



According to local legend, when William Eaton, Sr., a wealthy Roanoke River planter, was building his summer home in Warrenton (shown above), he was on occasion accosted by well-meaning neighbors who offered their advice on the design of the home. His response to one acquaintance who took it upon herself to suggest a change was, loosely

quoted, "I'm building this house to suit myself, and I'll build the next one to suit you." The home on Main Street adjacent to Wesley Memorial Methodist Church was bought as its parsonage in 1952 through a generous gift of George Garland Allen of Warrenton and was dedicated as the Mary Burwell Allen parsonage in honor of his wife. (Staff Photo)

Methodist Minister Calls Renovated Mansion Home

By KAY HORNER
News Editor

In 1843, William Eaton, Sr., a Roanoke River planter wealthy in slaves and in land, wanted a summer home built in Warrenton where his daughter, who attended school in Virginia, could entertain her friends.

The result was a stately Greek revival home attributed in design and construction to Jacob W. Holt, a Virginia builder and master craftsman whose name is linked to antebellum homes throughout the county either by document or by tradition.

The home has had a succession of owners since the Eaton family sold it in 1890, but in a town where tradition dies hard, more than a few residents still refer to it fondly as the "old Eaton place."

It is a designation that will probably survive as long as the home itself, but in 1952 the house was formally given another name when it was dedicated the Mary Burwell Allen parsonage by Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church.

How the Main Street residence became the Methodist parsonage is satisfying fare for those who prefer their history seasoned with a dash of romance.

At the close of the last century, George Garland Allen, a Warrenton native, first met his future bride, Mary Burwell of Mecklenburg County, Va., at the home.

He was later to become chairman of the boards of the Duke Endowment and Duke Power Company and vice chairman of the board of British-American Tobacco Company, Ltd.

Although home for the Allens was New York, they maintained a summer and holiday home in Warrenton in what is now the Warren County School Administration Building on Cousin Lucy's Lane.

In 1952, Allen gave \$30,500 to the Methodist church where for many years his family had been active members to enable it to purchase the old Eaton home.

The church remodeled the house at a cost of \$25,000, and it was furnished almost completely by Mrs. Allen, rendering it one of the most elegant parsonages in the state.

For the Rev. John Cameron West, the parsonage is home. When in his informal family quarters, a den, bedroom, and kitchen added to the original structure by a later owner, West might well forget the surroundings in the rest of the house.

But when he sits in the formal parlor, under portraits of the Allens that hang on either side of the fireplace, he's reminded of the responsibility that comes with blessing.

"Anything a church owns has to be used to the glory of God," West said in a recent interview. "Not only is the house a blessing, but it's a challenge for Wesley Memorial to be as generous in its ministry as God has been to us."

West, a graduate of Yale Divinity School, holds an undergraduate degree in American studies. Although at least one friend warned him this past June when he moved to Warrenton that living in the parsonage, which is known in Methodist circles throughout the state, would be more stuffy than fun, West has found it a delightful experience.

"To live in this house is to be a part of the history of this town," he explained. "What amazes me is the large number of people in Warrenton who have never been in this house."

This has not always been true, if the parsonage guest book established in 1952 is any indication.

It reads like a who's who of Warrenton, past and present, and includes the names of visitors from all over the United States as well as Portugal, Bolivia, Thailand and points around the world.

Visitors have been fewer in number in recent years, a trend West would like to change.

"I enjoy having church activities here," West said. "It's a place of beauty and people can come here and appreciate the gifts God has given us."

West, who is single, spent a year on sabbatical leave at Duke University from pastorates in Raleigh and Cary before coming to Warrenton.

"Friends of mine from Durham, who live in the North and have never visited small Southern towns or who have certain images of the South come here and are able to experience part of our country's history that they've never experienced before. They can get some sense of what it must have been like to live 75 years ago in a town like Warrenton."

It was, by most counts, a very gracious way of life.

Lizzie Wilson Montgomery, who in 1924 published her "Sketches of Old Warrenton," the bible of the town's history, gives a glimpse into the lifestyle of Miss Ella Eaton for whom William Eaton built his home in town:

"Her father gave her every advantage. She traveled extensively in Europe, under the care of Bishop and Mrs. Ives. During the season, she would visit the most fashionable springs of that day, the Greenbrier White of Virginia, and spend her winters in Washington."

Ella was the daughter of Eaton and his second wife, a Miss Hickman of Tidewater, Virginia. It was this wife who transplanted the boxwoods still flourishing in front of the parsonage from Eaton's plantation on the Roanoke River.

His first marriage was to Elizabeth Macon, a daughter of Warren County statesman Nathaniel Macon, and the children of this marriage were



The Rev. John Cameron West, who became minister of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church this past June, had no trouble making the antebellum parsonage his home. West hopes to utilize the home as an extension of the church's ministry both among church members and the community. (Staff Photo)

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NOTICE OF GENERAL ELECTION

A general election will be held in Warren County on Tuesday, November 6, 1984 to elect the following officers: President and Vice President of United States, United States Senate, Member of Congress, State Officers, State Judicial Officers, State Senate For District #2 and District #10, State House of Representatives for District #7 and District #22, District Court Judge, Constitutional Amendment and Court Officers.

All voters registered with Warren County Board of Elections are eligible to vote in the general election. Voters who are already registered to vote need not re-register to vote in this election. Residents of the county who are not registered to vote must register by 5:00 p.m., October 4, 1984, to be eligible to vote in the general election. Also, a voter who has moved since the last election must notify the Board of election of that change by the same date. A person may register to vote at the Board of Election Office at the Peter Davis House on South Front Street at West Macon Street, between 9:00 a. m. and 5:00 p. m. or by appointment at the home of his precinct registrar or judge.

Any voter who will be out of the county the entire time the polls are open on Election Day, or who will be unable to go to the polls because of sickness or physical disability, may vote by Absentee Ballot. The voter may apply for an absentee ballot beginning on September 7, 1984. Application must be made in person or in writing to the County Board of Election. The deadline for applying for an absentee ballot is 5:00 p. m., Thursday, November 1, 1984 also the deadline for "One Stop Voting."

Any questions about registration, absentee ballot, one stop voting, location of polling places, and other election matters may be answered by telephoning the Board of Elections Office at 257-2114.

RUBY JONES
Supervisor

Aug. 8, 29, Sept. 19, Oct. 3-c.

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