

Old Homes in the Neighborhood

Told by Mother¹ written down by E.C. Williston² at Brewster³, summer 1923

Scanned, digitized and footnoted in December 2006 by Julian Bullitt

Bentivar

Bentivar was the home of Uncle Ferrell Carr whose wife was Grandpa Terrell's sister Emily. At his death, he gave the place in fee simple to his only son Cousin William Carr, whose wife was Miss Charlotte Duke. They had a large family of children who were the boon companions of the Gale Hill children. We all went to school to Aunt Mal⁴ and were constantly together.

Ellen and Lottie were the ones nearest my age and my best friends, and Jim was my first sweetheart. He was lost during the war. Bentivar was liberty hall for all of us children. Cousin Charlotte let us do exactly as we pleased, and we loved to go there more than anywhere else.

Cousin William's two maiden sisters, Cousin Clarissa, whom we called Aunt Tee, and Cousin Doll lived also at Bentivar. They were clever and charming women and Aunt Mal was devoted to them. Everyone was amazed when Aunt Tee married old Mr. Woodson. He was over eighty and she sixty, I have no doubt, but she continued to live on at Bentivar after her marriage and so did Mr. Woodson.

Cousin Will as we called him was a physician and did all the practice in the neighborhood. He was one of the sweetest men I ever knew and everybody loved him—his children, his servants and his neighbors. He was an indulgent parent and master and a genial friend.

Bentivar was one of the best river plantations in Albemarle, placed as it was between the forks of the Rivanna. It had very large rich low grounds. Braxton Bryan⁵, when he lived with us at Key West and went to school, used to sometimes ride through the place going from Key West to Gale Hill. One day when he got home he remarked to me, "Margaret, if I had to be a hog I would rather be Dr. Carr's hog than anyone else's." The Bentivar low grounds were covered with the finest corn I ever saw and Braxton had seen the hogs reveling in it as he rode through.

Cousin Will went on the bond of a nephew of Cousin Charlotte's. The bond was for sheriff and a large one and he asked Pa and Cousin Frank Carr, who owned Red Hills, to go on it with him, which they did, Cousin Frank to the value of Red Hills, which was all he owned, and not a large place at the time, and Pa to the amount of fifteen thousand dollars. The man they bonded failed to make good and left the country, and both Red Hills and Bentivar had to be sold to pay the bond and Pa paid the fifteen thousand dollars he was responsible for. This was after the war⁶ and nobody had any money, so Pa had to borrow it, and after his death Mother paid the debt. To raise the money she had to sell Wirt's and Rich's⁷ land, Windieknowe, Clifton, what is now called Beau Lieu, and the wood land between Ridgeway and the Bronaugh land.

Cousin Will and Cousin Charlotte and their family went up to Fauquier County to live and there he died.

Cousin Frank went to St. Louis Missouri and worked there till his health failed when he came to my house in Charlottesville staying with me till his death.

¹ Margaret Minor Bryan (1845–1927), Dandoo, married John Randolph Bryan (1841–1917) on 19 February 1867 at Gale Hill.

² Elizabeth Coalter Bryan (1871–1957), Lib, married Robert Lyman Williston (1869–1934) in 1918 after her sister died.

³ The Bryan clan would often summer together in Brewster on Cape Cod. This was the summer home of the Willistons.

⁴ Malvina Terrell (1798–1880) maiden aunt of Margaret Minor Bryan

⁵ Rev. C. Braxton Bryan (1852–1922) was the brother of John Randolph Bryan. He was probably attending the University.

⁶ The Civil War (1861–1865)

⁷ Dandoo's brothers Wirt Minor (1855?–1921) and Richmond Terrell Minor (1844–1921)

Bentivar was a part of the original land grant made to Thomas Carr the emigrant⁸. Carrsbrook, Dunlora, and Glen Echo were also part of this grant.

I think Red Hills was also part of this grant though I failed to ask Mother about that place when she told me about the others. ECW

Glen Echo

This was an old place, being part of the original Thomas Carr grant and it belonged to Pa⁹. He bought it and Mother¹⁰ gave it its present name of Glen Echo. Here they went to housekeeping before they moved to Gale Hill.

Grandpa Terrell¹¹ moved up from Prospect Hill after Mother's marriage.¹² He was lonely there without her, so he sold his place to cousin William Overton and bought Windieknowe, which Aunt Mal named. But Windieknowe was too far from Gale Hill to suit the old gentleman besides being over the river, so he proposed to Pa to exchange Windieknowe for Glen Echo. This was done, and at Glen Echo Grandpa lived until he died. We saw him every day and often twice a day

Old Mammy Kate was his negro housekeeper and he lived alone except when Uncle Willie, Mother's younger brother, was there for visits. Uncle Willie lived with Aunt Lucy Terrell who raised him from a baby.

