

## Ruth Poteat Bender's Story

Em was a small girl of seven with large, hazel eyes and long black pigtails. She wore a sunbonnet tied under her chin to keep her skin fair. She darted out from the back door of her house and was soon met by a group of black girls who had been her playmates from the time she was a baby. From Em's haste the girls could tell that there was a chore to be done. Soon they were on their way to the pea patch. Should anyone fail to do her share, a scolding would be administered by her young mistress. No task was too difficult for Em. Praise from her father was joy enough.

William Jackson Moore had married Mary Elizabeth McNeill at her father, Hosea's, home at Kelso, North Carolina on December 22, 1840. After their marriage, they lived for a short time on a small plantation in Caswell County, but later moved to a much larger one in Stokes County. Of this union there were nine children with Emily Anne being their second girl.

Em was her father's shadow. Her delight when very young was to ride in front of her father on his horse as he inspected the plantation. Later she would accompany him on her own. Although William Moore employed an overseer, he liked to keep an eye on all the activities of the plantation.

He kept a general store on the plantation and sold his cotton and tobacco in Richmond where he bought supplies for the store. It took many hands to provide food and clothing for a large plantation. Sheep, cattle, hogs, chickens, turkeys, ducks, and guinea hens were raised on the plantation. Crops raised were cotton, corn, wheat, oats, and tobacco with tobacco and cotton being the cash crops. Vegetables were raised in the garden. During the growing season vegetables that were to be used in the winter were stored in the cellar under the house. The plantation was almost self-sufficient. Tea, coffee, sugar, spices, and medical supplies had to be purchased. Also purchased was material for better dresses.

The beef, pork, and lamb were kept in a smokehouse that was always kept locked with a huge key. Em's mother had a basket to store this key and keys to the storage places for meat, flour, and other supplies.

The plantation had shoemakers, blacksmiths, harness makers for the horses and mules, and coopers to make kegs and barrels for the tobacco. Blankets, bedspreads, woolen cloth and carpets were woven from wool sheared from the sheep. Also on hand were wheelwrights to keep carriages and wagons in shape. Cotton was baled by the slaves. All these jobs were done by the slaves who either knew the jobs or were taught by the overseer or a master slave workman. The best looking and least husky slaves were house servants, cooks, nurses, waiters, and personal maids for the young girls. The men were mostly butlers, carriage drivers, and body servants for the men of the family.

There were no sewing machines on the plantation. All the clothing had to be made by hand for the farmhands, house servants, as well as the family. A black seamstress with an able assistant did the cutting of the garments, under the supervision of Em's mother. Another person assigned garments to the appropriate seamstresses who specialized in pants, dresses, shirts, or undergarments. Many seamstresses were needed to make all the clothing needed on the plantation.

Em's mother saw to it that all were well-fed and clothed. She also provided medical treatment for the sick and old, and nursed the sick herself with the aid of a capable black woman. Once, one of the strong field hands had a severe case of typhoid fever. Em's mother nursed him day and night with the assistance of her house slave, Delsey. When Em's mother left the cabin to get some much needed sleep, she told Delsey to watch the patient carefully. He was not to eat any solid food. When Delsey left him for a few short moments, he got up out of bed and found some cornbread in the cabin. He ate it, and in a few days he was dead. It was a shock to Em, as well as to the others, because he was the father of her favorite playmate.

When Em and her brother William were quite young, they decided to frighten Joe, one of the slaves, who had been courting a slave on another plantation. Em and William dressed as ghosts, using pillows on sticks to make themselves look taller. They hid in a graveyard near their home. Joe always walked fast and whistled with bravado as he neared the graveyard. Em and William had hidden among the gravestones. As soon as they heard Joe whistling, they began to rise up moaning and groaning. Joe ran home screaming about the "haunt." He soon began courting a girl on another plantation.

Life was pleasant and exciting at home, except for the time she spent in school with her brothers and sisters under the watchful eye of the governess. It was too confining for such an active spirit as Em. Her parents, Mary and William Moore, realized she needed a broader education than the plantation afforded, so they decided to send her to a boarding school.

The Salem Female Academy was a Moravian boarding school established in 1722. It was the oldest girls' school in the entire south. The day she left for school was a sad, but exciting day for Emily. It was sad, because of leaving her family and friends, but exciting to be off with her father in the carriage for a long journey. Her trunk was strapped onto the back of the carriage. The preparations for her departure were many, because she would not return home the entire year. She was entered in the Academy on August 17, 1861. Plain, wholesome living was the rule in the early days of Salem Academy. Pupils and teachers wore calico cotton dresses which they made for themselves. In the common dormitory the alcoves for sleeping were marked off by white curtains. From their sleeping and dressing quarters on the second floor the girls descended to the sitting room on the first floor. From the sitting room the girls descended to the basement, where breakfast and all other meals were served. The girls returned to the sitting room from the basement to study. They sat at long tables illuminated by candlelight with one candle for every four girls. The day was not all study. Housekeeping chores, hymns, and country picnics relieved the monotony. In their free time some of the girls tended their gardens. The principal had given each girl a plot of land. Here they planted the wild flowers that they found when they were out walking.

