

Center Heights

Center Heights was an early subdivision in Centreville, Virginia. It was located 22 miles SW of Washington, DC, in western Fairfax County. It was originally platted in 1944¹. It was a true rural “exurb”. The lots did not have sewer & natural gas lines. Instead they used septic & propane tanks. It contained approximately 150 acres that were subdivided into 61 lots along Stone Road and O’Day Drive. The community was not developed by a builder as they are in modern suburbia. They were individually built. About half of the lots were developed. The houses were single family Cap Cod, rambler, and split level style homes. Today only five houses remain from the period.

History

The land that Center Heights was laid on was first granted to Col. George Eskridge by 6th Lord Thomas Fairfax (Proprietor of the Northern Neck Proprietary) in 1715² and re-granted to him in 1725³. Col. Eskridge was the legal guardian of Mary Ball, mother of George Washington. Col. Eskridge gave 800 acres to his son-in-law, Capt. Willoughby Newton⁴. Capt. Newton included this land in new grants from Lord Fairfax in 1743⁵ & 1749⁶. Capt. Newton had land holdings of 6421 acres in present day Centreville.

Capt. Newton leased 150 acres in 1739 to Jacob Remy on the site of Center Heights⁷. Jacob Remy did have a house built on the tract prior to the lease. It was located around present day Battery Ridge Lane. It was a three lives lease covering the life of himself, wife and eldest son Jacob Remy. The annual rent was 500 pounds of tobacco and three sterling shillings. In today’s wholesale tobacco price, the annual rent is equal to about \$800. Jacob Remy was a farmer. Due to the nutrient requirements of the tobacco plant, it was likely only the crop of choice for a decade or two. Other leases in the Centreville area did also require an orchard of apples or peaches to be planted.

Jacob Remy, Sr deeded this land to William Lane Jr. in 1779⁸. William Lane Jr owned several hundred acres to the west and south of the lease. William Lane Jr. was living on the tract of Jacob Remy’s lease when it was deeded over to him. Capt. William Lane Jr. served in the Continental Army. William Lane Jr’s grand father, James Lane Jr. had built a grist and saw mill very near the area of Center Heights. It was located at the junction of Cub Run and Rocky Run. A distillery may have also operated at the mill site at some point. William Lane Jr. sold 650 acres including the site of Centre Heights to James Hooe in 1818⁹.

Albert Flagler purchased 510 acres of that tract in 1854¹⁰. The Flagler Farm had a variety of crops. An agricultural census taken in 1860 showed the farm producing Indian Corn, Oats, Buckwheat, & Wheat. 35 sheep and 5 milk cows were listed for livestock¹¹. Albert Flagler was born in New York and a Union sympathizer. He did not vote in the election of secession. Reportedly, Albert was jailed in Richmond for part of the Civil War. Centreville served as a staging ground for the First and Second Battles of Manassas. Fortifications were erected in and around Centreville. One of the fortifications extended along part of the northern line of Flagler Farm on present day “Battery Ridge Lane”.

Remnants of the earthwork are still visible today. Albert Flagler deeded 30 sq ft to William Forsyth for the purpose of a cemetery in 1866¹². William Forsyth's son, James Forsyth was a confederate soldier who died of battle injuries in Petersburg, Virginia at the war's close¹³. No head stones remain on the site located south of Battery Ridge Lane. Another unmarked cemetery lies near, north of Old Kent Court. It is listed as the Peak Family cemetery and may contain burials from the 1800's -1820's.¹⁴ Humphry Peak had land holdings adjoining Flagler Farm to the east during that period.

Albert deeded the land to his daughter, Sarah Flagler in 1882¹⁵. Sarah Flagler being a widow deeded the land to her brother-in-law, Professor Ormond Stone in 1910.¹⁶ A plat was recorded with the deed dividing "Flagler Farm" into two equal lots. Professor Stone was an Astronomer at the University of Virginia. He retired to Flagler Farm but remained active. He founded the Fairfax County Public Library System.¹⁷ The professor sold the land to Louice Brosko in 1925 for the sum of \$7500.¹⁸ Brosko sold the land to W.S. Hodge, Jr. in 1932.¹⁹ W.S. Hodge, Jr. and his wife, Elizabeth Hodge recorded a deed of subdivision and plat for Center Heights in 1944¹.

Present Day

Today Interstate 66 runs to the east of the community, connecting residents to other suburbs and downtown Washington, D.C. There are several townhouse subdivisions occupying the old Center Heights division. Redevelopment of Center Heights began in the 1980's and continued till the late 1990's. A few exceptions being the recent developments of Victoria's Landing (Lots 40 & 41) in 2006 and lot 47 in 2008. Today the subdivisions lying on the former lots of Center Heights include Battery Ridge (Sully Station II) (Lot 60), London Commons (Lot 59), Woodgate Manor (Lots 48- 53), Woodgate Crossing (Lots 23-25, 35-39 & 54-56) Woodgate Village(Lots 16-22 & 30-34), Bryarton (Lots 1-4, 10-15, & 26-29)& Barrios Circle (Lots 42-46). A commuter lot / bus station occupies four of the old lots (5-8). Fire Station #38 occupies two of the lots as well (57-58).

¹ Fairfax County Deed Book 0437 Page 0256 (FX 0437-0256)

² Northern Neck Grant Book 5 Page 121 (NN 5-121)

³ NN A-201

⁴ Westmorland County Will Book

⁵ NN F-114

⁶ NN G-318

⁷ Prince William Deed Book D Page 262 (PW D-262)

⁸ Melvin E Stedman Collection: Loudon County Unrecorded Deeds Miscellaneous Reel 1232 Accession 34683 Library of Virginia. Richmond, Virginia

⁹ FX Q2-169 (Missing Deed Book). Fairfax County Land Tax Book B, 1819. Fairfax County Will Book N Page 31.

¹⁰ FX V3-073

¹¹ Sprouse, E. (1996). *Fairfax County in 1860: A Collective Biography*. Vol. 2 p. 666-a

¹² FX I4-172

¹³ Sprouse, E. (1996). *Fairfax County in 1860: A Collective Biography*. Vol. 2 p. 696

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- ¹⁴ Fairfax Genealogical Society, Inc. (1997) *Fairfax County, Virginia Gravestones* Vol. 4 p. CN-59
- ¹⁵ FX B5-338
- ¹⁶ FX I7-593
- ¹⁷ Friedman, C. (1987, April 18). Stone Road, A Tribute to “Twinkles”. *Center View*. pp. 1, 17, 18
- ¹⁸ FX O9-127
- ¹⁹ FX B11-454