

# L'ENFANT, CAPITAL'S DESIGNER, GAVE GREEN HILL FAME



Green Hill, home of the late Col. E. Francis Riggs and early estate of William Dudley Digges, who befriended Maj. L'Enfant. —Star Staff Photo.



Chapel at Green Hill. —Star Staff Photo.



Adelphi, or Riggs Mill, erected 1769. —Star Staff Photo.

## RECOGNITION CAME SLOWLY

Great Benefactor of Washington Occupied Modest Grave for Many Years—Chillum Castle Manor Was Home of Late Col. E. Francis Riggs.

By John Clagett Proctor.

FEW days ago the writer visited the grounds of the old Riggs mansion at Green Hill, or Chillum Castle Manor, to call by its early name, which was until recently the home of the late Col. E. Francis Riggs, who was assassinated a little more than a month ago in Puerto Rico.

It is a large stone building, with massive pillars in front, and so situated on a high elevation as to give an attractive view of the surrounding country. The doors and windows of the house were closed and a ring at the bell brought no response, while even the little stone chapel nearby seemed dismal and gave no indication of having been used since Miss Cecelia Riggs was married there many years ago to Lord George Howard of England, and their son, George Howard, and his wife in later years made the mansion their summer home. But off to the south of the mansion, in the lowland, where the elaborate dairy plant is located, and in the fields attached to the 600-acre farm, much of which is set aside for grazing purposes, the sheep, and particularly the cute little lambs, were enjoying themselves as only little lambs can, jumping and running here and there over the inclosure, still devoid of sufficient grass even to nibble upon.

Today, what remains of this once vast estate lies to the east of the Ager road, which runs from the Riggs road at the north to the Queens Chapel road to the south, leading to Hyattsville.

Originally this was a part of a tract of land patented in 1721 by William Digges, who continued to increase his holdings until he owned 4,493 acres, which he consolidated into one tract under the name Chillum Castle Manor. An idea of its vastness may be judged when we are told that it included the western part of Bladensburg, nearly all of Takoma Park, Rock Creek Cemetery, Brentwood, Mount Rainier, Cottage City and Colmar Manor. Later, when this property was divided into smaller tracts, some of their former names were either readopted or new names were applied.

MAJ. GIST BLAIR, in speaking of the large tract of land once owned by the Digges family, says:

"To the southeast of Silver Spring lay Warburton, the home of the Digges family. A part of this manor was known as 'Green Hill,' named after the ancestral home of the Digges in Kent County, England, where Sir Dudley Digges lived in the reign of James I. And William Dudley Digges, who resided here, has endeared himself to every one of us, because he took into his home as a guest the now famous L'Enfant when poor and old and without a friend but his dogs and kept him and fed him without cost until he died in 1825, and he buried him in his garden—a lovely spot he had designed and laid out near his house."

And Maj. Blair reminds us that he was present as a guest "at Green Hill" upon the occasion of the removal of the body of Maj. L'Enfant to Arlington National Cemetery, and that he was given a section of the cedar tree which grew at the head of the grave and whose roots passed through it and which, no doubt, was partially nourished by the remains of the distinguished engineer.

If a part of "Chillum Castle Manor" was once called "Warburton," it would be seem logical, since the estate of Fort Washington nearly opposite Mount Vernon, was once so named by the Digges family who patented it October 20, 1641. When the city of Washington was laid out, George Digges was the "proprietor of Warburton, on the Potomac, and, according to the census of 1790, had living with him one son over 16 years of age, wife and one daughter, and had 105 slaves. William, presumably his brother, owned 22 slaves and Mary, who may have been his sister-in-law, owned 75.

Parentetically, the name "Digges" is sometimes spelled "Diggs," and when not quoting, the writer is using what he considers the form most generally used.

Evidently the Diggeses were a very wealthy family, for, in 1790, of the six families of that name mentioned in the State of Maryland their combined number of slaves was 298, which, in itself, indicates that their farm lands must have been considerable to employ so much help. This census mentions as heads of families George Digges, Mary Digges and William Digges of Prince Georges County, and William Digges, William Digges of John and Edward Digges of Montgomery County and Henry Digges of Charles County.

The late Dr. James Dudley Morgan, a native of Washington and president of the Columbia Historical Society from 1908 to 1916, was a descendant of the Digges family through his grandmother, Nea Digges, who



Maj. Pierre Charles L'Enfant, designer of the City of Washington.

was born March 4, 1825, and who was the daughter of William Dudley Digges, of Green Hill, the ancestral Chillum home of the Digges family in this part of Maryland. The progenitor of this family in America was Edward, son of Sir Dudley Digges of Chillum Castle, Kent, England, who arrived in the Colony of Virginia in 1650 and became Governor of Virginia six years later.

