

Antebellum Reminiscences of Alexandria, Virginia
Extracted from the Memoirs of Mary Louisa Slacum Benham

Transcribed and Organized
by
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The information presented in this document has been extracted from the manuscript of the memoirs of Mary Louisa Slacum Benham, which can be found in box number 62 at the Barrett Library on Queen Street in Alexandria, Virginia. Mary Louisa Slacum Benham's memoirs, written circa 1880, reflect back on her life in Alexandria, Virginia, as well as her marriage and her travels throughout the United States. The intent of examining this manuscript was to focus on Mary Louisa's reminiscences of Alexandria and to extrapolate any information pertinent to the history of the town; thus the date of the excerpts included here are largely concentrated in the period from 1800 to 1840.

Although the manuscript is not presented here in its entirety, the most relevant passages have been extrapolated verbatim and are shown in quotes. Summaries are provided for context and direction for anyone seeking additional information on those subjects. The text has been divided into the folders in which the manuscript is organized at Alexandria Library - Local History/Special Collections. Other topical headings are provided as a finder aid for this document.

While Ms. Benham's memoirs have been previously published (*Recollections of Old Alexandria and Other Memories of Mary Louisa Slacum Benham 1802 – 1884* by Elizabeth Jane Stark, 1972), this document seeks to clarify specific wording and to organize the information for those interested in Alexandria history.

Folder 1 - "The Potomac River" (Chapter 1)

Mary Louisa describes the Potomac River as 89 feet wide at Harpers Ferry, which is 53 miles from Washington. She goes on to a general description of Potomac River, and its tributaries etc.

She describes her visit to Ash Grove, "Thomas Lord Fairfax, who at the time had his hospitable home near 'The Great Falls of the Potomac.' That country was sparsely settled. Lord Thomas Fairfax he was then married to the daughter of Mr. William Herbert and Sarah Carlyle, she was the only child and heiress of Col. John Carlyle, in whose home on Fairfax Street the governors met in the year 1755 to canvass and arrange war like defenses for the approaching campaign against the forces of the French king on the western boundary of the colonies of king George III. It was the house which was the headquarters of the King's trained soldier, General Braddock. The house to which Braddock had invited Col. George Washington to receive his appointment in the service of his monarch."

“Returning to the beautiful and powerful river Potomac...then, reaching the beautiful city of Georgetown, where the water was then deep enough to float vessels for foreign commerce, it glided past the capital of the infant Republic and washed with advancing and retreating tides [to] the wharves of Alexandria. At that point, the river is a mile wide, with a deep mid-river channel; a depth of water where fleets foreign and domestic have come and gone in safety. At our wharf, I have seen fifty frigates and I think ‘seventy five’...In my childhood, a fleet from hostile England anchored at our wharves and the white flag of a capitulated city waved over us. There was no steam to propel these vessels of war. White winged sails, subject to the varying and uncertain winds were the sole propulsion...”

“Having in part sketched a little of the locality of Alexandria I use my pen to outline my child life as remembered and impressed on me by my mother and her mother and many of those with whose lives mine was interwoven.”

Folder 2 - “Early Memories” (Chapter 2 and Chapter 8)

(1880 version)¹ “As I have stated Alexandria had, at the commencement of the 19th century, quite an extensive foreign trade. I know that my father owned vessels trading to the west Indies and to Madeira, Lisbon, Oporto, and sea ports of the Mediterranean bringing home the wines and fruits from the last named places and other brigs and schooners returning freighted with the products of the West Indies such as sugars [and] rum. Sugar was then a most important article of trade; as San Domingo alone furnished nearly one half of the sugars used in Europe and more than that proportion was brought to the United States. These western islands have always held a fixed place in my memory.”