At Christmas, New Year's, and Easter there were solemn Moravian religious services with special prayers, hymns, and processions through the town. Easter brought a solemn sunrise service. As part of the celebration, Moravian buns, sugar cakes, coffee, and tea were served. Years later, at the age of seventy-five, married and accompanied by her children and grandchildren, Em attended an Easter sunrise service at Salem. It was her last.

All of the girls in her alcove liked Em for her wit, kindness, and generosity. Em's stay at the school was interesting and instructive, but typically, she was always doing things that got her in trouble. She was not used to such strict discipline at home. Em, being more venturesome than the other girls at her alcove, would sneak out after "lights out" and visit a brother or sister house. These small shops were run by single Moravian brothers or sisters. One night she went to the brother house to purchase apples. She tied them in a ruffle of her petticoat. The Moravian brother heard someone coming and quickly hid Em in an empty brown sugar barrel and closed the lid. The tutoress was out looking for Em, because she was not in her alcove when the tutor had checked. As she walked into the store, she asked if Miss Moore was in there. The brother answered, "You do not see her, do you?" When Em arrived with her apples and other purchases, her friend pulled her in the window and the tutoress never discovered where she had been.

When required to do some embroidery, her teacher insisted that she rip it all out and do it over again. Em threw it in the fire, and received a black mark for conduct.

When she heard that the brothers of some of her friends had been killed in the Civil War, Em decided that she wanted to be home with her family. However, her parents felt she would be better off at Salem, so they refused her. She knew that if she were ill, someone, perhaps her father, would come for her and take her home. Since she was healthy, Em had to devise a way to become ill. A self-inflicted case of poison ivy came to the rescue. It was an awful case that spread to her eyes. Her father drove all the way from Stokes to Salem to take her home. She was a very sick girl. Even with all of the home remedies, and special care, it was a long time before she was well again. After her recovery from the poison ivy outbreak, she was allowed to stay home with her family.

She helped her mother with all the duties of a mistress of many slaves. The sewing she hated to do, especially because once the seamstress made her rip a seam out three times. She did her old trick of angrily throwing the garment in the fire. She rushed out of the room, and slammed the door behind her, but her mother marched her back. She never tried that trick again.

Each girl in the Moore family had a personal maid, and the girls vied with each other to have the one with the best appearance. Em had a new brown velvet dress that was especially becoming to her fair complexion. The dress was her pride and joy, but she gave it to her maid, so that her maid would look better than her sister's maid. Of course, her mother did not condone that.

When the Civil war started, Em's father was too old to go to war and his oldest son too young to enlist. Her father became an enrolling officer for the army. With family and plantation to care for, that was the next best thing to being a soldier. The black men called the enrolling officers "patter rollers" and stayed close to home, because if the "patter rollers" got them, they would be sent to war.

On the plantation and other places there were war rumors heard about General George Stoneman's Raiders ravishing the countryside in both southwestern Virginia and North Carolina. Even the slaves were upset about it. Em's mother was so worried about the rumor that she insisted that her husband hide in the woods. She knew that if the Yankees found the enrolling officer, they would put

him in prison. Finally, he agreed to do so. He knew one of his faithful blacks would take care of his needs.

Several weeks after Em's father had hidden himself, Stoneman's raiders arrived. One of the slaves spotted a Yankee soldier coming down the road and let out a yell. Soon the raiders were swarming all over the place. The Yankees ripped all the mattresses open, because they were looking for money. They opened all the cupboards looking for applejack liquor. In Em's room a soldier opened a drawer where she kept a large doll her father had bought for her in Richmond. She had kept it since she was a very small girl. The Yankee soldier rushed down the steps yelling as loud as he could, "I ain't-a-going to stay in any house where they keep dead babies!" Em tripped him, then he scrambled up and ran away as fast as he could to catch up to the other soldiers. Another soldier went into the kitchen where Mammy was cooking a ham, rolled his coat into a pad on his left arm, stuck his saber into the ham, and took it out of the pot. He put the ham on his coat and ran away while eating it. One of the raiders burst into the henhouse, scattering the cackling chickens to the four winds. Em followed him in and told him the eggs were rotten. He filled his pockets full of eggs that the chickens had been sitting upon, and then Em pelted him with eggs. The raider left in a hurry as she shouted, "I told you those were sitting hens."

Finally, a lieutenant with the raiders sat on the porch until the last Yankee soldier left. It was kind of him to protect the ladies, but by that time, the raiders had taken everything except an old blind grandfather mule, and the silver, which had been buried.