IN THE early wills of Maryland appears the testament of William Digges of Charles County, probated July 24, 1695, in which he leaves to his wife Eliza "Digges Purchase" and mentions his sons Charles, William, Dudley, John, Nicholas and Edward and daughters Jane Eliza, Ann and Mary. The estates mentioned in the will, besides "Digges Purchase," are "Digges Addition," "Baltimore's Gift," "Pierce's Encouragement" in Baltimore County, and "Elizabeth's Delight," which was left to Nicholas Digges, and which was then a tract of 1,000 acres.

When the will of Edward Digges was probated in 1714, the testator left "Elizabeth's Delight" "to brother Notley Roser," which probably meant

Notley Roser Digges, and the patent is again specified as containing 1,000 acres "at the Eastern Branch."

The estate of "Langley Park," containing about 500 acres, which lies to the west of the Riggs road and to the north of University lane, and which is owned by L. McCormick-Goodhart, an attaché of the British Embassy, embraces a part of "Elizabeth's Delight," as well as probably parts of "Adelphi" and "Bergundy."

Langley Park, with its magnificent mansion, is one of the most beautiful estates of Maryland, though the buildings are modern. Here the mingling of British and Colonial American blood, nearly always a good combination, shows up to particular advantage in the distinguished host and hostess who are adept in the art of entertaining friends and making them feel perfectly at home. Mr. McCormick-Goodhart has for his American background the noted McCormick family of Chicago, and the Goodharts, of course, are British, and because of this he has named his estate Langley Park, for his paternal ancestral place in the County of Kent, England. Mrs. McCormick-Goodhart is the daughter of American legislators, her father and grandfather having both represented the State of Pennsylvania in the halls of Congress.

CHILLUM CASTLE MANOR, of which Green Hill was a part, was evidently once sold under the hammer in order to satisfy financial obligations, for on October 11, 1824, there appeared the following notice in the National Intelligencer:

"Marshal's sale: By and in virtue of three separate writs of fieri facias issued from the clerk's court of this district for the County of Washington, to me directed, I shall expose to public sale and to the highest bidder, Monday, the twentieth day of September next, for ready money, all the following-described land and premises, viz. all that part of a tract of land called and known by the name of Chillum Castle Manor, seized and taken in execution as the property and estate of William Dudley Digges, and will be sold to satisfy debts due to Joseph Parker and James Campbell, use of C. G. and J. Brent Elisha Riggs and George Peabody, and George Hoffman, assignees of William Brent. Sale to take place at 12 noon, at the county court house. Tenth

Ringgold, marshal, District of Columbia."

And the following statement is added:

"The above property has been surveyed and divided into lots containing from 50 to 100 acres each, with a due proportion of woodland attached thereto. It will be sold entirely or in lots to suit purchasers."

However, whatever may have been the result of this sale, the property remained for many years afterward in the Digges family, for we do know that it was at Green Hill that Pierre Charles L'Enfant, American patriot and French engineer, spent his declining years as the guest of William Dudley Digges, and died there more than a century ago.

PRIOR to this, L'Enfant had accepted the hospitality of Thomas Digges of Warburton, on the Potomac, and it was after his death that the nephew, William Dudley Digges, gave him a place he might call home, for his old friends of the Revolution were then few and far between, and his service to his adopted country, both as a soldier and as the engineer who designed the Federal City, were not so manifest or so outstanding as they are today. Indeed, it took many years to arouse a just public sentiment, and before the public could realize the beauty of his plan for the Nation's Capital, and the great debt of gratitude owed to the memory of the man.

