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March 1992

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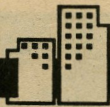
Vol. 4 # 5

Complimentary



THE OTIS ESHAM FAMILY & NITHSDALE:

An Inside Look...



Just west of Salisbury on the Wicomico River, where the river is bounded on the west by Rockawalkin Creek, the site of one of the county's historical treasures has become one of the county's most prestigious addresses. Nithsdale and West Nithsdale are communities conceived and developed by Mr. and Mrs. Otis Esham, communities which do not readily fall into the same category with other subdivisions or developments. There are no houses on the road at the entrance to these properties. The unique entranceways suggest the privacy of a country estate while inviting visitors in a neighborly way.

The Nithsdales are not housing developments; they are neighborhoods. The Eshams planned them that way, and Mrs. Esham is proud to say, "There are good neighbors here. That's what we wanted."

One of the guiding factors in maintaining the integrity of the property was the Eshams' personal interest in the history

The Otis Esham Family & Nithsdale

surrounding New Nithsdale and its attendant acreage. After years of research, there is no final agreement about the original owner of the property and the house. What is certain is that this property was a part of a land grant from the king of England and that one of the original owners named the house New Nithsdale for his beloved home in Scotland on the River Nith.

The house itself, overlooking the river, was built circa 1735, and is listed on the register of the Maryland Historical Trust. Mr. and Mrs. Esham built an addition to the original house and moved in in 1956. The original house is a one and one-half story brick house with a gable roof and six



dormers. The house has a central hallway which divides the two downstairs rooms, both containing interior fireplaces; and the original oyster shell and horse hair plaster still exists in the larger bedroom and the hallway. Much of the woodwork is original, too. Most notably, the original stairway stands intact and sturdy; the beautiful five-paneled doors

by
Becki Chalmers

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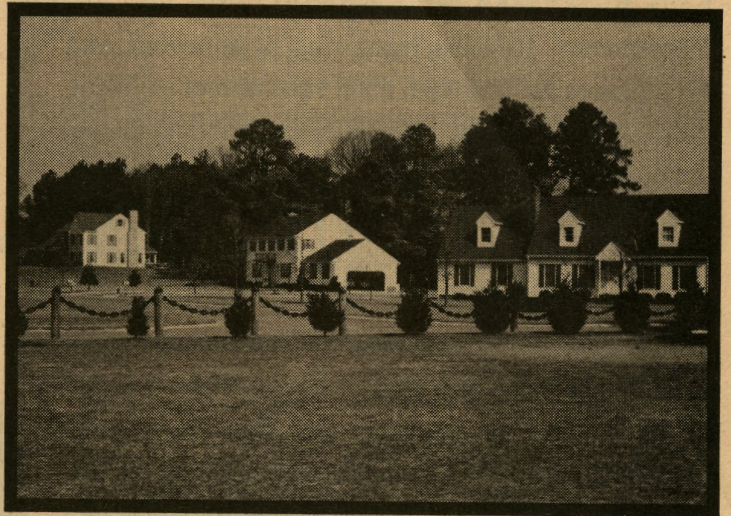
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are still hanging; and the wide plank pine flooring is rich and warm looking. The west bedroom upstairs is particularly noteworthy. Hidden behind the hand-carved paneling are two closets, and there is a small working fireplace in this room also. Mr. and Mrs. Esham discovered only two layers of paint when they restored this room; and again, with careful attention to its historical value, they matched the original color when they painted the room. The exterior salmon-colored bricks are set in a Flemish bond pattern with random glazed ends, and they glisten with a rich patina in the sunlight. When the Eshams built their own addition to the house, the oversized bricks that they selected for the garage, breezeway, porches and fireplaces were handmade in Glasgow, Virginia, to identically replicate the existing brick.

One interesting story connected to the original house concerns the wife of an earlier owner. One variation of the story indicates that the lady pined for her native Baltimore and suffered from terrible homesickness. The other, somewhat more interesting version involves her love of another man who would take her back to Baltimore. Whatever the case, her husband recognized her unhappiness; and, in a move calculated to push the thought of leaving out of her mind, he ordered the removal of the windows on the west side of the house. As testimony to the validity of that story, the windows on that side of the house remain bricked up today.