Hard times came. Most of the young, healthy slaves left, leaving the sick and old to be cared for by the Moores. Em and her whole family labored from dawn to dark in the fields every day. Not one of the former slaves on the plantation complained of hardships. Each, old, young, healthy, or ill, did all in his power to help. It was wonderful knowing they were free, but still preferred to stay. For them it had always been home. They planted what seeds were left, and spun and weaved whatever fibers they could find. For now the clothes they had would have to suffice. Later, bedspreads would be cut and made into dresses. There were a few chickens, scattered all over the plantation by the Yankee raiders. These chickens were finally corralled. Their eggs helped, but finding food for the chickens was difficult. Little grain was left by the soldiers, so crops for the table were few. After being accustomed to the abundance of the plantation, it was difficult to adjust to austerity. No wonder the family and former slaves thought of the soldiers as "Damn Yankees." There were some turnips and potatoes left in the gardens, as well as sweet potatoes. The sweet potatoes were made into flour used for sweet potato biscuits. There was a milk cow that had fled to the woods because the raiders had made so much noise. She did not give enough milk to provide for all, but the butter she gave helped. The Moores were pleased to discover that several hogs had followed the cow into the woods. Finally, they survived that awful time with closer ties to each other and gratefulness to their former slaves.

On the day Lee surrendered Em's father purchased a slave from another plantation, because one of his men wanted to marry the young girl. He never would separate families. He thought, even with all he knew about the war, that Lee would never surrender.

After the war, the Moore family was finally able to accumulate something once again. The two older girls, Virginia and Em, were able to stay the summer season at Piedmont Springs, a lovely spa. There were friends from all over the state, and quite a few beaux for the girls.

Captain James Poteat married his first wife, Isabella Roberts, and they lived on a plantation near Yanceyville. They had five children: James Preston, F. Lindsay, John Miles, Sarah Elizabeth (Betty), and Virginia. James Preston, the youngest, was named for his father.

Betty was very pretty and charming and led a happy life on the plantation with servants at her beck and call. When she became a young lady, she had many beaux. One, a Mr. James Lindsay, from Louisa County, Virginia came courting several times before he persuaded her to marry him and leave her interesting friends and family. When Mr. Lindsay came courting Betty, he brought a retinue of slaves who stayed on the plantation as long as he did.

When war was declared, Lindsay Poteat enlisted in the First North Carolina Volunteers, Company H-13. John Miles Poteat was a sophomore at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, when there were rumors of war. He left Chapel Hill to become a cadet at the North Carolina Military Institute at Charlotte. He became lieutenant in the First Regiment of North Carolina Volunteers, and later served in the Third North Carolina Regiment. His commanders complimented him several times. James Preston was too young to enlist. Lindsay was twenty-three when he enlisted and John Miles was twenty-one. Lindsay was wounded in the heroic battle of Reams Station and died of his wounds. His body servant, Uncle Jack, who had cared for him during the war, washed his clothes, even stole food and cooked for him. Upon Lindsay's death Uncle Jack stole a wagon and put his body in it and drove all the way to Forest Home, where Lindsay was buried. John Miles Poteat served throughout the Civil War. His body servant cared for him throughout the war. John contracted tuberculosis and returned to Forest Home, where he lived until 1869. He is buried in the family plot at Forest Home next to his brother, Lindsay.

Many years later, the children of Helen and Lawrence Stallings, who lived at Forest Home said the often could hear Johnny Miles pacing in his room. They said they heard his boots stomping and his sword clanking at his side.

Sometime after Isabella Roberts Poteat's death, Captain James Poteat married Julia Anness McNeill, the youngest of Hosea and Isabella McNeill's clan. They were married October 17, 1855. Her father willed her \$1480; one slave, Zillman; one slave girl, Eliza; a pianoforte; bed; and other furniture. There were five McNeill girls altogether and each one was bequeathed a large sum of money to be administered by her husband, who was only allowed to use the money as his wife directed. Hosea was quite a fore thinking parent, because at that time in North Carolina, the law gave the husband the right to all property.

In 1856, the year of the big blizzard in North Carolina, Julia McNeill Poteat had gone to Kelso, to the home of her parents, to await the birth of her child. On October 20<sup>th</sup> William Louis Poteat was born. He was named for the husband of her sister, Mary Elizabeth McNeill, who had married William Jackson Moore in 1840. He was named Louis for Louis Mason, the eldest son of the pastor of the Baptist Church in Yanceyville. William Louis became a very famous teacher, prophet and the president of Wake Forest

College. The second child of James and Julia Poteat was Ida Isabella, who headed the Art Department at Meredith College in Raleigh from the time of its inception until her death at eighty years. She was a wonderful person and beloved by all who knew her.

As conditions improved in Caswell County after the troops had left, the Poteat family was in reduced circumstances, as were other planters. They moved from Forest Home into Yanceyville. Preston had been an officer in the militia during the Civil War. Preston secured a job in a dry goods store, so that his meager earnings could help the family. Later he went to Wake Forest College. He was a good student, excelling in math and penmanship. He joined the Euzulian Debating Society. Later William Louis Poteat, his half-brother, joined the same society. Preston was chosen Senior orator and later became their honored president.

The house the Poteats owned became the Poteat Hotel, which competed with the Kerr Hotel. The Kerrs and the Poteats were related. Because Yanceyville was the county seat, it was quite a lively place during Court week with the comings and goings of important judges and lawyers. It seemed as if the Poteats were able to secure all of the best judges and lawyers because of the charms of the Captain and his lovely wife, while Kerr's establishment had to be content with lesser ones.