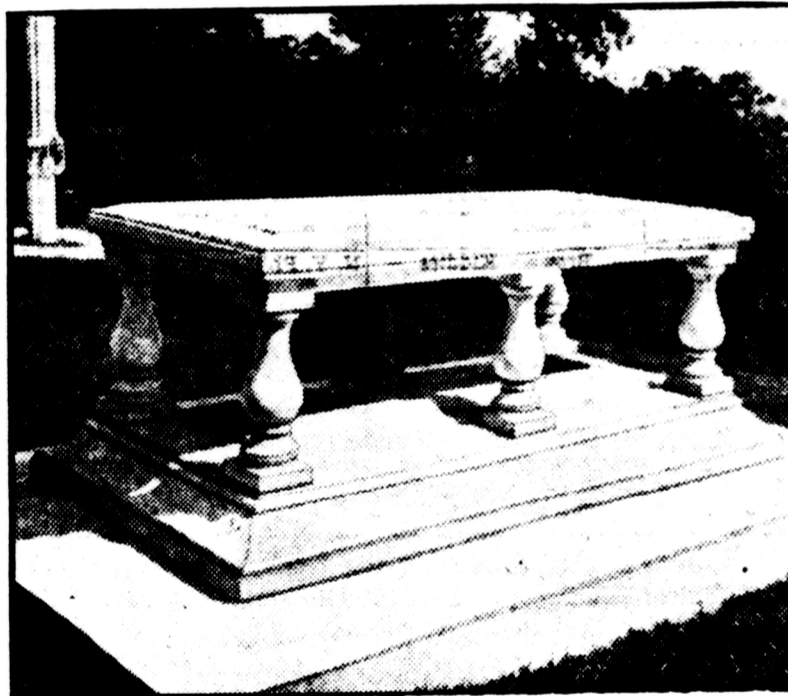
For many years efforts were made

in the Daily Critic of December 30, 1885, the following item:

"At least one good result may be accomplished by the tributes in books, magazines and newspapers of recent date to the perfection and beauty of the plan of this city. These comments may serve to attract attention to the unmarked and neglected grave of Maj. L'Enfant, just outside the District limits."

"A Critic reporter called upon Mr. W. W. Corcoran to ascertain the facts in regard to Maj. L'Enfant's burial place and the prospect of securing for him a more suitable place of interment. Mr. Corcoran was found at work upon his personal correspondence, replying to letters of birthday congratulations. His interest was at once aroused by the mention of the subject."

"It is true," he replied to an inquiry, "that Maj. L'Enfant's remains are interred in a garden of the Riggs estate in Maryland, a mile and a half beyond the District line. The grave, he went on to say, 'is unmarked by any monument and is in an out-of-the-way place. L'Enfant was very poor in the latter part of his life, and was befriended by Mr. Dudley Digges, whose old home, Chillum Castle Manor, was beyond the Soldiers' Home, outside the District line, and is now part of the Riggs farm. Here L'Enfant lived for some years and died, and in the garden of this old homestead he was buried by his friend and patron, Dudley Digges.'"



Monument marking the grave of Maj. L'Enfant in the Arlington National Cemetery.

to have the remains of L'Enfant transferred from their lonely, unmarked spot at Green Hill to Arlington National Cemetery, but, like many other worthy suggestions and projects, little, if any, consideration was given the subject. As an illustration, we find

"MR. CORCORAN says he can remember L'Enfant very distinctly as an old gentleman who frequently visited Georgetown in the years immediately preceding his death in 1825, and who won many friends by his superior talents, fine presence, grace-

ful manners and kindly nature. L'Enfant, he says, established, without effort or ostentation, his absolute right to the credit of being the designer of the National Capital. The official records, Mr. Corcoran added, confirm this beyond all question, and no effort to deprive him of this distinction can be successful."

"Mr. Corcoran says that there cannot be an individual who has a better claim to a grave and a monument on public grounds in Washington City. No park or public reservation could be dedicated to a more suitable purpose than to perpetuate his memory. The object is, in his opinion, essentially one for public and congressional action, and he believes that Congress will in time recognize the propriety of taking proper steps. The subject has once been presented to Congress and found an earnest advocate in the person of ex-Minister Kasson, then a member of the House. When he left Congress the matter was neglected."

"Mr. Corcoran hopes to live to see Maj. L'Enfant's claims to public recognition as the designer of the Capital City gratefully and appropriately acknowledged."

BUT Mr. Corcoran did not live to see L'Enfant's body removed and proper respect shown to his memory, for time and time wait for no man, and it was not until 1908 that, through the continuous efforts of the Columbia Historical Society and a few other interested persons, Congress appropriated \$1,000 to remove and render accessible to the public the grave of Maj. Pierre Charles L'Enfant. On April 22, 1909, in accordance with this act, the mortal remains of the designer of Washington were exhumed and conveyed to the receiving vault at Mount Olivet Cemetery and, on the morning of April 28, they were conveyed to the rotunda of the Capitol, where they lay in state from 9 until 12 o'clock when, under military escort, they were transferred to the final resting place in Arlington National Cemetery, and his tomb now occupies a fitting and conspicuous place in front of Arlington Mansion, overlooking the Capital City of the United States of America.

At Green Hill when the body of L'Enfant was taken up there were in attendance Commissioner Henry B. F. Macfarland, Dr. William Tindall, then secretary to the Commissioner, George Howard, a grandson of George Riggs, who then owned the estate; Maj. Gist Blair and a number of others, including Dr. James Dudley Morgan, a descendant of William Dudley Digges, who later wrote a most interesting account of the transferring of the remains of L'Enfant for the Columbia Historical Society.

At Green Hill, to the rear of the mansion and at the same spot from which L'Enfant's body was removed, there is today a vacant tomb appropriately inscribed in Latin, telling of the removal of its former distin-

guished occupant, and not far away—to the north of the chapel—are four little wooden markers containing the names Winnie, Worcester, Heather and David, Col. Riggs' prize canines, for the colonel was a lover of dogs.