A graveyard which sits on the property adjacent to the house testifies to the history of the area. Names like Slemons, McBryde, and Hooper are prominent on the gravestones. This site, like so many other areas on the property, has been lovingly maintained by Mrs. Esham, who still plants flowers and shrubs in common areas around Nithsdale.

The Eshams understood their role as stewards of history and, for that reason, felt it was important to create a community of homes which would be appropriate to that property. And they wanted good



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neighbors for themselves, people who would appreciate their careful attention to detail in creating a pleasant living environment.

They have succeeded. Mr. Esham, who passed away last year, lived to see the realization of a dream he had envisioned when he first bought the property--a neighborhood of lovely homes on carefully landscaped lots, sitting on wide winding streets, many overlooking the Wicomico River and Rockawalkin Creek. As much as possible, the Eshams wanted to retain the flavor of the area, the natural beauty of country living and wooded spaces. While there is no time limit on building on a lot that has been purchased (many people buy lots as investments), all house plans must be approved; and no house with less than 2500 square feet of living space may be built in either of the Nithsdales.

When Mr. Esham subdivided the property in 1979 in anticipation of the development, he had to build more than a mile of finished road just to access the buildable lots for the first section. Phillip Parker surveyed the property, and Mr. Esham and he laid out the plans for all of Nithsdale to be developed gradually. The Eshams knew that they did not want houses at the front of the subdivision and that, as Mrs. Esham puts it, "we wanted this community to be nice or not at all." Always a pioneer in every venture, Mr. Esham was instrumental in substantially changing the face of the poultry industry in our area. Mrs. Esham notes that he "had known the chicken business from the beginning of its growth. He experimented and was an innovator in the business." His quality business was always on the cutting edge of technology. So, it was not surprising that a subdivision with which he would be involved would have to be the best he could make it. At least initially the Eshams were still farming part of the property, but it did not take long for word to spread about the wonderful new subdivision with all the Scottish street names--Edinburgh Court, Loch Lomond, Bagpipe

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"Old Friends" A Nithsdale Memory



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Court--and the authentic looking gatehouse.

The stones for the gatehouse were taken from the Wicomico River where they had rested for quite some time. Originally used as ballast for ships, the stones provided an authentic connection to the Old World and reflected the property's past. When commerce involved trading along the river, ships would bring goods like furniture or tea to be exchanged for cotton or tobacco produced by the settlers. In order to access these trading ships, the settlers used the discarded stones (also originally from Scotland) to weigh down a roadway made of logs over which their carts could travel. Wherever possible, with street signs and entrance signs, with the stones for the gatehouse, the Eshams went for the authentic, materials that were connected to the history of the property or to the natural beauty of the property itself. Stones were painstakingly removed from their resting place; a tree fallen in the river became the first Nithsdale sign.

On a later trip to Scotland, the Eshams tried unsuccessfully to find historical documents pertaining to the land grant which covered their property. Mrs. Esham notes with pride that she and her husband travelled the entire length of the River Nith, even to the source of the river at a falls called "Mare's Tail." Mrs. Esham herself waded in the River Nith to collect stones, into which she then had an "N" chiseled. She presented these stones as keepsakes to her nine grandchildren.

Lots along the river sold quickly, and then lots west along Rockawalkin Creek sold. The Eshams opened up a second section East of their home; and, before too long, over forty lots had sold, and building was obvious everywhere. In the first few years, the Eshams built a tennis court, a playground, and a driving range on the front of the property, features which enhanced the worth of the property and helped to create the sense of community and neighborhood for which they were striving. There is also a private

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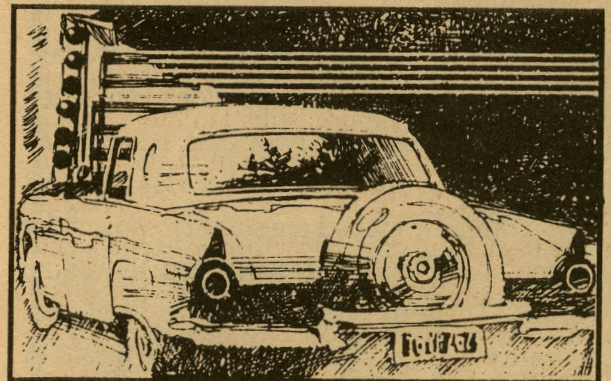
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boat ramp which allows property owners (both here and in West Nithsdale) direct access to the river. The Eshams, who handled most of their own advertising and sales, worked out of an office in their home. Mr. Esham's genuine fondness for people and theirs for him was much of the boost that sales need. He did most of the selling, including his famous pontoon boat rides for potential customers so that they could see the real beauty of the property from the river. The rest, as most Salisburians know, is history.

