

A Guide to the Royal Oaks Collection, 1935-1961

The Royal Oaks Collection, 1935-1961
1935-1961

A Collection in The Fairfax County Public Library MSS 04-06

Title Statement

A Guide to the Royal Oaks Collection, 1935-1961

Subtitle: Royal Oaks Collection

Collection: MSS 04-06

Publication Statement

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Profile Description

Creation: Machine-readable finding aid created by Ross Landis, January 14, 2024

Language Usage: Description is in English

Descriptive Summary

Record Group Number

MSS 04-06

Language

English

Abstract

The Royal Oaks Collection consists of 2.0 linear feet, spans the years 1935-1961, and includes photographs and sketchbooks of the historic house formerly located in Centreville, Virginia.

Creator

William H. Lamb (1889-1944), Norman L. Baker (1926-)

Extent

2.0 linear feet

Repository

Fairfax County Public Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

None

Use Restrictions

Consult repository for information

Acquisition Information

The photographs in this collection originated from the estate of William H. Lamb and given to Norman L. Baker. Mr. Baker gave the photographs and his sketchbooks to Dennis Hogge. Mr. Hogge donated the collection to Fairfax County in 2014, giving it to Sully District Supervisor Michael R. Frey. The collection was given to the Department of Planning and Zoning which donated it to the Virginia Room in December 2017.

Processing Information

Chris Barbuschak, January 2018

EAD generated by Ross Landis, 2024

Preferred Citation

Royal Oaks Collection, MSS 04-06, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Separated Material

None

Related Material

None

Historical and Biographical Information

Royal Oaks was a magnificent two story frame house containing 10 rooms and twin stone chimneys located in Centreville, Virginia. There is conflicting information about the house's origin and date of construction. Captain Willoughby Newton purchased the 3,000 acre tract that became Royal Oaks in 1743. He gifted the land to his son John Newton on December 18, 1753, who sold the land to his cousin Newton Keene Sr. in 1765. It is believed that Keene constructed Royal Oaks shortly thereafter. The construction of the house has also been attributed to Revolutionary War patriot General Daniel Roberdeau who might've built the house for his son James Roberdeau around 1785, although there are no records to support this. James and Martha Roberdeau did live in the house and are buried in unmarked graves on the property.

The house saw heavy action during the Civil War. In 1862, Royal Oaks served as the headquarters for General John Pope during the Second Battle of Manassas. Pope made his office in the northwest room on the second floor and maintained a telegraph line using the branch of a large oak tree outside his window. The glass insulator from Pope's telegraph remained on the tree for almost 100 years until removed in 1961.

Royal Oaks passed through several hands until its final owners, Georgia and William Harrison Lamb, publisher and editor of the Manassas Journal, purchased the house in 1922. After Georgia Lamb's death on January 16, 1959, her will entrusted the property to the Church of the Good Shepherd in Burke, Virginia. The church retained the land but sold Royal Oaks to Norman L. Baker who bought the house for \$2,000 in February 1961 with the intention of disassembling and reconstructing it on his property in Delaplane, Virginia in Fauquier County.

In the spring and summer of 1961, Baker dismantled the house piece by piece taking measured drawings and photographs. Each piece was carefully marked and documented for eventual reconstruction. The timbers including Pope's glass insulator were trucked to Fauquier County.

Baker also purchased and restored an historic Colonial-period house known as Summerset (later known as Rose Hill), in Delaplane, Virginia. He intended to reconstruct Royal Oaks and conjoin the two houses together with a glass enclosure. Unfortunately this did not pan out, and the dismantled timbers of Royal Oaks remained stacked in pile under a leaky makeshift shed.

In May 2005, historians from Centreville interested in returning and reassembling Royal Oaks on its original site traveled to Delaplane to assess the condition of the remains of the house. Unfortunately, they discovered most of the original wood had severely decayed due to exposure to the elements and they abandoned plans for restoring the house.

The overgrown site of Royal Oaks, located at 13910 Braddock Road, remains undeveloped and also contains the unmarked graves of the Roberdeau family. The circa 1930s boundary stone wall still marks the entrance of the property, the foundation of the house remains, and a giant oak tree that once marked the house's front entrance still stands.

Scope and Content

The Royal Oaks Collection consists of 2.0 linear feet, spans the years 1935-1961, and includes photographs and sketchbooks of the historic house formerly located in Centreville, Virginia. Photographs are from the estate of William H. Lamb, final owner of Royal Oaks, and include various images of the exterior and interior

of the house, a distant view of Payne's Store, portraits of the Lambs, unidentified individuals, and a sketch of a map of the Centreville post office which was typically submitted by postmasters with their site reports to the Post Office Department. The sketchbooks date from 1961 when Norman L. Baker purchased Royal Oaks and dismantled it with the intention of reconstructing it in Delaplane, Virginia. The sketchbooks contain detailed measured drawings, floor plans, and elevations of Royal Oaks and were created as the house was in the process of deconstruction.

Index Terms

Baker, Norman L. (1926-)

Centreville (Va.) - History

Historic Buildings - Virginia - Fairfax County

Lamb, Georgia E. (1872-1959)

Lamb, William H. (1889-1944)

Royal Oaks (Centreville, Va.)

Container List

Box 1: Photographs, 1935-1961

Box 1: Sketchbook, #2, Undated

Box 1: Sketchbook, #3, Undated

Box 1: Sketchbook, #4, 1961 May-June

Box 1: Sketchbook, #5, Undated

Box 1: Sketchbook, #6 "Specific", 1961 August

Box 1: Sketchbook, "Kitchen" , Undated

Box 1: Sketchbook, "Original Trim" , Undated

Box 1: Large sketchbook, unlabeled, Undated