A mile and a half to the north of the Riggs mansion on the Riggs road, at probably what was once the northern boundary of the old Digges estate, may be found a picturesque old mill, early known as the Adelphi mill. The Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River crosses the road at this point, and this stream in days gone by furnished the motive power for the mill. It will now compare in size with Rock

"The Rambler," the writer's predecessor in writing these stories for The Star, who died February 12, 1928, and whose real name was J. Harry Shannon, visited this old mill in the Spring of 1914, and then met H. T. Freeman, who was residing in an old brick house near by. The interview between "The Rambler" and Mr. Freeman brought out the following interesting comments:

"That he was born there in 1857 and had lived there all the years since. His father, William H. Freeman, lived there all his life, and his grandfather, Thomas Sheekles, lived there before him. He said that he understood



Former burial place of Maj. L'Enfant, in the garden of Green Hill, Chillum Castle Manor. —Star Staff Photo.

Creek, though it was much larger a century ago.

Directly across the road from the mill still stands the miller's house, and when the writer passed this way it was occupied. Apparently the State of Maryland regards these old relics as historic landmarks, for near the mill there is this typical Maryland marker which states:

"Adelphi Mill.  
"This old grist mill, built in the Summer of 1796, probably by two brothers, Issacher and Mahlon Scofield. In 1811 the mill was also used for wool carding. The miller's cottage is of the same period."

THE mill is about 50 feet front by 60 feet in depth. It is one story under ground and two stories above the level, and the walls, which time has failed to destroy, are still fairly well intact. Above the walls there was originally a superstructure of wood, covered by a hip roof containing one full story and an attic beneath the sloping shingle roof and the ridgepole.

that the mill was built about 150 years ago. The date of the erection of the mill had been rudely cut in the stone of the foundation, but a long while ago it had been so mutilated by some boys from the Agricultural College that it could not now be deciphered.

"He had learned from his father, who got it from his father and mother, that an English family named Scofield moved into that part of the country a good many years before the American Revolution, and built the brick house on the hill, the stone house opposite the mill, and then the mill. It was operated as Scofield's mill. Tiam another English family by the name of Logan acquired the property, and the place was long known as Logan's mill. The property was next taken over by the Riggs family, and sometime before the Civil War it came to be known as Riggs Mill. The milling business in that part of the country began to languish with the development of the great mill industry in the West, but the mill continued to struggle on for existence until a few years since."

IN 1790 there was a Mrs. Casandra Chew, living in Montgomery County, who had two daughters and four slaves. At that time there were also residing in the same county Abraham Sheekles, two John Sheekles and two Richard Sheekles. Samuel Sheekles was then a resident of Prince Georges County, as were Joseph Schoolfield, his wife, six sons and two daughters. Any of these might have been related to the early settlers around the Adelphi Mill mentioned by "The Rambler."

Naturally, there were not a large number of residents in this part of Montgomery County when operations at the Adelphi Mill were at their height, but at the time of the Civil War the population of Bladensburg district, in which it was located, showed a decided increase, and by 1879, according to Hopkins' plat book, a considerable population was noted, and we find residing near the mill, or owning property in that neighborhood, John Toney, William H. Freeman, Columbus Chew and George W. Riggs, and those who were interested in the land lying west of the Northwest Branch, to the District of Columbia and Montgomery County lines, in the general vicinity of "Green Hill," were William Metzgerott, P. P. Gross, B. L. and W. B. Jackson, L. H. Brown's store, Johnson, John Powell, Albers Charles, John Steiner (near another old mill), Andrew Powell, George Neitzey, Robert Brown, James Brown, Canfield, John Joy (manager for Mr. Riggs), Thomas Brown, J. E. Ray, Albert Gleason, William Sibley, Thomas Miller, Mrs. Morrell, John Morrell, Lewis Maurath, William R. McChesney, Amos W. Souder, Thomas Murphy, John Miller, John T. Barnes, Washington E. Nalley, John Miller, James Miller, H. Hiden, Daniel Mehrling, Arthur Cosack and John Saulsman.

MANY will recall the name of Washington S. Nalley, the well-known pedagogue, here mentioned, who died about 20 years ago. He was a product of the Maryland public schools, and his career as an instructor began in 1867. Nine years later he was appointed a teacher in the local public schools, and his first work was done in the school near Soldiers' Home, which was not far from Chillum, where he resided and where he met and married a Miss Miller, whose people were pioneer residents of the place. From the Soldiers' Home School he was transferred to the Brightwood School, at first a small frame building on the Military road, and later the present Brightwood School, where he held the position of principal until the time of his death.