Once when Preston and Em were courting, Preston's younger half-brother, Edwin, hid behind the sofa. When Preston kissed her, Edwin shouted, "I'll tell on you unless you pay me." Preston did, of course. Edwin was always full of fun and made fun for others. Later he became a famous Baptist minister, but not the fire-and-brimstone kind. He was happy in his Christian life and wanted others to be also. James Preston Poteat and Emily Anne Moore were married December 13, 1873, after he finished college. They were married despite an earlier letter she had written to a friend, Powell Ash, in which she said she was waiting for her darling, brown-eyed Johnny Deal to recover from his war injuries. She had also written to Preston, but a mix-up in the letters resulted in one from Preston absolving her from her promise to marry him. Stated in courtly terms, but in a brokenhearted manner, he expressed his sorrow to her. He had thought she loved him as much as he did her. Emily cherished that letter until her death.

A picture taken to commemorate their wedding shows Preston seated and Emily standing behind him with her hand on his shoulder. The dress and the hat she wore in that picture were her "second day" outfit. After the wedding dress, there were special dresses for each day following the wedding.

After their marriage, they went to live in a small house on a plantation Preston had inherited near Forest Home, his father's plantation. On the place there was a grist mill which he and his assistant operated. With all of Em's accomplishments she had not learned to cook, either at school or at home. She burned the bacon. Her biscuits were too hard to eat, and even the eggs were not properly cooked. Preston survived her awful attempts at cooking without complaining. Before their first child arrived, Em learned the art of plain cooking. After that, Preston said that no one could make biscuits that were as good as hers.

After waiting five long years almost in despair, Preston and Em's first child arrived on a blustery day, March 10, 1878. She was a lovely, dainty little thing. Because she was the second grandchild in the Poteat family and lived near the Poteat grandparents, she was adored. The first grandchild, a girl also, had been born to Preston's sister, Betty Lindsay. The Lindsays lived far away in Virginia, so the grandparents did not see her often. Preston and Em named the baby Lillie May, and two years later Ernest Lindsay arrived. Two years later Ida Purefoy was born. She was named Ida for a devoted aunt, and Purefoy for Em's adored friend. Then followed the birth of Bess McNeill and two years later, James Kenneth.

On a cold February night in 1887, the Poteat's house caught on fire. Out in the country with no help, the house burned down. My mother grabbed one month old baby Kenneth, wrapped him in a blanket, and put him under a tree far away from the smoke. She then helped to save what belongings she could. Now the family was homeless. Perhaps Kenneth was fascinated by the brightness of the flames, but he never whimpered.

The Poteats had to find a new home. There was not enough money to build, but fortunately, a bachelor cousin had a plantation not far away, and kindly let the family move in with him. Here Ruth Isabella was born in 1888. With my arrival the plantation house was much too small. Now we had to find a new home, and so moved to Yanceyville.

Yanceyville was an interesting village with interesting people. My mother often took me to visit the Robertsons. There was one married sister who did not pay attention to her father's statement that there were no men worthy of his daughters. She had two children, a boy and a girl. In addition to the married sister, there were four maiden ladies. The family had been wealthy before the Civil War. They had lovely furniture, lots of land, and lovely jewelry. Some of the jewelry had the family crest done in pearls. After the Civil War, they would not sell even an acre of their land, even though the sale would have made life much easier for them. It was kept intact for the nephew and niece.

The maiden Robertsons were Miss Sally, Miss Lucy, Miss Georgia, and Miss Liza Ann, the youngest. When I was a child, I thought they were rather strange. As each one finished her meal, she would leave the dining room, wash her dishes, and replace them in the cupboard. Each in turn did the same. Every time I visited them Miss Lucy would never forget to ask me, "How does your curiosity 'seegashiate' today?" Of course, being young, I did not know what to say. All the Robertsons were deathly afraid of storms, especially ones with thunder and lightning. Each would go to her bed, pull the covers over her head, and stay until the storm had passed. Each sister had her own four-poster bed so high from the floor that three steps were needed to reach the beds. Sometimes they were in such a hurry that they would trip and fall into the bed. Miss Lucy sat on the front porch and rocked and rocked. That is all I ever saw her do.

There were several stores in Yanceyville, including one that I especially remembered. It was the only hat shop in the village and stood where the two streets converged. The hat shop had three steps leading up to the first and only floor. A window on either side of the steps was used for display of the hats. In the shop was a long counter with a glass showcase. Here was kept veiling by the yard, ribbons

of all colors, artificial flowers, and long bright hatpins. One hatpin was shaped like a butterfly that had wings that moved when the hat moved. A thick curtain divided the sales area from the workroom. In the backroom special tools of the trade were kept. There were needles, thread, thimbles, scissors, elastic for children's hat, pins, artificial flowers, more trimmed hats, and other untrimmed hats. The fascination of the shop was the proprietor, Miss Mary Lockett, a maiden lady. She must have been fifty years old, but to a child of five, she seemed ancient. She was very short and squat, and dressed in old-fashioned clothes. She had blue twinkly eyes and white hair. She smiled often, which gave her quite a pleasant expression. I did not want her to put elastic in my sailor hat, but she told my mother it was a precaution against the wind blowing my hat away. It would stay only on the back of my head.

