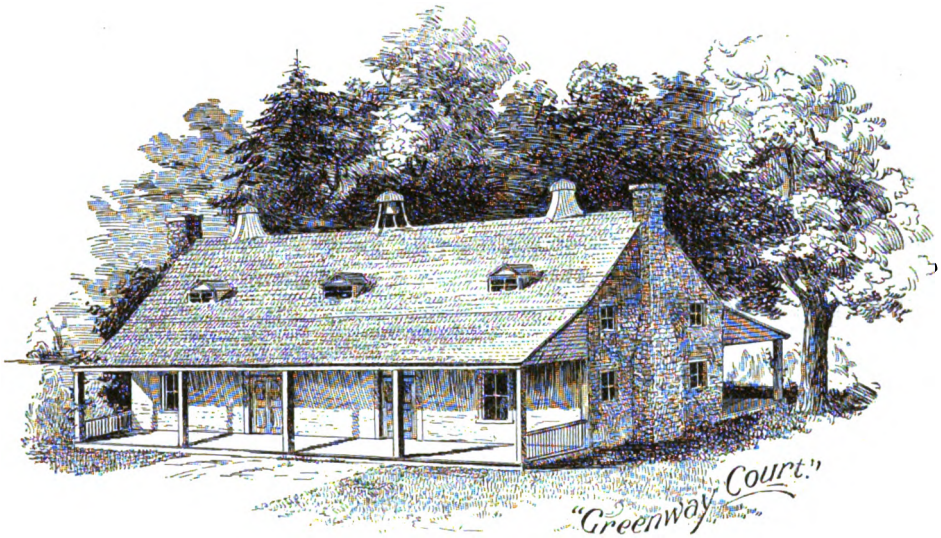

GREENWAY COURT

By Walker Y. Page

Fairfax Coat-of-Arms

Shield supported by two lions.
A lion on the shield.
Crest—a lion rampant.
Motto: "Je le ferais durant ma vie." Translated: "I will do it during my life."
Beneath as follows: In memory of Thomas lord Fairfax, who died in 1782, and whose ashes repose underneath this church, which is endowed.

More of historic interest perhaps attaches to this old homestead than to any other in the famous valley of Virginia—it having not only been the residence of Lord Fairfax, whose name and fortunes form no inconsiderable feature in the early history of the state, but also from its having been the headquarters of the then youthful surveyor, the embryo Father of his Country.

Little as his lordship could forecast the great future of his protégé whom he had invited under his roof, and who almost as a boy had been intrusted with the survey of his vast estates, yet he was not slow to recognize in the young surveyor those characteristics of mind and heart which in after years were destined to shine on a far broader arena. But it was no light honor for a young, comparatively unknown man to be admitted to the favor and friendship of the great colonial lord. A sketch of the

old manor house of Greenway Court would be incomplete without special mention of its lordly founder. History knows Lord Fairfax now less for what he was in his own times in general than as the patron and host of Washington. This lonely old earl had come to reside at Greenway Court in the Shenandoah valley early in the eighteenth century, and here the youthful Washington often stopped as he journeyed to and from eastern Virginia, his own home, to the valleys of the Alleghany and Monongahela where he was destined afterward to win his first laurels in gathering up the fragments that remained after Braddock's frightful defeat.

Lord Fairfax was a man of the world, had seen life in every form, had passed his youth as a fine gentleman at the court of St. James, had been the friend of Addison and Steele, and having sounded all the depths and shallows of court life had come, a disappointed and disgusted old man, to the wild woods of the valley of Virginia, there to settle and rear himself a home in the midst of his princely inheritance—a grant from the crown —the great Northern Neck of Virginia.

The region surrounding this old manor was one of rare beauty, and it was not long before a small English colony, attracted by its fertile soil, its enchanting sylvan scenes, transparent streams, and majestic panorama of mountain and forest, had come from the colonial lowlands to settle around Greenway Court, bringing with them their firm adherence to the Church of England, which was not long in finding its exponent in the building of the "Old Chapel," a plain and unpretentious stone structure which still stands, an impressive monument to the departed worthies of that olden time who once thronged its sacred aisles and knelt in holy fervor at its chancel rail. These were the veritable days of "church and king" in Virginia, and although there was always something to distinguish the cavaliers of Clarke and Frederick and those other Shenandoah counties from their more easy-going cousins of the Potomac and the James, yet the social unity of the colony was well preserved. The Old Chapel was to the descendants of these men what Blandford, immortalized in the poem of Tyrone Power, is to the scions of the southside cavaliers. It was a pillar in the plain, as it were—a sort of colonial shrine—and to this day the hand would be indeed esteemed sacrilegious which should lay leveling pick or axe upon the faded greatness of the Old Chapel.

To these early settlers around Greenway Court Lord Fairfax sold from time to time the rich fair fields and towering forests, some of the choicest portions of his princely inheritance, for what would now be considered the ridiculous price of forty shillings an acre. But these settlers were cavaliers themselves, and therefore naturally congenial to Fairfax, who

thus seems to have sought to rear another society in the colonial wild woods which should boast much of the refinement of that court life which he had left forever, without being tainted with its heartlessness and hollowness. America was in fact a good way in which Charles the Second and the later Stuarts got rid of subjects whose manners and morals were a reproach to their own laxity, and whose presence at court was therefore irksome.

