

THE GAGE HOUSE



FALLS CHURCH SENIOR CENTER

**401 West Great Falls Street
Falls Church, Virginia 22046**

(703) 533-2874

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Located in the greenery of Cherry Hill Park, the Falls Church Senior Center in the Gage House preserves a balance of modern urban convenience and a unique natural setting.

In 1981, at the direction of the City Council, the Gage House was thoroughly renovated to become a center for the city's senior citizen programs, administered by the Department of Recreation and Parks and a Senior Citizens Council. It was dedicated to this purpose and opened on June 13, 1982. Since that time, the center has served as a focal point for the city's senior citizens, where they can meet friends, receive information on social services, recreation and educational opportunities.

On the second floor of the Gage House, two rooms are reserved for the Falls Church Historical Commission as places for work, meetings of the commission and for special exhibits on local history.



The Falls Church Senior Center.

Various activities, meetings, classes and programs are held on a regular basis at the Falls Church Senior Center.



CHARLES ELLSWORTH GAGE (1882-1972)

A native of Nebraska, descended from New Englanders and reared in Missouri, Charles Gage came to Washington in 1906. Here he was employed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. His first assignment was as a stenographer for the distinguished conservationist, Gifford Pinchot. He next served in the Bureau of Crop Estimates, where extensive travel gave him a unique knowledge of the nation's geography and agriculture.

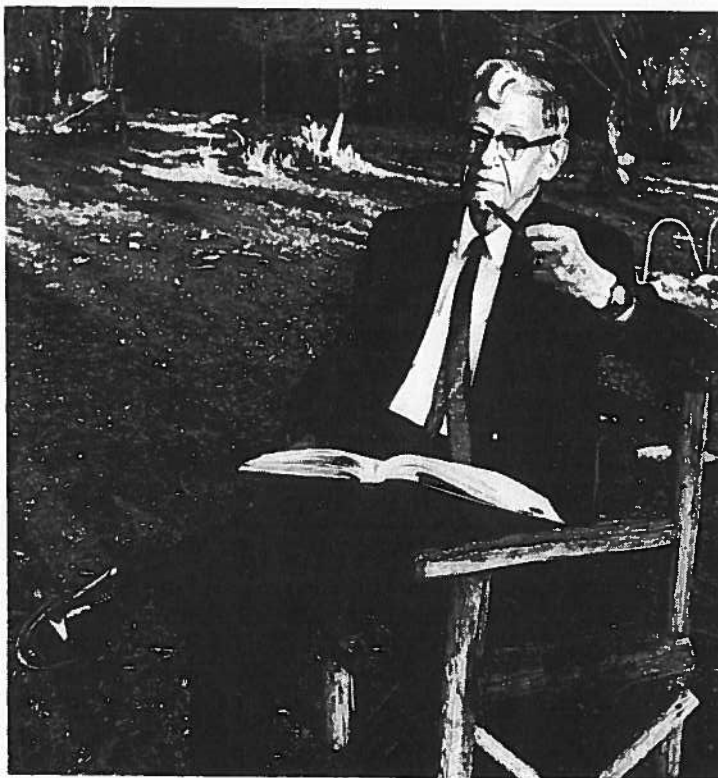
He became a recognized authority on tobacco production. In 1919, when Congress authorized collection of tobacco production data and creation of standards for grading tobacco, Charles Gage headed the department's new Tobacco Section.

For the next 20 years, he supervised the establishment of official types and grades of tobacco and the collection of production records. Later, when Congress made inspection mandatory, it was found that the good will he had created and his work for fair marketing practices helped assure the law's success.

During World War II, he was one of the U.S. members of the Combined Food Board, and later he served on the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation. Following retirement in 1948, he served on the Secretary of Agriculture's Tobacco Advisory Committee and was a consultant for the American Tobacco Company. In 1953, one of his educational programs for tobacco growers earned the Public Relations Association's "Silver Anvil Award" for the American Tobacco Company. In 1954, he was part of the U.S. delegation to the World Tobacco Congress in Amsterdam, Holland.



Charles Gage at Great Falls about 1908.