“My father had a small summer retreat comprising sixty acres of Fairfax country land. It was situated three miles from Alexandria. The house he had builded [sic] was on the brow of a hill, commanding a beautiful and extensive view of the surrounding country. He called it “Prospect Hill”. (My father’s costly hobby was lavished on this little embellished home) His little estate was a costly hobby. In the eye of wisdom such as my maternal grandmother possessed it was valueless, for that portion of Virginia country had some picturesque scenery but very poor soil. Grandma said that it had cost my father more money to enrich it than if he had paved it with Spanish doubloons!”

(1879 version, earliest version) Note: This 1879 version adds Spain and Marseilles to the list of foreign countries her father’s vessels traded to. There is also a mention of some trade in native art.

In this version Mary Louisa briefly reflects on country life, the orchards, the unrestrained pleasure of her childhood versus “today’s” more restrained childhood, and the “annual fun” of a corn husking. Additionally, she recalls two “negroes,” Aunt Winny and Aunt Jenny who were often seen spinning or knitting.

¹ Mary Louisa wrote several versions on the subject of her childhood. For the purpose of this document the most complete versions were used.

“I was then a heedless happy child one among a merry group of children. Old black Jim, the teamster, would often say to his wife Dinah,² “woman, dem chillum o’ ourn can’t be beat, for masta is got a merry little drove, and I does all I can to make ‘em happy and hear ‘em roar o’ laffing”

“On the opposite elevation separated by us from the Braddock road was an estate occupied by Mr. William Robinson. It had been the residence of one of Mrs. General Washington’s granddaughters who was married to Mr. Thomas Law...” (Here follows divorce of the Laws etc.)

Summary: This folder includes a general description of Christ Church, the seating arrangements etc. At Sunday services at Christ’s Church, all parents and grandparents would sit facing the parson and the children would face away from parson. Old Mrs. Cook, an ample and portly woman, opened the family pews and lived on the corner of the graveyard and Washington St. Mary Louisa mentions a “caste system” or social stratification in which Mrs. Cook would open the pews only to the most respectable and well dressed parishioners while locking it to the common folk. Afterwards, the servants brought in the foot stools for the rich. She later explains the schism between Christ Church and Saint Paul’s. Mary Louisa was acquainted with Parson Davis’ nephew Davis Carneal of Cincinnati.

The pew behind the Slacum’s was Colonel DeNeale’s, the friend of General Washington, who had born Washington to the burial vault. “The Colonel gravely took the key from the lock, advanced to his window and sent it hurtling along the grassy sward and circling the tombstone. He then, with head bowed, took his seat in prayer. The next vestry meeting abolished the custom of locking the pew.” For more details of prayers, communion, etc. see chapter 7 in the Stark book.

“It had become the custom of General and Mrs. Washington to come up on Saturday afternoon to occupy until after the Sabbath services a small house, two rooms and a bedroom- below was a kitchen, on Cameron Street. They came to town on a chariot and four, bringing the lady’s maid and an out rider, and were always early in the Church, for the General’s punctuality was one feature in the assemblage of his good qualities.”

Parson Davis was “a fox hunting” clergymen who died just as the century passed. Mary Louisa was born two years after, indicating that her memories regarding this time were not her own but rather that of her mother’s.

“Across the aisle from our pew was an elderly gentlemen and his family. His bright penetrating look was made a terror to me and other children because the bright black eyes were shining on the white bandages that bound his brow and others passing over his head and chin and we were told that he had been a great warrior in the revolt from England but that the wounds under those bandages had been inflicted in Baltimore where he was defending a press and printing office from the violence of a lawless mob. This time worn hero was the renowned General Lee. The Appalachian of dragoons was not yet introduced. His sons Henry, Carter, Robert, and Smith were young boys then. What Robert became in after life is now and will, while the English language is spoken, be a tale of heroic suffering. And the fact noted but what one life more was lost between

² Name only mentioned in manuscript

the achieved separation from old England, the mother country, and Puritan and cavalier descendants.”

Folder 3 - “Dancing School” (Chapter 3)

Summary: The dancing school of Mr. Generis was connected to his house at the intersection of Prince and Royal Streets. He and his family were Creole which included himself, Monsieur Generis, his wife, Madame Generis, their son, Henri, and their daughters, Marcelina and Eugenia. He escaped from Cape François due to the insurrection of Haiti and came to Alexandria.