Red Hills

This was another old place and the home of Dr. Frank Carr, the one we children used to call Uncle Hazelnut Frank.

He was twice married, first to Virginia Terrell, cousin Lucy Davis's aunt, and her son Cousin Peter Carr and his wife Cousin Laura were lovely people and much beloved by all the kin. Cousin Peter was a splendid young lawyer and lived in Missouri but came home for a visit every summer. He died quite young and had no children.

Dr. Frank Carr's second wife was Maria Morris, and Cousin Frank Carr (F.E.G. Carr) who died at my house in Charlottesville, was the only son of this marriage. He, like his half brother Cousin Peter, was a charming man and the best of good company. He was one of the most gifted and well educated men of his time and had a beautiful voice.

His son is Cousin George Carr who lives in Texas.

Red Hills was sold shortly after the war to pay for Cousin Frank's part of the note he went on for Cousin Will Carr, and Cousin Frank went to St. Louis, and got work there till his health broke down.

The Retreat

This place, before I was born, used to be the home of Uncle Boucher Carr, but he with all his family except Cousin Mary Ann moved to St Louis before I can remember.

Cousin Mary Ann married Cousin Hugh Minor and they lived at The Riggory. Ever since I can remember, the Austins lived at The Retreat. It was burned down within the last ten or twelve years.

⁸ Thomas Carr (1646–1711) was born in Yorkshire, but the timing is better for his son Thomas Carr (1678–1737) since Albemarle County was not settled until the 1730s.

⁹ William Wardlaw Minor (1815–1887)

¹⁰ Mary Waters Terrell (1815–1895)

¹¹ Richmond Terrell (1783–1857)

¹² Mary Waters Terrell married William Wardlaw Minor on 21 December 1835 at "Prospect Hill," Louisa County, VA

Woodburn

When I was a child and young girl, Cousin Patsy Clive lived at Woodburn. Mr. Clive was a teacher so the children did not go to school with us. but were taught at home by their father,

Cousin Patsy was Cousin William Carr's sister, and we were very fond of going to Woodburn and of the Clive cousins.

Before the war, they all moved to Cincinnati, and since then some have died and others have moved to Texas.

Cousin Mary Waters Clive, who was named for my mother, married Dr. Addison and she came to our house during the war while the doctor was in the army. After the war, she returned to Texas and I have not seen her since.

Carrsbrook

This old place was built by Peter Carr, son of the Dabney Carr who was Jefferson's friend and who married his sister Martha Jefferson. This Dabney Carr was the first person buried at Monticello.

My first knowledge of the place, Carrsbrook, was when it was the home of my grandfather, Dabney Minor and after his death his widow, Pa's stepmother and her children lived there for awhile. Then she rented out the place and lived around, I don't know just where but probably at Mechunk with her daughter Aunt Lucy or at The Farm with the Davises. Her sister was Cousin Eugene Davis's mother.

When I first remember going to Carrsbrook, the Cooks lived there. Mrs. Cook was first Mrs. Stockton, and both the Stockton and the Cook children lived at Carrsbrook. There were two Stockton children and three Cooks. Uncle Willie Terrell was very attentive to Kate Stockton at one time and I got acquainted with them through him, and Maggie Cook, who afterwards married Bob Mason. and I were great friends. Aunt Mal used to sniff mightily at the intimacy, not because of the Cooks or the Stocktons, who are as good people as any, but because of Mrs. Cook who was of plain origin, but was very pretty and she married Mr. Stockton when she was only fourteen and he sent her to a convent after their marriage to be educated.

Carrsbrook has been sold many times since and I do not know who owns it now.

Carrsbrook was burned down in 1929. ECW

Ridgeway and the Riggory

Ridgeway was the home of old Cousin Peter Minor whose father was Garrett Minor of Sunning Hill and whose mother was Mary Overton Terrell. Cousin Peter's wife Lucy Gilmer, but when I was a child old Cousin Peter's son Cousin Franklin Minor and his family lived there. Cousin Hugh Minor, his brother, inherited it and lived there first, and Cousin Frank owned The Riggory, but Cousin Frank was prosperous and wanted a large place for his school, so he and his brother exchanged places, Cousin Hugh getting money in addition to The Riggory.

Cousin Frank's boys school was very prosperous and Brother¹³ went there to school.

Pa and Mother were very fond of the Ridgeway cousins and for years there were two arborvitae trees, one on each side of the veranda at Gale Hill, which Cousin Frank gave Pa and the trees were always called Frank and Lucy Arm.