In Yanceyville on Sunday afternoons during bad winter weather, all the neighbor children congregated at our house, sprawling on the floor before the big fire. They would listen while my father read Bible stories. Each child had a turn to choose his favorite Old Testament hero. Mine was Joseph and his coat of many colors.

When I was six and still living in Yanceyville, my friends and I made what we called memory strings. They were made of many buttons laced on a string. Each button was a gift from a girlfriend, parent, friend of my mother, and others. The longer the string, the better, and my string was two yards long. Each button had a "kinda" story including where it came from and who gave it to me. The button from your very favorite friend was the one you loved best. We always remembered which button was given by whom.

We wore the memory strings around our necks, often wound around three or four times. We competed to see who had the longest string, the prettiest string or buttons, or who had the button from the farthest place. Think of how scornful a child of today would be of such a string. I am sure that had I kept my string, I would have found some valuable buttons. A friend of mine paid \$500 for a Washington button.

Several years later my father bought the local newspaper, the Milton Times. He was also at one time the mayor of Milton. We moved to a lovely antebellum house several miles from Milton. Before the Civil War, this beautiful old place had belonged to a family named Stamps. It had been vacant for some years. Since there were no Stamps to be found who had any connection with the place, it was sold for taxes, and Mr. Angle had purchased and restored it before my father rented it.

In front of the house there were huge wrought iron gates for the carriages. Inside these gates were smaller one for people. From the gates an avenue of tall trees ended a few feet away from the broad portico. Four large ionic columns supported the portico up to the second story. On entering the house from the portico, there was on the left a large hall and a semicircular ballroom with two French windows on either side. The small room at the end of the ballroom was used as a powder room. A lovely chandelier with prisms hung from the center of the ceiling. When the Stamps lived in the house, the ballroom had a grand piano, many chairs, and loveseats pushed against the wall. Surely there must have been more musical instruments in this house. On the right of the hall was a large parlor with a huge fireplace, high ceilings, and four French windows, two on either side. Here we always had our



Christmas tree, which touched the ceiling. The Christmas trees had been cut from trees growing on the place. Instead of electric lights, the tree was illuminated by candles clamped to the branches. We made many ornaments for the tree. We covered nuts with tinfoil from cigarette papers that we had saved all year. We would string cranberries and popcorn, but could not buy tinsel for the tree. A stepladder was nearby for adults to replace the burned out candles on the tree, because the candles only lasted a short time. How fortunate we were not to have had a fire resulting from all those candles.

I remember that room well because it was under one of the French windows in the side yard that I sat upon a copperhead snake. With a book in my hand and not looking, I sat down on the ground and felt something move under me. As I hurriedly jumped up, to my horror, I discovered the snake. I yelled, and out jumped a live frog that the snake had started to swallow, but had not had time to digest.

The stairway at the right of the hall on the first floor led to a hall and two huge bedrooms on the second floor. They both had built-in wardrobes and four windows. This part of the house was made of brick. From the front hall on the first floor three steps descended to a colonnade, which was an enclosed hall about eight feet long and six feet wide. This colonnade was constructed of wood. There were six windows on each side with curved frames at the top.

This colonnade connected the front of the house to the back of the house. The back section was also made of wood. At the entrance to the back section of the house was a large hall. On the right of the hall were the kitchen, pantry, and other storage rooms. On the left was a large dining room with lovely windows and a deep fireplace. Off the dining room was a small storage room. From this dining room we could see the top of our neighbors' house two miles away. Off the hall at the left was a staircase ascending to the second floor bedrooms. I do not remember how many bedrooms there were, but it must have been a large number, because we always had room for all the relatives who came to stay.

At the back of the hall on the second floor was an attic stairway with a trapdoor that led to the room. On the roof was what looked like a widow's walk. We wondered why a widow's walk would be built so far from the sea. The enclosed space of the widow's walk was lined with tin. We were told that when the house was built, it was filled with water in which goldfish swam. As a child I wondered how the fish had been fed and watered. Perhaps with the many slaves it was not too difficult to tend them, or maybe there was a mechanical device to care for the fish.

Our backyard sloped down to the railroad tracks and across the tracks to the Dan River. On the banks we kept a rowboat. Often my father or one of the children would set a net in the evening. What fun in the morning to pull in the net and see the catch, including several kinds of fish, besides catfish! We even caught turtle, which was good eating.

At the rear of the house was a lovely flower garden, our pride and joy. Before the Civil War, it took several gardeners to keep it in shape. Box bushes were pruned into circles, oblongs, triangles and other shapes. Inside each shape a different flower bloomed.