Madras head handkerchiefs were the fashion for women. French influence was also fashionable and was often used in advertisements etc.

“The word Creole is significant of persons born in the West Indies, Spanish American, and Louisiana. Worcester’s inaccurate definitions are ‘Creole: a person born in Spanish America or the West Indies, but of European descent.’ ‘Quadroon: the offspring of a mulatto by a white person.’ Webster- these are the best recognized American authorities- gives the following: ‘Creole: (1) one born in America or the west Indies or Europeans ancestors, and (2) one born within or near the tropics of any color.’ ‘Quadroon: the offspring of a mulatto and a white person- a person quarter-blooded.’” “I, from a residence in Louisiana, know that in the above-designated countries, the European parentage is not necessarily associated with the Creole, which designation simply belongs as a birthright to the children born in these boundaries, perhaps in other countries as well. A Creole of either sex means native-born. A quadroon, on the contrary, is mixed blood transmitted through the white and negro races, the mulatto being an intermediate race. The just and simple definition is ‘that one quarter of white blood, of course leaving the remaining three quarters in abeyance, constitutes a born Quadroon, or, as called often in the South, a ‘Quarteroon.’ With this in mind, there cannot be an excuse for confounding Creoles with Quadroons.”

“Negro” nurses accompanied the dancers wearing their calico habits, “servants dresses were called habits and were always buttoned up in front. The dresses of ladies were uniformly laced or buttoned up the back. Children’s dresses were also fastened up the back. They were fine in texture, simple in form, and were invariably called frocks.” In the school the girls learned how to enter a room, walk to the bench, and seat themselves properly.

Folder 4 - “Alexandria Theatre” (Chapter 4)

For recollections of Alexandria theatre and its actors see manuscript folder 4 or chapter 4 in the Stark book. Specifically, see chapter 4 of Stark book for an interesting anecdote connected to the Slacum family; Mrs. Seymour Sweet had a beautiful singing voice and rented a house close to the Slacum’s where several actresses lived and Rosina, a daughter of one of the other actresses, was allowed to sleep in the Slacum’s house while her mother was at the playhouse. Another actress, Mrs. Duff, was one of the more beautiful actresses in the house and played many of the leading roles. The best actor in town was named Jefferson.

December 26, 1810 “The awful conflagration of the Richmond Theater occurred. Several Alexandrians there lost their lives. After that there were few if any theatrical representations and not long afterwards the Lyceum Lectures, and Temperance Oratory was introduced.”

The last time the theater was opened was for Tyrone Power. He had dined with Colonel Rozier Dulany at Shooters Hill. Dulany had insisted that Alexandrians be given the chance to see and hear Powers, a renowned British actor. Dulany gave his negro servant, Peter, twenty dollars to bring people to hear him. Unfortunately this was not successful. Soon after, he left for England and was drowned at sea and “not one human [from the ship] was ever found or heard from.”

Folder 6 - “My Childhood” (Chapter 9)

Summary: During Mary Louisa’s childhood there were no chamber stoves; instead there were wood fires, brass andirons, trap fenders or wire fenders surmounted by brass bands. The chambers had brick hearths and painted or varnished bedsteads with four pole canopies. At the children’s breakfast. Mary Louisa addresses hair combing and nail inspection. High foreheads were carefully cultivated, grape vine juice was used for the hair. There were no sewing machines so they were taught alternative methods to sew and take care of their clothing. She again describes excursions to Prospect Hill as well as Virginia corn huskings.

“The fires were fed by the quickly ignited bituminous coal or the hard stone with its dull red glare and atmosphere-drying air.”

“In the parlors were carved wood or marble ‘mantels’ as they were called. They were very much higher than the accepted mantelpieces of today. They were used to hold candles in rich candlesticks, and snuffer and snuffer tongs were always there, with vases and other ornaments. Marble hearths were always present when the mantel was of marble.”