They came to Gale Hill to my wedding. Cousin Frank was always very fond of me and he was in failing health at the time and when he told me good bye he said, "I shall not see you again in this life, my dear, but I want to give you a motto for life. 'Live in charity, trust in providence and turn on the poles of truth.' And remember my dear that in married life there are always two bears, Bear and forbear."

¹³ William Wardlaw Minor II (1843–19xx)

The following May the old gentleman died, so as he prophesied, I never saw him again, but his advice and motto have never been forgotten.

Cousin Lucy Ann, his wife lived to be very old and died while we were living at Key West.

This was the first funeral I ever went to. I don't know how old I was, but Maisie and I put the wreaths on the grave. ECW

The Riggory

This was the home of Cousin Hugh Minor and his wife, Cousin Mary Ann Carr. The name Riggory comes from 'The Rockery' for the place was very rocky.

Cousin Hugh was a splendid gardener and he had a beautiful garden full of choice grapes, pears and other fruits which were a great temptation to all of us children, and he was very cross and gruff with us. We used to cross the river on a root bridge and walk over there often and would pilfer his fruit and he would be very cross and mad about it, and if he could have caught us, would certainly have whipped us, but catching comes before hanging!

Cousin Mary Ann had a very sweet voice and she and her daughter Patty used to sing together. Patty was our teacher for you children at Key West for years.

Cousin Hugh died when I was a child and after the marriage of his son George, Cousin Mary Ann left The Riggory for him to live at and she went to town and lived with Patty who had married Thomas Walker Gilmer, and there she died—fell and broke her leg and never recovered from it. This was after I was married. We used to go to The Riggory a great deal but were nothing like so intimate there as at Bentivar.

George Minor and his wife Sally Carr lived at the place and he still lives there, she is dead now.

An amusing incident occurred at Gale Hill when little Peter, one of George's children, was sent by his father to enquire after Mother's health. The boy rode up to Mother who was walking on the veranda and said in his slow drawl, "Papa sent me over to find out how old Cousin Mary Waters is to-day." "Well," replied Mother with asperity, "Tell him I am just one day older than I was at this time yesterday."

Edgemont

This was the home of the Gilmers. Old Mrs. Gilmer lived here when I can first remember. Her daughter was Cousin Lucy Ann who married Cousin Frank Minor and lived at Ridgeway. I don't remember much about old Mrs. Gilmer. Pa and Mother used to go to Edgemont to see her. When she died, she left the place to her grand daughter and namesake Cousin Sally Minor who married Henry Magruder and that family still lives there.

When Cousin Frank died, he divided Ridgeway between his two other daughters Cousin Juliet and Emma and in this way made the portions of the three girls equal.

The Meadows

The little Carrs lived at The Meadows when I can first remember, but it was sold and then they boarded at The Riggory for some time. This was during the war. Cousin James Carr, father of the Brig, died at The Riggory. Later the little Carrs moved to Amherst, and every Christmas all the Gale Hill families in the neighborhood clubbed together and sent them a big box of good things to eat, the Dunlora family sent too—a turkey, ham, sausage, cakes, candy, etc. One year the letter thanking us for the box told us how Cousin Jane Margaret got up at five o'clock and cooked the turkey for breakfast they were so eager to enjoy the feast.

There were six little Carrs, cousins Virginia, Hetty, Elizabeth (who married Mr. Appling), Jane, Margaret and Henry, whose nickname was the Brig. He was a great friend of Rich's—they were in the army together. Their father was James Overton Carr who was the son of Garland Carr of Bentivar, so

they were close kin to that family. Garland Carr's father and mother were John Carr of Bear Castle and Barbara Overton.

The two who used to come to the old neighborhood oftenest were Cousin Hetty and the Brig. The Meadows was later owned by the Michies.

Brookhill and Landsend

Brookhill belonged to my grandfather's, Dabney Minor's, brother James Minor, who is the ancestor of our Holladay and Emerson kin. He was the father of Dr. John Minor who was known as Turkey John because he killed so many wild turkeys.

I do not remember when any of this family lived at Brookhill. The first kin of ours who lived there during my life were Cousin Charles Minor and his family. He was a brother of Cousin John B. and was a splendid and successful doctor in Charlottesville. He had a large practice but his health broke down and he had to give up the practice of medicine, so he bought Brookhill and started a school for boys there. Rich went to school there and so did Jim Carr as Brother had gone to the Ridgeway school.

