

Historic North Wales

North Wales is part of the 2900 acres granted in 1718 by Lady Catherine Culpeper Fairfax to Colonel Rice Hooe, Jr. and Captain John Hooe. The land was named for their father, Rys Hooe, who was born in Wales in 1599.

In 1763, John Hooe bequeathed his interest in the land to his daughters Sarah, Susannah and Anne. The latter became the wife of a Scottish immigrant, the merchant William Allason, in 1772. Mr. Allason built the surviving Georgian-style stone dwelling between 1776 and 1796. It is the earliest known example of two-story stone construction in Fauquier County, beginning a regional tradition.

North Wales remained in this family for six generations until it was sold to Edward Motley Weld in 1914. Weld was a Harvard-educated New York cotton broker and the son of Brigadier General Stephen Minor Weld, who fought in the Battle of the Wilderness. Weld was an avid horseman involved in fox hunting and steeplechase. Edward Weld's racing activities made a major, but sympathetic, impact on the landscape at North Wales.

Following Weld's impressive enlargement of the original manor house and creation of the equestrian center, the property took on a new social and recreational importance, with entertaining taking place there on a grand scale. Weld's interest in equestrian sport was keen. In fact, a private race between horses owned by Weld and his friend J. Temple Gwathmey is said to be the progenitor of the now-famed Gold Cup Races, founded in 1922.

In 1929, Weld sold the estate to a corporation called Colonial Estates, of which neighbor Robert C. Winmill was then president. Winmill convinced a group of men to pay \$5,000 each to purchase historic North Wales for use as a club where visiting sportsmen could fox hunt, shoot, and keep their dogs and horses. Guests from all over the world, including Walter P. Chrysler, Jr. and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, enjoyed the ambience of the "Millionaire's Club," but it's fascinating to note that most people who came to hunt with the Warrenton Hunt at North Wales paid just \$5 a night. The club was run by an African American couple, popular orchestra leader Chauncey Depew Brown and his wife, Georgia White, who is said to have been the inspiration for the classic swing tune, "Sweet Georgia Brown."

World War II altered priorities of the members of the North Wales Club. In 1941, Colonial Estates sold the property to Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., son of the auto magnate. A colorful and controversial character, Chrysler invested in Broadway and movies as well as art. He amazed the Fauquier community by building a "Chicken City" and a "Turkey City" while also dabbling in monkeys. Customers for the product of his fowl ventures included

New York City's Stork Club. More conventionally, though with characteristic showmanship, Chrysler continued the horse industry theme at North Wales, turning it into a stud farm to breed his racehorses. He also continued to entertain by holding charity balls, of which one of the largest commemorated the 60th birthday of President Roosevelt, with proceeds benefiting the Infantile Paralysis Campaign. Chrysler made important, though not always welcome, contributions to the future of Fauquier County business and politics through his many contractual associations associated with North Wales.

Chrysler sold North Wales to former Oklahoma Congressman Victor Wickersham, who in turn sold it in 1956 to Parkwood, Inc., whereupon North Wales became the focus of a forty-year struggle to prevent suburban-style development. The head of Parkwood was eventually jailed for his role in a scheme that even victimized a group of Italian nuns. In 1968, a new owner, Cooper Communities Inc., tried to rezone North Wales to permit a 10,000-house subdivision for 31,500 people, which would have more than doubled the population of Fauquier County at the time!

Three men—Bill Backer, President of the Upper Fauquier Association, S. Prentice Porter of Marshall and Francis Green of Warrenton—responded by organizing strong community support to oppose Cooper under the umbrella of the Fauquier Protective Association, which evolved into the Mid-Fauquier Association, which in turn evolved into Citizens for Fauquier County (CFFC). The battle for North Wales resulted in many of the laws and ordinances that have prevented Fauquier County from losing its rural character. Through CFFC, this work continues.