Today, Nithsdale has ten finished sections with sections eleven and twelve waiting to go. Son Otis "Bud" Esham, Jr. has taken over his father's work with the management of the Nithsdale development projects with much able assistance from both of his brothers. Dr. Robert Esham, a local dentist, was involved with his parents in the development of Nithsdale and worked very closely with them. Richard Esham, who continues the legacy of perfectionism in landscape detail, is instrumental in decisions about road construction. Of the 191 lots which have been developed in Nithsdale, 175 are sold, and there are 150 homes in this first project. What brought Bud Esham home after college and a few years of living and working in the city (which he did not like) was the development of West Nithsdale.

West Nithsdale, a bit further west along Pemberton Drive, opened in 1986. Like Nithsdale, it sports the Eshams' signature entrance, and it was Richard Esham who carefully crafted the stone crossovers for all the streets along Royal Mile Boulevard, the central thoroughfare. There are presently 125 lots developed. Here, too, are winding streets nestled in the woods or overlooking the river or creek, all with Scottish names. The same restrictions apply to homebuilders here, and, in many cases, the houses far exceed those minimum restrictions. There are plans for a driving range, playground, and tennis court here in the near future, and Bud Esham says they are also considering



a fishing pond for kids of all ages who live in West Nithsdale.

Given the remarkable success of these Nithsdale projects, it is not surprising that the three Esham brothers have formed a partnership called Tally-Ho Developers, a company which is currently busy with yet another development called Nithsdale Highlands located just across Pemberton Drive from West Nithsdale. This subdivision is characteristically defined by the entranceway, but it is a development based on a different concept. There are only nine lots in Nithsdale Highlands, each one 2 1/2 to 3 acres in size. The idea is for homeowners to have space to build their own stables and to house horses on their own property. Each lot will be individually fenced and have direct access to accompanying riding trails for the exclusive use of property owners in the development.


Bud Esham's Delmarva Construction, a road construction company, is presently gearing up for another project, work on which will begin in the summer of this year. Bud's idea of a small community for authentically designed Williamsburg houses caused him to form Olde Towne Company to oversee this project located between Nithsdale and West Nithsdale on Pemberton Drive. This

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community will have 52 lots on which houses which conform to historic authenticity will be built. These homes will be somewhat smaller, 1500-2000 square feet; and, in order to maintain control over their authenticity, Bud Esham will operate as both builder and developer. Although the front entrance will not be identical to Nithsdale entrances, it will bespeak the historic theme of the development.

And so the beginning is really in the end of this article. Another Esham with a vision of the future, is carrying on the fine tradition of quality development tied to an important past. What the future may hold one can only imagine. 

NITHSDALE

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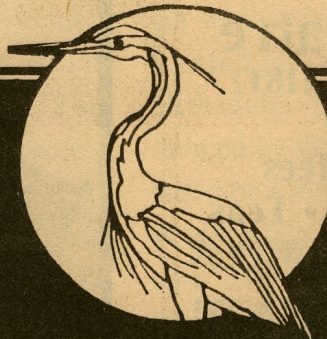
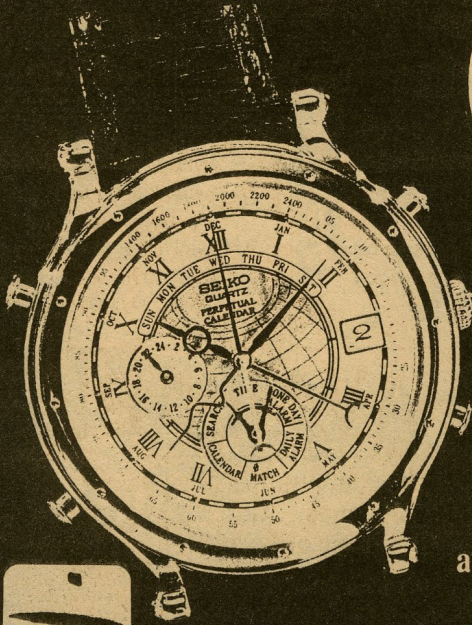


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