“Old Grandmama’s bedstead was surmounted by an arched tester and her curtains were pure white cambric with two or three seams where the wives were putting falsestaff [sic] into the buck basket. These curtains lead me to read. We slept on feather beds.”

“We had bread and milk either hot or cold as appetite dictated, hot hominy. Battered corn johnny cake, wheat loaf...the latter was a preparation of cracked wheat always boiled in milk. The boys had a chop or small steak or Potomac shad or herring. There was neither tea or coffee at the table.” Her discussion goes on to address additional aspects of daily life such as the hairstyles etc.

The grandest of the candles were in the chambers and the dipped candles were used for lighting by the servants.

“There was a scarcity of pins during the last three years of the war of independence. For example the _____ pins gave out and the inland homes had to use thorns from the wild white locust tress.”

[Ms. Edmunds’ School] “I recollect Mrs. Edmund’s school and the beautiful embroidery executed there. French flowers, figures, guidos aurora. Telamachus (?) on Calypso’s Island, Marie Stewart in prison etc. Silk and chenille embroidery on satin on which the young ladies worked; Mary Anne Young was the genial niece; Ms. Sally

Edmunds the very sensible, very stern, and very plain daughter. She ought to have been a descendent of Oliver Cromwell..."

"Mrs. Edmunds, her dress, her look, pale white face, contrasted with her inky black bombazine wrapper with its high stiff collar on her neck, a tumbler of chamomile tea always near her. There was always on her brow the look of physical pain overcoming by strong resolution any expression of her suffering."

"Then each day at 11 a.m. there entered into this female sanctum a pleasant faced man of more than middle age who came to give his writing lesson and pen making and pen mending lessons. It was Mr. Edmunds... [all pianos, harps, and embroidery frames were removed, the niece, Ms. Mary Anne, took the youngest children.] Our writing books had throughout printed copies of penmanship from the straight line to pothooks shaped after the fashion of the hooks hanging on our kitchen cranes. From the straight line, the curved line, the slanting line, the young ones progressed to capital letters then to words of 'large hand, round hand, small hand.'"

"Our copy books were not only to be used as a means of improving our handwriting by the goose quill instruction, but the inside and the outside carried instructions to the scholar...I have one from the outside of which I copy. On the front is a picture of a large globe with history on one side of it and children examining an open book on the other. On the back of the copy book are printed arithmetical tables of numeration, English money, multiplication tables, tables of weights and measures, Troy, avoirdupois, apothecaries, paper, land measure, time, pence, shillings, pounds, federal money, long measure, coal measure, solid measure, cloth measure, dry measure, wine measure. Pen making and pen mending and 'nibbing' the pens was a task. Grey goose quills were ours. Slit pens had not been invented."

[Cottom and Stewart] "On the north side of King Street were the only book sellers, book printers, and paper furnishers of the town in 1811. Paper furnishers included good strong serviceable, large, letter paper (foolscrap and fancy note but no envelopes and no musilage). The wares of this necessarily popular establishment because of the only one of its kind, included wall papers as well, and well do I remember that in that little one story frame magazine, I bought my copybooks, commencing with lines, advancing to words and then to attractive moral phrases and sentences, in copper plate printing, to be copied by the learner. There I found my slates clumsily and heavily bound in board; my motto stamps with various small devices and mottoes, large sticks of stamped London red sealing wax, and smaller ones of every conceivable tint, the lapis lazuli with golden spots being the favorite, with large and small wafers. There was, as well, goose quills in bunches or cut into pens and tiny crow quills, cut or uncut for finical miniatures writing. This store of Cottom and Stewart was the armory where we gathered the utilities for preparation of mental work."

[Kitchens] "Kitchens had cranes with pot hooks suspended from them. The shovel and tongs were curiosities from their length and strength, usually the work of neighboring blacksmiths."