Behind the flower garden there was a large space covered with gravel. Here we built our stove for our playhouse. We built our stove from brick with tin for shelves and old gutter pipes were used for a chimney. Mother gave us all the supplies we needed for cooking. Scrambled eggs, bacon, and biscuits comprised our best menu. Our biscuits were cut from an old snuffbox that had belonged to our mammy. It was just the right size for our small biscuits. We did a lot of cleaning to keep it from tasting like snuff, though. Not far from the store was a two-story house with two rooms each up and down. If the weather was too bad for cooking outdoors, we used the old slave house.

Cooking was not our only fun. A river branch flowed through the grounds. Here we caught tadpoles and minnows to use as bait when we fished with a bent pin for a hook. We watched dragonflies skim over the stream and we dammed up the stream to make a wading pool. It was not large enough for swimming. On the banks above the branch was a large growth of stately pines whose needles must have been dropping on the ground beneath for eons. The needles made a wonderful bed. It was fun to lie on my back and watch the clouds scud past. I imagined the clouds were elephants, tigers and other wondrous things. We enjoyed sliding on the pine needles that had been dropping on the banks for so long. We had to be careful to miss the pine trees and to avoid landing in the water below.

Because there were railroad tracks near our backyards, hoboes and tramps, sometimes two a day, would appear at the house. They had marked our house with a symbol that indicated that there would always be food given at the house. As they rode the rails, when the trains slowed at Milton Station, it was easy for them to walk up the tracks and climb the hill to our house. My mother never turned a wanderer away. She or the cook placed their food on the kitchen table. Sometimes one offered to cut some wood for us, which my mother appreciated.

Once an organ grinder hobo arrived with a cute little monkey, Jocko, dressed up in a suit with red wool pants, blue jacket, and a tiny red cap. He took the cap off and held it out for a penny every time the organ grinder stopped playing his tune. The monkey was so cute that we gave him all the pennies we had been saving for Christmas. My sister, Bess, was so captivated with Jocko, the monkey, that she threatened to save her small allowance to buy her own monkey. We teased her about making her living with a monkey, but she only laughed and said he was cute.

The monkey was so cute and graceful that when the dancing bear came, we thought he was an awful, hulking thing. The bear's handler had attached a chain to the bear's collar. Somehow he managed to hold onto the chain while he played, of all things, a violin. A guitar would seem more appropriate to me.

The children were all interested in all who came our way. Years later I wondered how my mother had the courage to take in the hoboes. We children were always waiting for the "King of the Hoboes" to arrive. Needless to say, we were disappointed.

A real peddler came to our house. He was a Frenchman named Boss. How he managed his huge pack was a marvel to the children. The pack contained fine laces, buttons, lovely ribbons, special pieces, even yard goods. He managed to get the huge pack on his back by squatting down on the floor

putting each arm in a strap, and then rising like a weight lifter. After stopping at our house several times and talking about his family, how he liked to cook, and how hard it was to be away so long; my mother would let him stay overnight. She would let him cook noodles, his specialty. I do not remember what else he cooked, but our cook was incensed. She did not like having a foreigner in the kitchen. He taught us a few French words and phrases with which we astonished our friends.

On summer afternoons my father took all the children for long walks down the railroad tracks and across the trestles to a place called Mineral Springs. At the Springs there was a huge rock we called Rock House. It was about six feet with toe holes which we could use to scramble up to the top. In the center of the rock was an opening with a clear pool of water, and on either side was room for several children to stand. One side of the rock was raised and looked like a couch. On these walks my father talked of birds and flowers.

On one of the Sunday afternoon walks my brother was caught on the trestle when a train was coming. No train was scheduled at that time, and fortunately, it was not a long one. My brother, Kenneth, was able to swing down to hold on the sides of the trestle until the train passed. The suspense was horrible.

On another walk our beloved puppy, Leo, followed us. He was not quick enough and was caught by a train. He lost his rear left leg and had to be destroyed. Never again did I want a dog.

In the apple orchard there was a gnarled and ancient apple tree with one particular large, flat limb. This was my favorite place, stretched out on the limb. I would bring a pillow from the house to use for my head. I would read for hours. Leaves were protection from the sun. I could eat the apples, which I did shortly after the blossoms fell on until they were really ripe and good to eat. I must have had stomachaches from the green apples, but they have been forgotten because of the pleasure of eating apples while reading.

Once when she was only five, my sister, Nez, had an "old fashioned fit". Even after the doctor had arrived, we were frightened out of our wits. The doctor was a puzzled as our mother. Finally I remembered that she had eaten greengage plums. The doctor finally fixed Nez and the family relaxed.

While we lived in the Stamps house, we were visited for the summer by my step-grandmother, who we called Gransy; my Aunt Ida, who we called Nida; Pressie, my cousin; Mrs. Purefoy, a special friend of my mother; and Hubert, a cousin we adored. Mrs. Purefoy was Hubert's grandmother on the maternal side, and Gransy his grandmother on the paternal side. Gransy's trunks were always interesting. She was a great one for embroidering and making Battenburg lace. In the room she occupied she would open her trunk and show us all of the things she had made at Oxford Female Academy. In the autumn she stayed at the school with her daughter, Ida, who taught at the school.