Charles Gage at "Poverty Pines" about 1960.

Despite his extensive travel, Charles Gage put down deep roots in Falls Church. He served on the Town Council from 1929-1938, the Planning Commission from 1938-1942 and the Historical Commission in 1959. His love of history led him to trace the old tobacco rolling roads in this area, and he wrote an authoritative account of them titled Tobacco, Tobacco Hogsheads and Rolling Roads in Northern Virginia. He was a member of the Cosmos Club of Washington, a Mason, a Shriner and a member of numerous professional and historical societies. He was also a member of Falls Church's unique "Lantern Club."



Charles and Maude Gage on the front porch of their home, "Poverty Pines," about 1960.

KATHLEEN MAUDE RILEY GAGE (1878-1968)

Born at Cherry Hill in 1878, Maude Riley grew up with a personal knowledge and love for the site that later was her home for 60 years, following her marriage to Charles Gage. She was educated well for a time when women's education was a controversial subject, and she graduated from the normal college at Farmville, Virginia, in 1898. Returning to Falls Church, she taught at the Jefferson Institute for several years, after which she obtained a federal appointment in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Maude Riley met Charles Gage in 1906 when both were employed with the Forest Service. They were married two years later. The home they named "Poverty Pines" was built a year later and they moved into it in 1910.

Life in the Gage household was full and active. In her career of more than 40 years of federal service, Maude Riley Gage served in the Departments of Agriculture, Post Office and Treasury. During some of these years, Mr. Gage's niece, Gladys Rickey (now Mrs. Clarence Buck), lived with them. Thereafter, Mrs. Gage's niece, Judith Birge (now Mrs. Donald Sides), lived at Poverty Pines.



Kathleen Maude Riley, about 1896.



Maude Gage clearing path to bird feeder at "Poverty Pines" during the 1950's.



Maude Gage and Robin relax on the front porch of "Poverty Pines."

Throughout the years, a variety of birds and animals always enjoyed the hospitality of Poverty Pines. In all seasons, the bird feeders were filled twice daily. It was a local legend that Maude Gage could make friends with any bird or animal that came into her yard. Also legendary were the broad-brimmed straw hats that "Aunt Maude" always wore when working in her yard or the garden shared by the Gage House and Cherry Hill. She shared with her husband a love for the flowering trees and plants that surrounded their home. This love, it would seem, was returned by the flowers. Under her care, they flourished in a way that made Poverty Pines a place of quiet beauty in every season of the year.



"Aunt Maude" with one of her famous straw hats, about 1960.



A rear-view winter scene of "Poverty Pines," about 1960.

