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See Pictures

BELFAST FARM

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Belfast Farm, located on U.S. Route 33 about three and one-half miles west of the Louisa-Hanover county line, is possibly part of a 223-acre tract of land on Taylor's Creek which Benjamin Burton Hope purchased from Dudley Digges in 1794[1] , and is still owned by a member of the Hope family. It is known that Thomas Anderson Hope, son of Benjamin Burton and Elizabeth Anderson Hope[2] , lived at Belfast. According to family tradition, which has not yet been confirmed through research in court records, it was also the homeplace of his father.

Thomas Anderson Hope was an extensive landowner who held 894.94 acres[3] at the time of his death in 1868. By his will he left his house and 150 acres to his son Dr. John Fleming Hope, who was to gain possession after the death of his mother, Lucy Bolling Anderson Hope.[4] A survey made when the estate was settled indicated that the tract was 162 acres.[5]

After the death of Dr. Hope, his wife, the former Cornelia Gray[6] , and his daughter Miss Annie Gray Hope lived at Belfast. During this time, the farm served as a summer resort as well as the Hope residence.[7] Upon the death of her mother, Miss Hope became the owner. When she died in 1949 she willed the property to her two nieces, Mrs. Mary Hope Poole and Mrs. Lucy Hope Collins,[8] who in turn deeded it to their father, John Fleming Hope, Jr., in 1955.[9] When he retired in 1959, he and his wife, the former Olive Willis, made Belfast their residence and soon thereafter their daughter, Mary Hope Poole and her husband, John L. Poole, came to live with them. In 1966, the Pooles purchased the property from the other heirs of John F. and Olive W. Hope.[10] The Pooles continue to make Belfast their home and to farm the land.

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1 *Louisa County Deed Book G*, p. 439.
2 *Louisa County Will Book 8*, p. 203.
3 *Louisa County Land Tax Book, 1866.*
4 *Louisa County Will Book 17*, pp. 346-47.
5 Louisa County Chancery Court Suits, File No. 29.
6 *Hope Family Bible.*
7 A handbill advertisement of Belfast as a summer resort is among the Hope Family Papers in the possession of Mrs. Poole.
8 *Louisa County Will Book 26*, p. 196.
9 *Louisa County Deed Book 93*, p. 40.
10 *Louisa County Deed Book 128*, p. 242.

Belfast Farm

Research shows that at least four generations of the Hope family have lived at Belfast Farm. The initial portion of the house may have been built by Benjamin Burton Hope; but, if not, it certainly was built by his son, Thomas Anderson Hope. Through the years it has been enlarged and renovated by the descendants to accommodate their interests. For this reason, no particular attention seems to have been given to sustaining a specific architecture. There are features typical of colonial Virginia and of 19th century.

The large frame house is built on a knoll. Although the elevation of the site seems only slightly higher than the surrounding land, it is possible to see the Blue Ridge mountains from an attic window. The house is surrounded by a spacious lawn dotted with boxwoods and other shrubbery. A giant oak tree, measuring 17 feet in circumference and estimated to be over 200 years old, once shaded the kitchen and weaving room which were separate from the main house. The kitchen and other dependencies, including an orderly row of slave quarters, have disappeared. Only a smokehouse to which a machine shed has been added remains.

The age of the house is unknown. Mrs. Poole theorizes that construction and additions have taken place in at least three stages. It appears that the original house consisted of a basement, two rooms on the first floor and on the second floor, and an attic. Sometime between the original construction date and 1880, the basement was enlarged toward the front of the house, and rooms or porches were constructed above it. An 1880 photograph shows that one room and a porch had been added to the first floor and two rooms, to the second. A shed-like structure also had been built across the front. After 1880 the first floor porch was enclosed to make a room and the shed-like structure was replaced with a small porch. There is evidence of many interior alterations which have been made through the years, but when they were made is uncertain.

Among some of the interesting architectural features which have been retained in the house are chair rails, coat rails, mantelpieces, doors, and enclosed stairways. Handcarved mantels are found in the bedrooms. Of particular interest is a seven-foot mantelpiece in the living room. The many carved pieces used to construct this mantel were individually made and glued into an intricate design. Then a simulated-marble effect was achieved by a special spattering treatment. Much old plaster remains, and broken spots in the attic reveal the hand made nails used in the laths and the pig hair used for durability in the plaster.

During the past few years, the Pooles have been gradually renovating the house by restoring many of its old features and by

modernizing for comfort and convenience. A modern kitchen and homey family room are located in the basement. On the first floor are an entrance room, the living room, two bedrooms, and a large unfinished room. One of these bedrooms was used as an office by Dr. John F. Hope. Three bedrooms and a large storage room are on the second floor. The two attic rooms, which may have been used at one time as part of the living quarters, are now used for storage of many family bibelots and memorabilia. The house possesses the harmony of simple old furniture, shelves and bookcases filled with old books and ledgers, family portraits, and yellowed maps. Belfast Farm is neither a plantation nor an estate, but a farm; its house is neither a mansion nor a showplace, but a farmhouse as it has been through the years.

3 STRAW HATS, 3 WORTHY ROBBERS

The letter which follows is among the Watson Papers in the University of Virginia Library. It is addressed to "Mr. Charles Cosby or Capt. Garet Minor".

24 May 1777

Dr. Sir:

The 3 Straw Hats, that Mr. Charles Cosby was so kind as to procure for me hath been taken away by 3 worthy Robbers, and being now much in want, have made free to Tresspass on your kindness to procure for me half a dozen lest I again meet with the same fate, pray desire the maker to be expedicious as she can, please pay for them, and as they get finished, its probable you may find frequent opportunities of lodging them with Mr. Michael Robinson Junr. on the road abt 3 miles above Fredericksburg. Pray excuse the trouble I give you and am

Sir Yr. mo ob H. Servt.
Ger. Banks