Ida was good at entertaining us with charades, games, tableaux, contests and reading to us. Once she frightened me out of my wits. She had Pressie and two of my older sisters dress as Bluebeard's wives. She cut three holes in a sheet which was attached to a wire and stretched across the hall. In front of the tableau were chairs that filled the rest of the hall. Behind the sheet were the girls'

bodies. In each hole a girl's head appeared with their hair pinned to the sheet around her head, and from the neck blood streamed.

Hubert was good at reading Uncle Remus. He put so much expression into each tale. His dialect was wonderful whatever story he was reading.

Since the antebellum house was two miles from Milton, one carriage was not enough to carry all the family and relatives to church. So Aunt Nida not only entertained us, but also led devotional services on Sundays. One Sunday she read John 1:1 to us. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." I was bewildered by this passage, too young to understand, too shy to ask for explanation. I am sure Nida explained, but I did not absorb it. It must have been years before I really understood. This verse is one I never forgot.

A black man who lived in Milton some years ago said that if the Lord Jesus Christ came down to earth, Milton would be the only place on earth he would recognize. Milton was once a town which flourished in trade and boasted of its beautiful women, its plug tobacco, and its discriminating aristocracy, in that order. The Donoho's sometimes called Donohue's, were our nearest neighbors, and one of the oldest families in the area. George III gave the Saunders family thousands of acres of land, extending as far away as Mississippi. The Saunders were great-grandparents of the Donohos. Dolly Madison was born Dorothea Payne and came from Guilford County in North Carolina. The Donoho's great-grandmother, Mary Payne, was a half sister of Dolly Madison.

The Donoho's grandfather moved to the area in 1822. He had three hundred slaves and over thirty thousand acres of land extending from Milton through Tennessee to Mississippi, half of which he never saw. Romulus Saunders was Minister to Spain under President James Polk. Romulus and his son owned Longwood, named after Napoleon's home in St. Helena. Romulus had heard that Senator Crawford, a candidate for Vice President of the United States, was to be in Milton. Because of that, Romulus and his son traded lovely Longwood with a relative, Dr. Garland, for Fairwood, the most pretentious house in Milton at the time. He did this in order to entertain and impress the senator. The Saunders gave Dr. Garland fifteen hundred acres of land to boot. After entertaining the senator, who did not become Vice President, they traded Dr. Garland back for their home. Dr. Garland kept the extra land.

The Donoho's were two sisters, Ellen and Miss Isabella. They were the only Donohos living at Longwood when I was living near Milton. The sisters were great horsewomen, and often rode over to see my mother. They wore the same habits they had before the Civil War, and always rode sidesaddle. I loved to hear them talk of their family. They had a brother, G.G. Donoho, but I can scarcely remember him. They had a married sister, Mrs. Shepherd, who lived in St. Louis, and visited them in the summer with her two children.

At Longwood in February 1941, in the yard was a red oak tree, which was claimed to be the oldest this side of the Rockies. This tree was measured by government managers and said to be thirty-one feet, eleven inches in circumference at a foot from the ground. The Donohos in 1941 still had lovely antiques, furniture, and silver. They owned a hand-hammered soup ladle made in the Milton silver shop

from silver dollars. The antique furniture was made mostly by Tom Day, a West Indian, who came to Milton in 1715. Many homes in Milton had lovely mahogany furniture made by him in his cabinet shop.

From our dining room window one night after supper, we saw a bright glow. Soon we found that the woods about a quarter mile from our house were on fire started by lightning. Our family gathered on either side of the fireplace at the two large windows to watch. Fortunately, the wind was blowing away from us, but toward the Donohos. We feared it would reach lovely Longwood. When the fire had burned about a half mile of woods, a sudden downpour occurred. What a blessing! At first this rain seemed only to halt the flames which were shooting skyward, but it slowly put out the fire. There were no firemen in Milton at that time.

My older sister, Lillie May, was reading the history of the French Revolution at the time. She was so interested in Madame Defarge knitting and the falling heads of the guillotine that she would not stop to look at the fire. But our exclamations finally drew her to the window. The book she was reading was at least three inches thick with red binding. It took her the rest of the winter to finish it.

Mr. Angle, who owned the Stamps place, sold it and the new owners wanted to move into it. Shortly after the new owners moved into the Stamps place, it burned down. Year later I visited the old grounds and garden to see if any children's ghosts lingered at that happy place. We had to find a new house, and because my father owned the Milton newspaper, it was convenient to live in town. We moved into a very odd house.

The "Odd House's" front door was only a few steps from the sidewalk where there was a hitching post. A huge marble block was used as a steppingstone to enter the front hall. On the left side as one entered the hall was a lovely curving staircase. Beyond the staircase was a long drawing room and a kitchen with pantry and storage rooms. These were the only rooms on the first floor.

At the top of the staircase was a large hall. Radiating from it were the parlor, two bedrooms, and another short hall with a staircase ascending to the third floor, which held the other bedrooms. One very long room was used as a playroom. Here we played games, dolls, and dress-up. We had some dolls that were made before the Civil War. Often in later years, I wished our mother had not allowed us to wreck them. From the third floor we could slide down the banister to the second floor, and then to the first floor.