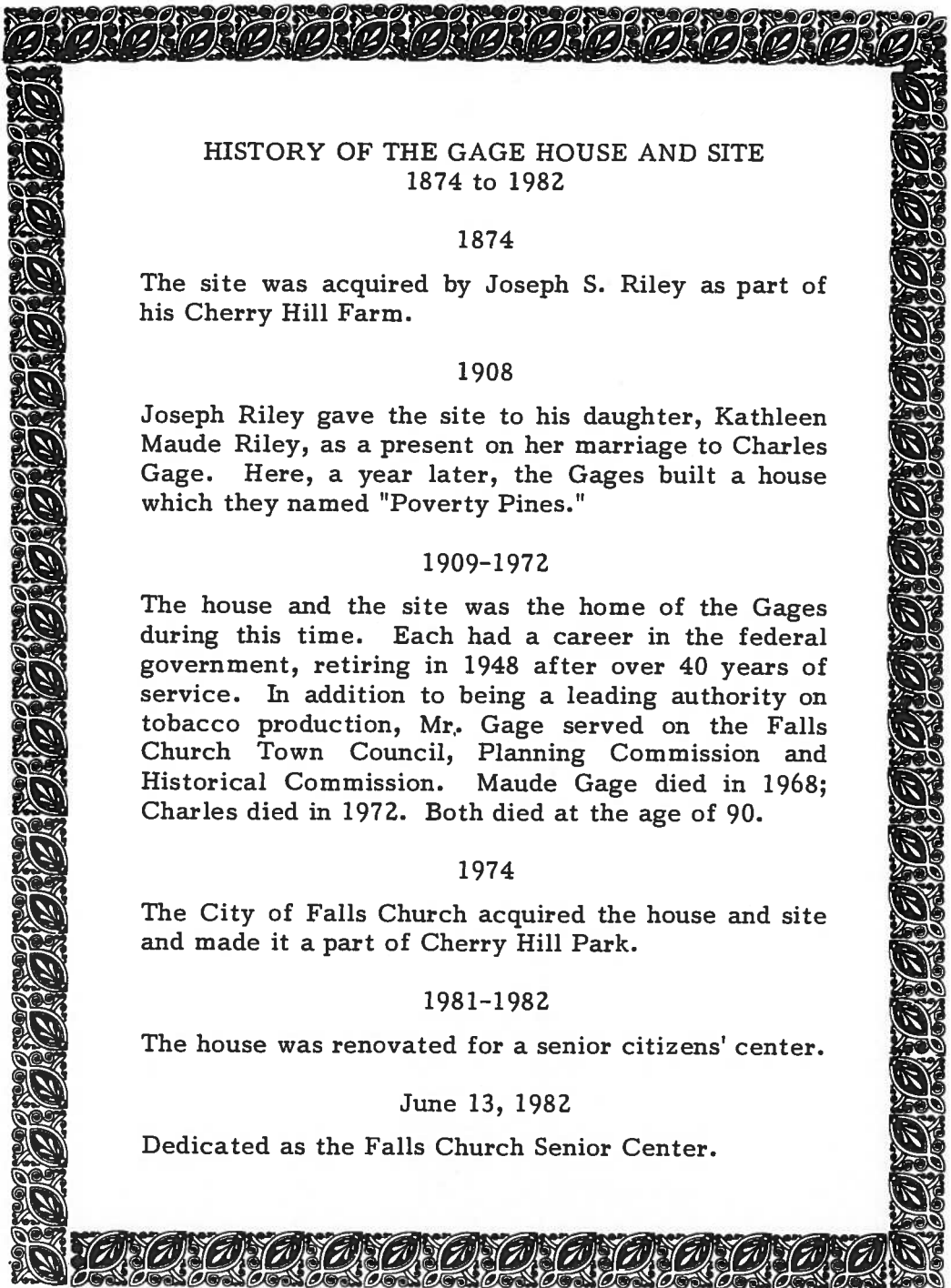
"POVERTY PINES"

The Gages named their home "Poverty Pines." This name was given in affection for the site, but originally, it was a reminder of hard times.

One account of the origin of this name holds that it refers to the Virginia field pines, a small, rapidly-growing tree that springs up naturally in fields that are not cultivated.

In the years of poverty following the Civil War, much of the farm land in Virginia was not restored to cultivation because its owners lacked the means to buy horses, mules, seeds and tools. Also, the general poverty of the time led many to simply abandon the land to be taken over by Poverty Pines.

As hard times were replaced by economic growth, it was found that these Poverty Pines had grown to a size that could be used for fuel or lumber. Thus, they became reminders of both hard times and good times.



HISTORY OF THE GAGE HOUSE AND SITE
1874 to 1982

1874

The site was acquired by Joseph S. Riley as part of his Cherry Hill Farm.

1908

Joseph Riley gave the site to his daughter, Kathleen Maude Riley, as a present on her marriage to Charles Gage. Here, a year later, the Gages built a house which they named "Poverty Pines."

1909-1972

The house and the site was the home of the Gages during this time. Each had a career in the federal government, retiring in 1948 after over 40 years of service. In addition to being a leading authority on tobacco production, Mr. Gage served on the Falls Church Town Council, Planning Commission and Historical Commission. Maude Gage died in 1968; Charles died in 1972. Both died at the age of 90.

1974

The City of Falls Church acquired the house and site and made it a part of Cherry Hill Park.

1981-1982

The house was renovated for a senior citizens' center.

June 13, 1982

Dedicated as the Falls Church Senior Center.

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