticos and Doric columns which he named Oak Hill. It was designed by Monroe's friend Thomas Jefferson and the plans were completed by James Hoban the designer and builder of the White House and the supervising architect of the Capitol. President Monroe employed William Benton, an Englishman (who is said to have "served him in the triple capacity of steward, counsellor and friend") to superintend the construction of the mansion under Hoban's supervision and to manage the extensive farming operations of the estate which he did most successfully. It was here that President Monroe wrote his famous message to Congress, delivered in December 1823, embodying what since has been known throughout the world as the "Monroe Doctrine" and it was here also that he entertained Lafayette in 1825. Mrs. Monroe died at Oak Hill in 1830. On Mr. Monroe's death in 1831, the property went to his daughter Mrs. Gouverneur of New York by whom it was sold in 1852 to Colonel John M. Fairfax, who set out the large orchard of Albemarle Pippins some of the fruit from which, sent to Queen Victoria gave her such pleasure that thereafter it enjoyed her preference over all other apples. Later when his son, the much-loved State Senator Henry Fairfax, owned the estate he became known throughout the nation for the Hackney horses he raised there. In 1920 the property was acquired by Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Littleton who greatly enlarged the old building by the extension of both wings. When Mr. Littleton was quarrying sandstone on the place in 1923 there were found numerous imprints of prehistoric dinosaurs—the first known evidence that these monsters had[179] inhabited this portion of the eastern part of the present United States.

The estate took its name from a group of oaks planted on the lawn by President Monroe, one from each of the then existing States, each tree presented to him for that purpose by a congressman from the State represented.

Mrs. Littleton died in 1924. Mr. Littleton and his son Frank C. Littleton, Jr., continue to make the historic old place their home, carrying on extensive farming operations on its broad acres.

On the 20th March, 1793, the first postoffice was established in Leesburg. The first postmaster was Thomas Lewis, who was succeeded on the 1st April, 1794, by John Schooley, who in turn gave way to John Shaw on the 1st April, 1801. Then came Thomas Wilkinson on the 1st April, 1803; William Woody on the 1st January, 1804, and Presley Saunders on the 12th February, 1823.

At the end of the eighteenth century Loudoun was, in politics, a Federal stronghold. Colonel Leven Powell has long been credited with being the founder of that party in the county. The momentous election for members of the Convention of 1788 was bitterly fought. Stevens Thomson Mason and William Ellzey, both lawyers, were opposed to the adoption of the Federal

Constitution. For its adoption stood Colonel Powell and Colonel Josias Clapham. Both of the latter, as we have seen, were old soldiers but no match as orators to their opponents and thus were at a great disadvantage in the contest. Powell's great personal popularity alone is said to have secured his election. Mason also won but the county remained so strongly Federal that its vote dominated its Congressional District.

When war with Great Britain was forced upon us in 1812, a cavalry regiment was raised in Loudoun of which Armistead Thomson Mason of Selma became colonel. But the incident in that war which most prominently stands out in Loudoun's memory came in 1814.

Oak Hill. East Drawing Room, showing mantel presented to Monroe by Lafayette, and other historical furniture. Oak Hill. East Drawing Room, showing mantel presented to Monroe by Lafayette, and other historical furniture.

After the American forces under General William H. Winder had been defeated by the British at Bladensburg in August of that year, it was apparent that the capture of Washington was highly probable. Madison's Secretary of State, James Monroe, had been in [180] the camp of General Winder, closely studying with him the enemy's movements and seeking to appraise the ability of the Americans to successfully defend the Capital. That he was not reassured by what he thus learned is shewn by the letter he sent to President Madison wherein he advised him to remove from Washington the government's more important records. The President recognized, none too soon, the imminence of the danger. The more valuable of the government archives were ordered to be taken from Washington and Stephen Pleasanton, then a clerk in the State Department, was placed in charge of their removal. He caused to be made a large number of linen bags in which were placed the government's books and documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It is said that the painting of Mrs. Dolly Madison, hanging in the White House, was cut from its frame and accompanied the government's records. Some accounts aver that, so numerous were the archives, twenty-two two-horse wagons were used in their transportation from Washington; others who have written of the incident say that four four-horse wagons only were used, while still others claim the method of transportation to have been by ox-teams. However they were carried, they left Washington across the old Chain Bridge and sought their first safety in the grist mill of Edward Patterson on the Virginia side of the Potomac two miles above Georgetown. So threatening was the British advance, however, that it was deemed prudent to carry the precious cargo further up-country; the wagons were duly reloaded and the caravan continued to Leesburg, where the sacks were placed for one night in the courthouse according to some writers or, on the authority of others, in a vacant building in the town, the key of which was given to a certain Rev. Mr. Littlejohn, a young clergyman then recently ordained. The next day the sacks were again placed in the wagons and driven to the nearby plantation of Rokeby where in its vaults they were stored for two weeks until it was safe to return them to Washington.

During those two weeks President Madison was a guest of Ludwell Lee at Belmont, whence he directed National affairs; and ever since that time it has been a primary and essential asseveration in the credo of every true Leesburger that the town was, during that stirring fortnight, the de facto Capital of the United States.

Proud as that memory may be today, the event itself is said to have caused great anxiety to the more substantial citizens of the town and nearby country for fear lest their sudden prominence in the affairs of the nation would invite a swift and disastrous foray upon them by the temporarily triumphant Britons; a denouement which, happily, did not ensue.

Source: Legends of Loudoun: An Account of the history and homes of a border county of Virginia's Norterh Neck by Harrison Williams