Cousin Charles did not live very long and after his death, his wife, Cousin Lucy Charles, as we used to call her, kept the school up till the war broke out. Then she sold Brookhill, which was too large and expensive a place for her to afford to keep without the school, and moved to Landsend, miserably poor place down toward Stony Point. Here she and her children lived till she died and the children were scattered.

During the war, I used to often go to Landsend, and we all enjoyed going there for it was "Liberty Hall." Cousin Lucy was a great spoiler and indulger of young folks and allowed us to cut up all the pranks we chose. Her eldest daughter, Cousin Mary Overton Minor, was a splendid musician and played the best dance music I ever heard, but she was a captain and would not play a note unless the dancers danced to suit her and would not stand for any awkwardness or mistakes.

She was one of the plainest people I ever saw, but very smart. She was the one who said to me when Jinny Minor's first child was born and died at birth, "This one was named Boucher and I want you to remember now Margaret, that Boucher is dead." She disliked the old Carr name.

There were lots of young people of all ages at Landsend as at Gale Hill, and Lanty was my chum among the boys and Lou among the girls. Lou is dead now and Lanty lives in Newport, Arkansas. His first wife was Emma Minor of Ridgeway who died long ago, and he is married again I hear to a young woman, a school mate of his daughter's. His daughter, named Lou, is a fine girl and her father's partner in business, so Frank Skipwith told me.

Dunlora

Colonel Samuel Carr, another of Dabney Carr's and Martha Jefferson's sons, was the first owner of Dunlora of whom I ever heard, but I do not remember him as Dunlora was bought in 1846 by Major William B. Dabney, his brother in law, and the Dabneys lived there all of my life.

I used to ride over to Dunlora behind Pa to see two girls who came there to visit, Mildred Perkins and Nonie Wood. They were Major Dabney's nieces. Both of them had brilliant colors and I have often heard Aunt Mal say, "Oh that hectic flush! They are doomed." and they both did die young of consumption.

Old Mrs. Dabney, Major Dabney's mother who was Miss Sally Watson from the Green Springs, lived at Dunlora and so did old Mrs. Gordon, his wife's mother and it seems rather strange that May Moon who now lives at Dunlora has living with her mother and also Mr. Moon's mother, so two grandmothers could easily become a tradition at Dunlora.

Major Dabney was a busy and successful man and used to go to town every day. On his return as he rode up the hill, he would call to one of the negro men in stentorian tones, he had a tremendous voice, "George, bring up the watermelons!"

Often the people at Bentivar, just across the river, would hear him and Cousin Will would say to Pa or Cousin Frank or whoever was there, "Come on, let's go over and get some watermelon." So they would mount their horses and ride over. Major Dabney was a great favorite among the neighborhood gentlemen and Dunlora was a favorite gathering place for them.

Major Dabney's wife was a Miss Gordon. She came to this country from Scotland when she was sixteen in a sailing vessel. The ship was becalmed and the voyage took three months.

She was twice married, her first husband dying when she was very young. She was a very absent minded person and on one occasion was denouncing second marriages most violently, as almost wicked. One of her children remonstrated with her, reminding her that she herself had been married twice. In her enthusiasm against such conduct, she was shocked at the very idea and denied it, but a moment later remembering her first husband's existence she added "Oh Mr. Green! He died so long ago I don't count him."

One day she was reading Shakespeare's plays aloud to her children when dinner was announced. They all went to the table and Mrs. Dabney bowed her head for grace and said solemnly, "All's well that ends well." A shout went up from the company which and greatly shocked her and she rebuked them. "Why Mother, do you know what you said?" asked one of the children. "I suppose I said my usual blessing," replied Mrs. Dabney.

She was an excellent musician and played the piano beautifully, even keeping it up to some extent after she was a grandmother and the Dabney children all inherit her talent for music.

Key West and Windieknowe

A syndicate in London sent over to Virginia in the early days a man named Martin Key to take up lands for them and every Christmas they would have a big company dinner and would drink the health of "Honest Martin over the water."

After a time they sent someone over to look after their interests and it was discovered that "Honest Martin" had taken up all the lands in his own name, so the company found their confidence misplaced.

Key took up a large tract of land in Albemarle between the Southwest Mountains and the Rivanna River. Pa bought a part of this property which included Key's west farm or field, so called from being that part of Key's land farthest west. Pa was also part owner of Rich Mountain which was a part of Key's original tract.

The house at Windieknowe was built by Key who was a convivial gentleman and the big room was used as a dance hall. The Windieknowe tract Grandpa Terrell bought when he sold Prospect Hill to Uncle William Overton and came to Albemarle to be near Mother but Windieknowe was too far from Gale Hill to suit him so he exchanged it for Glen Echo which belonged to Pa.

