

GRACE CHURCH HISTORIC FARM TOUR



—*beyond the Gates*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Six Historic Albemarle County Farms To Open For Public Tours

Keswick, VA -- Members of the public will have an opportunity to tour six farm estates in Albemarle County, as well as the Keswick Hunt Club and Grace Episcopal Church, on Saturday, June 18, 2011 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The tours are sponsored by Grace Episcopal Church, which is located near the farms in the Cismont/Keswick area. At Grace Church, participants can visit a country fair, tour the historic church and grounds, and enjoy organ music. The fair will feature food and craft vendors, pony rides, a fire engine and a raffle for prizes.

The six estates on the tour are Castalia, Clover Hill, East Belmont, Edgeworth, Eldon Farm and Round Hill Farm. The farm tour event, entitled *Beyond the Gates*, provides a rare opportunity to visit a selection of historic sites near Charlottesville. Highlights of the tour include a carriage exhibition, a sheepdog demonstration, presentation of the Keswick Foxhounds, an exhibition by Paso Fino horses, and other events.

Julie Norton, Rector of Grace Church, said: "All of us at Grace look forward to welcoming the people of Central Virginia to our *Beyond the Gates* historic farm tour. We hope that both individuals and families of all ages will enjoy the events and fun of this day in the country." Added the Senior Warden, Mike Stone: "We want our visitors to know that proceeds from the farm tour will go to support our community ministries, including support for non-profit organizations like Hospice of the Piedmont, Salvation Army and Habitat for Humanity."

Historic Grace Episcopal Church stands at the site of one of six colonial churches in Virginia that still have active congregations. Thomas Jefferson served on the Vestry of the original parish from 1767 to 1770. Every Thanksgiving Day since 1929, the church has conducted an outdoor service known as the Blessing of the Hounds. This colorful ceremony brings together foxhunters and their horses and hounds in the church yard for prayers and thanksgiving.

Castalia was once owned by relatives of famed explorer Meriwether Lewis. During the past 25 years, the farm has produced outstanding Paso Fino horses, including national champions El Vicario Ltd. and Lisanna.

Clover Hill was originally a portion of neighboring Cloverfields plantation, which was granted to Nicholas Meriwether II in 1730. The main house was built in the 1840s, and the farm's bank barn dates to around 1790 and may be Albemarle County's oldest surviving barn.

East Belmont's past owners include Thomas Jefferson's friend John Harvie, as well as John Rogers, Sr., a cousin of Revolutionary War hero George Rogers Clark. Confederate cavalry horses were pastured at East Belmont during the Civil War. Several vintage carriages will be displayed at East Belmont.

Edgeworth is a 1200-acre farm that features Angus cattle and sheep. Previous owners include the Rev. James Maury, who operated a school attended by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison; and Major-General William Fitzhugh Gordon, who fought in the War of 1812.

Eldon Farm dates back to a 1735 land grant of nearly 18,000 acres along the Southwest Mountains. Owner Ken Luke acquired the farm in 1999 and has transformed it from a cattle operation into a thriving home for mares, foals, layups and yearlings.

Round Hill Farm features a large organic vegetable garden, an orchard, a renovated residence and horse barn, and 25 acres of horse paddocks and native landscaping.

The Keswick Hunt Club's kennels are home to roughly 70 American Foxhounds that lead mounted club members on chases in designated territory in four counties. Founded in 1896, the Hunt Club has hosted at least one horse show every year since 1904.

Tickets for the Beyond the Gates historic farm tour cost \$15 in advance through June 17, or \$20 per individual on the day of the event, and may be purchased at Grace Church and any of the tour sites on June 18. Children ages 12 and under are admitted free. Each ticket allows admission to all sites, exhibits and demonstrations. The farm tour will take place regardless of weather conditions. Proceeds will support the church's numerous community ministries, which benefit the church's food closet and organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army, Hospice of the Piedmont, Meals on Wheels, and others. Ticket information and other details are available at www.gracefarmtour.org.

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