One mile from Greenway Court Lord Fairfax had caused to be erected, at the intersection of four neighborhood roads, a post directing his tenantry, and especially intending purchasers of land, to his land office at Greenway Court. Around this post houses began from time to time to be built, which, as the years rolled by and the lands became more thickly settled, developed into the village of "White Post," which at this present writing, after a century or more of industrial desuetude, boasts of its churches, its storehouses, its mechanic arts, and its railway depot. The original post, which the writer of this sketch well remembers, has long since yielded to that leveler of all human structures, time; but the worthy citizens of this old Virginia village, not willing that this chronicler of their name and fame should be "consigned to cold oblivion there to rot," have planted a much more imposing post upon the site of the old one—a posthumous post far in advance of its historic predecessor, as it forms a conspicuous object as one approaches the village from north, south, east, or west. There was a time, within the memory of the writer, when the original post served a purpose other than that of index to the land office of Lord Fairfax, standing there for half a century a terror to all evil-doers regardless of race, color or previous condition—a moral as well as physical pillory for the luckless wights who failed to appreciate, for instance, the sacredness of the hen-roost or the inviolability of the corn-crib!

Greenway Court is situated, as has been said, in one of the most picturesque and fertile regions of Virginia, the far-famed valley of the Shenandoah. Its commanding location, the varied beauty of its surrounding scenery, the wavy outline of undulating fields and forests, with the well-defined course of the majestic Shenandoah ("river of the woody banks"), with the long, unbroken line of the Blue Ridge mountains in the foreground, forms a picture which well attests the taste and wisdom of the lordly possessor in its selection.

Nothing could be more beautiful in scenic effect than the eastern outlook from this historic old pile, which notwithstanding the lapse of more than half a century, when the writer as a boy sported upon its ample lawn or played familiar with every nook and corner of this relic of "ye olden

time," is still an undimmed picture on the walls of memory from which so many others have been long since obliterated.

The house itself, quaint and curious in the extreme, was doubtless modeled after the fashion of the old English country farmhouse of that day, with its sloping roof and shed-like porches running the entire length of the building. Everything about it was low, viewed from a more modern standpoint—a long, rambling building, sitting almost flat upon the ground, consisting of only one story and an attic, massive outside chimneys, squat and low, stuccoed gables into which small stone had been pressed when the mortar was yet soft and yielding, giving to the whole gable, chimney and all, the appearance of mosaic, and which we may readily imagine has not its like upon the American continent.

The low-pitched roof, surmounted with three belfries, gives an additionally unique appearance to the building, and these, together with the line of dormer windows which look out from the slant roof like so many quaint and curious eyes, add not a little to the antique impressiveness of the whole, and serve well to illustrate the fashion of an age and an architecture long obsolete.

The interior of the building is (or was) after the same antiquated order. One did not ascend into the house, but descended by a step or two to the narrow hallway and the first-floor rooms, which were by that much lower than the floor of the porch outside. These rooms were large and commodious, with low, very low, ceilings, high mantels, and wide fire-places, stoves being a comparatively modern luxury and unknown at that day.

The porch in the rear, which corresponded with that in front, looked out upon an open court or oblong open square, surrounded by the houses of the domestics and retainers of his lordship, except at the far end where stood his kitchen. This kitchen was connected with the mansion by a covered plankway, which, while it protected his lordship's "bacon and greens" *in transitu* to the hall from rain or snow, was no guarantee against cold bread and chilled coffee in its journey of fifty yards or more.

Just in the rear of these a gate led from the surrounding grounds into a majestic forest of oak, walnut, and hickory, which doubtless had been the special care of its lordly owner, as even at the time spoken of it bore but few marks of the woodman's axe and stood in almost primeval growth and grandeur. In the edge of this wood, in a spot where the shade and gloom were deepest, stood an old stone mausoleum or dead-house, at that time itself an emblem of decay. The roof had fallen in, the niches where memorial tablets had once stood were all empty, and there was no one then living to tell who had been buried there. It was an uncanny spot,

and the writer well remembers one occasion, and only one, when, under the twofold influence of the raillery of his companions, who did not dare go themselves, and shame at his own superstitious dread of the place, he was induced to intrude. That one hasty glance, however, so sufficed to impress the scene upon a boyish imagination which had been previously wrought on by plantation ghost stories, that it remains an unfading memory.

It is probable that the remains of Lord Fairfax were first deposited in this old dead-house. It is true, however, that a new tablet to his memory is affixed to the eastern wall of the Episcopal church in Winchester, Frederick county, of which church he was a member and the probable founder, while he himself sleeps beneath its chancel.

Greenway Court was devised by will to a certain Miss Martin, who afterward married a Mr. Carnegge, and by whom she had one child, a daughter, who married the Rev. Thomas Kennerly of the Methodist church. Their son, Mr. Joseph Kennerly, is the present owner of Greenway Court. A spacious brick mansion about fifty yards away now looks down upon the old manor house, which (notwithstanding its memories of the old colonial *régime*, when its lordly owner dispensed his hospitalities not only to Washington and his compeers, but to the swearing, blustering, blundering Braddock with his redcoats as well) has, in all probability, been relegated to the owls and to the bats.

One little incident before closing this cursory sketch may be of interest, at least to the antiquary.

There was a meadow beyond the lawn and in front of the old mansion. This meadow within the memory of man had never known the plow. The elder Kennerly, who though a minister of the gospel was a utilitarian besides, determined, for the improvement of this tract, to have it plowed. One day the plowshare turned to the light a large leathern pocket-book, decayed, and scarcely held in shape by its heavy golden clasp, which contained, if my memory serves me right, fifty-eight gold pieces. I have no recollection of their value or denomination, but what most impressed itself upon my memory was the peculiar shape of these coins—they were hexagonal or octagonal. I had never seen the like before, nor have I since. How they came to be there or to whom they belonged was never found out. The secret died with him who lost or him who placed them there.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND.