

## ***HORRORS! HOUSE OWNER'S NIGHTMARES: NO TULIPS FOR GARDEN WEEK***

Like most owners who open their homes for Historic Garden Week in Virginia, Mrs. William B. Taylor has had a recurring nightmare about it.

Her nightmare is that she looks from the third floor windows, sees tulips with no blossoms in the garden and races downstairs to paint the blossoms on the bare stalks. Then she has to race up to the third floor again to see if they look all right. But Westmoreland County's The Grove is interesting enough, whether or not the tulips are in bloom.

The first things you notice about the The Grove are the narrow windows, nine-over-nine-light sash; then you see the situation of the house, on a bluff overlooking the Yeocomico River near the unspoiled old village of Kinsale. The house has a north-south orientation to catch the breezes from the river, and Mr. and Mrs. Taylor said they don't feel the need of air conditioning except in the hottest weather.

The Grove, three stories tall with an English basement, will be open for the Northern Neck tour of Historic Garden Week in Virginia from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 22, under sponsorship of the Garden Club of the Northern Neck.

The house was built in 1832 in Federal style by David Taylor, great-grandfather of the present owner, a retired distributive education teacher in the Chesapeake school system, who was born at Kirnan, another house open for the tour.

When the Taylors came into possession of the house after the death of an elderly aunt, they found it in a state of dilapidation but full of family furnishings and the 150-year accumulation of family papers. They commuted on weekends from their Virginia Beach home, doing much of the restoration themselves. Once relatives almost caught thieves who had removed about half the furnishings.

The Taylors figured the house, built of brick laid in Flemish bond with walls 2 feet thick at the basement level, was well worth the pain of removing from all the old whitewashed horsehair plaster that was ready to fall. They have found the spot on the property where the bricks for the house were made. They relied on professional help for updating the plumbing and electrical work and installation of a new heating system and new closets, with the usual difficulties of getting workmen in the country. One of the contractors quit in the middle of the job when he "got religion."

Until well into this century, the Northern Neck was served by steamboats, which plied between the Neck and Baltimore or Washington. And it was to these cities the residents went -- or sent -- for business transactions they couldn't complete at home.

Relics of this way of life are a small painting in the parlor of the Kinsale dock, crates that once brought goods from Baltimore, and a handsome set of decorated chairs made in Baltimore. In the hall ceiling is a plaster medallion done by an itinerant artisan who arrived by steamboat and worked awhile in the neighborhood. Beneath it is an old trunk used for travel by the steamboat.

One of the Taylor ancestors who lived at The Grove ran a store in Kinsale and he even went by boat to the store.

When the Taylors cleaned out the house they found an accumulation of family papers with much information about life in the past on the Neck. They have loaned the papers to the archives of Old Dominion University.

All the mantels and baseboards in the house are their original color, black, and most of the doors are in their original color, old red. The Taylors have used old Williamsburg colors on the woodwork. The pine floors had always been washed with lye and had never even had a coat of wax. The Taylors, unable to face a retirement of scrubbing floors with lye, have applied a natural stain and a thin coat of wax.

"One of the joys we have had in trying to bring the house back to its original state was in doing it with simplicity, creating the atmosphere it originally had," said Mrs. Taylor.

The house is not "decorated" as some restored houses are. It's what it has always been, a livable country house full of old and not-so-old furniture the family has enjoyed through the years. Taylor has refinished the old pieces where necessary. The Victorian sideboard in the dining room was rebuilt by him.

Many pieces are original to the house. In the hall is an Empire sofa and a Victorian washstand; in the living room, an Empire bookcase-desk that has always stood on the same spot. On it is an 1849 New Testament given to the builder of The Grove, David Ball Taylor, and reinscribed to his son, Charles. A pair of eyeglasses belonging to the elder Taylor rests near it. An unusual feature is a heavily ornamented cast iron fireplace believed to have been added after the house was built.

The dining room table, a three-pedestal banquet table, is also original to the house. The table will be set for the tour with mats and napkins handmade by Anna Taylor Brown, the aunt who owned the property and was recognized as an authority on handwork, particularly church linens.

Upstairs, two bedrooms will be open but the third floor will not, because the stairs are too steep.

And in the English basement the family room and kitchen will be open. The family room contains a pitcher collection from around the world; musical instruments, including a rebaba, a primitive Canaanite instrument made of camel hide; and several antiques. The kitchen contains an 18th century cupboard and a wash stand and table originally in the house.