Aunt Mal named Windieknowe when Grandpa bought it. I never heard what it was called before then.

When Pa took care of Aunt Catherine Reinhart and her children, they lived at Windieknowe, that was when I was a child. After my marriage and on our return from Louisiana, your father and I lived there till the log house at Key West was built when we moved there. Ran¹⁴ and Maisie¹⁵ were my babies when we lived at Windieknowe and Ran was a most beautiful and charming child. One day when I was out, some friends came to see us but found only the children and nurse at home. Ran was eating a slice

¹⁴ John Randolph Bryan (1868–1909)

¹⁵ Mary Waters Bryan (1870–1934)

of bread and jam and when asked what he was doing replied, "Eating my dam and cuss." My friends laughed and teased me for allowing my boy to begin swearing so young. Here also originated the celebrated, "mother may I go to the sherry shee" and "Ranny whiner" stories. The story of Ranny Whiner has stopped many a whine in the younger generation.

After we moved to Key West, Jael and Willie Dabney lived at Windieknowe and Susie was born there. Brother has lived at Windieknowe ever since then.

Rev. Edgar Woods in his "History of Albemarle County" says Windieknowe is one of the oldest houses in the county. In 1732 a grant of 400 acres was made to John Key, head of a family which later owned all the land between the Southwest mountains and the river from Edgemont to the free bridge. John Key continued patenting land up to 1741 when he owned 1200 acres. Martin son of John Key inherited the home and estate of his father, so probably the old house was built by John. It was not called Windieknowe till so named by Miss Malvina Terrell, the aunt of Mrs. William W. Minor of Gale Hill.
ECW

Mrs. Perkins First Visit to Gale Hill¹⁶

Mrs. Perkins told Maisie about the first visit she ever made to Gale Hill. She and her sister Helen and Aunt Mary Launcelot Minor and Miss Lucy Robertson and another girl friend of Mother's whose name she has forgotten all went out to Gale Hill for a visit. Mother went into town to get them in a four horse wagon with hay in the bottom of it and chairs for them to sit in and blankets and shawls to cover with for it was in November and it was chilly.

When they got to the river it was past fording and the wagon could not get across, so the boys from Gale Hill met them on horseback and brought them across on their horses, riding double, a girl behind each boy, carrying their carpet bags in their hands. When they were all across the boys put two girls on each horse and they, each carrying a torch to show the way lead the horses up to the house. It seemed a long distance to the girls but they finally arrived, and the house was beautiful, Mrs. Perkins says, so brilliantly lighted, a blaze of candles and even lamps!!

They danced that night, Grandma and Mother playing for them and they stayed several days amusing themselves with music, singing and dancing.

There was a boy's school at Gale Hill then, established by Grandpa so his sons, Uncle Will, Uncle Rich and Uncle John and younger ones could be taught, and Mrs. Perkins remembered the names of some of the boys who lived there and went to school at that time—two Powell boys, Hunter Wood and Cousin Rache and Cousin Henry Magruder.

She said Mother was the most charming and thoughtful hostess she ever knew, never thinking of herself but always of her guests and doing everything for them and their pleasure. She said Mother played and sang very well and she herself had a sweet voice and sang a great deal and they gave a great deal of pleasure with their singing. In those days everyone was taught music and played well. Now no one plays, all they have for music is the phonograph and the radio, then someone would sit down to the piano and play the accompaniments and all the young people would gather round and sing together.

Mrs. Perkins was Lizzie Watson, her twin sister Helen married Cousin Jimmie Rawlings. Both were great friends of Mother's all their lives and both of them still live in Charlottesville now, October, 1931. The account written above was told Maisie by Mrs. Perkins when she called at The Fall Field this afternoon. All of us Bryans who are still living are here with Maisie now, Evelyn, Patsy, Buck, Belle, Maisie, of course whom we are visiting, and myself. It is a great reunion and we are enjoying it in spite of the fact that Buck is so far from well. ECW 19th October 1931.

¹⁶ circa 1865

Told by Malvina Terrell Minor Cheape.

When I was a small child I was once visiting Gale Hill and was playing behind Aunt Mal's easy chair and probably in the fire too, for the chair was close to it, and I accidentally set fire to her chair in which she sat.

Aunt Mal sniffed and said to Grandma, "Mary Waters I smell smoke." Grandma investigated and found the fire and also me behind the chair, whereupon Aunt Mal exclaimed, "You little vixen!" But she would not let Grandma whip me for it.

Mal is Uncle Will Minor's second daughter and was Aunt Mal's only namesake. ECW