

William Fitzhugh's Land Grant, ca. 1760

### Resources

Fairfax County History Commission's African American History Inventory  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/history-commission/africanamericaninventory](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/history-commission/africanamericaninventory)

Fairfax County library's Virginia room  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/virginia-room](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/virginia-room)

Historic Programs and Activities with the Fairfax County Park Authority  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/nature-history/parks](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/nature-history/parks)

For information and directions, visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/oak-hill](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/oak-hill)



NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST



Welcome to

# Oak Hill

A Self-Guided Tour



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Seville Homes, the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, the Fairfax County Park Authority, and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors entered an agreement in 2004 to preserve Oak Hill, a privately-owned property including its 200-year-old boxwoods, through a historic and conservation easement.

### Oak Hill Origins

This land was originally under the stewardship of the Tauxent nation and other Algonquian speaking cultures. We honor their enduring relationship with this land, past, present, and future.

### Fitzhugh Family

In the 1600s, Europeans colonized and established ownership of land in the eastern part of North America. William Fitzhugh, a successful planter and lawyer, was granted Ravensworth, a 21,996-acre property that was among his holdings that stretched from today's Lake Barcroft to the Rappahannock River. After William's death, the Ravensworth tract was divided among his sons and continued to be subdivided through the family, with Richard Fitzhugh inheriting Oak Hill in 1783. The Oak Hill farmhouse, built around 1790, is the only surviving Fitzhugh family manor, with nearby Ossian Hall and Ravensworth house destroyed by fire. Oak Hill remained in the Fitzhugh family until 1889 and was home to hundreds of enslaved people who worked on the Ravensworth tract properties.



William Fitzhugh



Oak Hill (north facade), ca. 1900

### Inside the House

The original Georgian-style house featured a center staircase/hallway with rooms on either side of each floor. Lacking indoor plumbing, it relied on a well for drinking water and fireplaces for heat. Modern conveniences like electricity and a gasoline-powered washing machine were added over time. The house was restored by Macomber, who added ornate arch surrounds, Georgian paneling, carved mantles, an elevator, carpeting and plywood. Oak Hill is now an excellent example of early preservation and restoration efforts in America.

### Oak Hill as a Farm

Oak Hill was a 50-acre farm in the 1800s, with boxwood trees lining a lane used by carriages and horses. William Watt purchased the farm in 1889 and maintained it as a working farm with his family, growing crops and raising livestock. During the Great Depression, the farm was sold to Edward and Jane Howrey.

### House from Yard

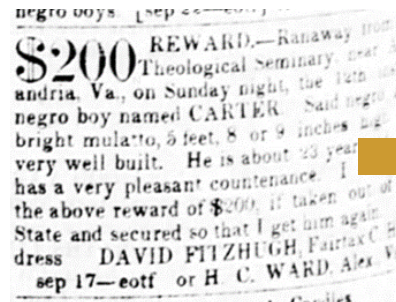
Oak Hill in Annandale, Virginia, was initially constructed in the late Georgian style, with multi-paned windows and a west-side addition in 1830. In the 1930s, the house was remodeled by restoration architect Walter M. Macomber in the Colonial Revival style, adding a front portico with columns, dormer windows, and a second story in the back. Today, it remains unchanged since the 1930s, except for a sunroom added to the west side in the 1970s. Macomber was also involved in restoring other historic buildings in Northern Virginia, such as the Fairfax County Historic Courthouse, Gadsby's Tavern and the Old Presbyterian Meeting House.



Oak Hill south lawn, ca. 1900

### Stories from Oak Hill

During the Civil War in 1861, Oak Hill, was caught between competing Union and Confederate armies, leading to a shootout between scouts. Evidence of enslaved people in the Ravensworth tract has been uncovered, including Carter Dowling, who was hired out to the Virginia Theological Seminary by Fitzhugh family members. David Fitzhugh assisted his injured cousin by aiding in the hiring out of enslaved people.



\$200 Reward- Ranaway from the Theological Seminary near Alexandria Va on Sunday night the 12th. A negro boy named CARTER. Said negro is a bright mulatto, 5 feet 8 or 9 inches in height and very well built. He is about 23 years old and has a very pleasant countenance. I will give the above reward of \$200 if taken out of the State and secured so that I get him again. Address DAVID FITZHUGH Fairfax C.H.

Ad placed by David Fitzhugh in the Alexandria Gazette (Alexandria, Virginia), Thu., Sep. 30, 1858, Page 2

Although records about his escape raise questions, additional sources confirm that Carter escaped using the Underground Railroad. To learn more about his story, read *The Underground Railroad Records: 1872 Edition* by William Still.

It is known from records that after emancipation, three of the former enslaved persons purchased small parcels of land for their homes not far from Oak Hill. All three were born into slavery in Fairfax County and are listed on the 1856 state inventory. Their names were John Newman, Oscar Newman and Richard Newman.