While we lived here, my brother, Kenneth, kept complaining that he felt tired. My mother thought he was using it as an excuse to stay home from school and was very upset with him. Finally, Dr. Adams said Kenneth had walking pneumonia. He was allowed to stay home, not in bed, but resting in a chair. No doubt today's doctors would have diagnosed Kenneth's trouble as mononucleosis. The only thing Kenneth wanted to eat was beaten biscuits. Neither my mother nor the cook made them. Sam Hunt, the most handsome young man in town, lived half a block from our house. Hearing that biscuits were all little Kenneth would eat, Sam each day brought him a tray with beaten biscuits and other tempting food. He did this for as long as Kenneth was sick.

While we lived in the Odd House, there was a bridge over the Dan River to Virginia. Gossip had it that a few miles from the river a wealthy man and his wife lived in a beautiful house. They often went to New York City where the wife had her face enameled. It was very delicately tinted with enamel. Every year she and her husband went to New York City to have her face redone. I have seen this woman in a carriage with her husband and her attendant dressed in livery. As a child I thought she looked lovely, but when I grew up, I could not believe anyone could manage an enameled face.

We did not live in the Odd House very long because another, more desirable one became available, although it was two miles from Milton. It was called Richmond Place. Here was a front yard with so many oak trees I never could count them. The yard was several feet from the big road. Although the house was large, it only had two stories, but we had a carriage house for a playhouse and a real icehouse. The icehouse was built over a huge round pit dug in the backyard and filled with sawdust. The two sides of the ice house met at the top. It was shingled. We had fun climbing to the top and sliding down the sides. There was a pond about a mile away that froze in winter. The ice was cut into huge blocks with a saw and then hauled by wagon to the icehouse. In winter the ice almost reached the front door of the icehouse, but by late summer, a ladder had to be used to reach the ice. We kept butter, milk, iced tea, melons, berries, cherries, peaches, and peas cool in the icehouse., There were peach, pear, and apple orchards, as well as berries, cherries, and grapes.

From the large front yard there were three steps up to a broad front porch. From a wide hallway there was a parlor on the left and a stairway to several upstairs bedrooms. A narrow hallway extended from the front hall to the living room with a fireplace. From the back of the living room a covered porch extended to the end of the house. Off the porch were the dining room, kitchen and pantry. Three steps led from the porch down to the side yard. The yard had flowers everywhere. There were separate orchards for peaches, apples, and pears. In between were plum and cherry trees. In the back was a large garden with melons, vegetables, and berries. We lived here until we moved to Durham.

At this time my oldest sister, Lillie May, was at Oxford Female Academy. Ernest was at Wake Forest College. Foy was at private school in Milton. That left Bess, Kenneth, Nez and me with lessons at home. There were many books at home and we all read a lot. I am sure we read indiscriminately, but we had no formal education. Because my father decided it was time that the children at home should have the advantage of a good public education, we moved to Durham in 1900.

After we moved to Durham, there lived near us a family of teenage girls. We knew they were not wealthy, but the family was always very well dressed, especially the girls. We often wondered how they managed. At that time taffeta petticoats were the thing, because of the rustle of the material. The girls seemed to have several taffeta petticoats each. My sisters and I each owned only one. We later discovered that on each petticoat the girls had sewed ruffles of crepe paper!

We had a laundress who did not live in our place, but took the soiled clothes home. She washed, ironed, and then brought the clothes back at the end of the week, I think because I sent my

clothes out to be laundered and would not get them back for a week, was the reason that even after we had washing machines, I still thought we needed more underthings than we did.

The oldest daughter of this laundress had a very long name. We, as children, would ask the mother to recite the name for us. The name was Clarsey Adelaide David Elizabeth Becky Ann Pacy Columbus Mandy Hallow Louis Any Bright Day Good Lord Barksdale. Her mother would say, "Mrs. Teat, dat and all. I forget the rest." Barksdale was the surname.

My mother was unusual for her time and place. She always found time to read any and everything that came her way. I heard her say that when one of the babies was restless, she would rock the cradle with one foot while reading. She would often read all night with the fire almost out and the house cold.

She was a real story teller. She made stories like "Sinbad the Sailor" or "The Adventures of Daniel Boone" seem vivid. Her bedtime stories often came from The Youths Companion, but we preferred her telling us stories to reading them, because of her wonderful way of telling them. Her grandchildren would leave whatever play they were engaged, if she would tell them a story.

My mother kept up her interest in reading. After reading or telling bedtime stories to all her children or grandchildren, she read for her own pleasure. Even in her old age she kept up her reading. She read twelve volumes of history through twice before her death. Her spelling was as bad as mine, but there were few words she could not define accurately. She had a rare wit and was always interested in world affairs. She predicted long before the war with Japan that someday we would have trouble with them. She did not live to see it, but when it happened, it brought back to me that she had kept up with things all her life.