Mary Louisa provides a description of the Dutch oven; a round iron vessel with three legs. Breads of various kinds were made in deep Dutch ovens and smaller 'spider' a round iron vessel with three legs as had the Dutch oven. Coals were drawn from the fire on the broad stone hearth and carefully regulated to impart the necessary heat while the bread was being gradually heated until it came to the required height.

“There were trivets, numerous saucepans a very long handled frying pan so that the cook could stand a short distance back and see the frying process going on not for meats, it was thought vulgar and poisonous to eat fried meat in genteel families. The contrivances for broiling steaks, chops, etc. were admirable...and a quantity of charcoal was always near to broil the steaks over living fresh coals and the arrangement to receive the juices was good. We had tin kitchens. For turkey, saddle of mutton, or things of this enlarged size, there were long spits from one end quite through the length of the kitchen and above that was a row of hooks for quails and small birds but this was never in use if a joint or turkey was roasting below so the juices were never mingled. Our waffle irons were always square and had a handle as long as that of a frying pan. The tossing of the omelets in the frying pans was quite curious. At the back of the kitchen and shaped as a half moon, there was a door with a little knob which from time to time was lifted while the meat or game roasting in front of these roaring fires was being basted with flour to keep in the juices. Jacks were also in use.”

“Fires made of kindling, pine or coals were not much used, never in kitchens. No meat or game was baked in the Virginia colony except in an iron covered Dutch oven which stood on three legs [coals were drawn from the hearth and regulated to impart the necessary heat while the bread was being heated and rising]...for loaf bread and cake baking they used a similar vessel and for rolls and small cakes, a miniature iron oven called a spider which had a long handle and stood on three legs. Little dogs were enclosed in a sort of tread mill on the right hand side of the fire place while meat or chickens were roasting, suspended in front so as to receive the heat from the heavy logs resting on andirons but at the same time getting the benefit of the surrounding air which was deemed essential to successful roasting. The machine for roasting was called a ‘wall spit’; the little dog, ‘the turn spit’ and the dogs were so educated to their tread mill duty that at the signal from the cook little turn spit took his place, began his work which was a time regulated step and when the roast was brought to its last rotary motion the spit was stopped, the roast transferred to a Chinese blue stone dish of capacious dimensions. And little ‘turn spit’ darted off to enjoy the freedom and play the remainder of the day for two p.m. was the general dining hour for the fashionable world. Mrs. Tindle’s dog was called ‘fire spit’ he was so fond of his work.”

“The idea of baking meat in any closely enclosed article was only resorted to by the laboring classes as a time saving measure. They would wash the meat, cover with flour, pour water in a Dutch oven (why called Dutch I do not know) and place it over live coals. When at last her roast needed the finishing touch of baking, the lid of her Dutch oven had been taken from the fire jamb where it had been gradually heating and the cover had a little band of iron on the article and was filled with bright coals [so that] the cover would be filled with bright coals. This was the browning process and was the work of wife and daughter in the country. In the laboring classes they called our pitcher a jug. It was generally of grey or cinnamon brown earthen ware. It was now called pottery. The women in the country had their ‘sun mark,’ it could scarcely be called a ‘dial plate.’ It told them near the hour of noon, the hour when the working people ate their dinner and I suppose from that custom came the still used expression of the ‘noon day meal’. The housewife would blow a horn to call everyone to eat. The Laboring classes took a short rest before returning to work and in many parts of the country that rest was called nooning. The bellows, twenty five years ago, was in use everywhere. The warming pan,

with live coals incased in a small iron cylinder with perforated copper lid, was used on winter nights between to sheets the warm them.”

“China, eggshell, nankeen, blue and white was brought by the east India ships to England and shipped from England and from England reshipped to the American colonies. In addition they came by the way of Holland, a variety of knick knacks or ornaments not only for the rich but also for walls and mantel pieces, etc...The court cupboards were triangular and placed in the corners of the principal rooms. They were of various depths, of course triangular, enclosed with double doors about three feet from the floor and above that double glass doors that opened in the center. On the shelves were arranged all the sterling silver of the family. Added to which there was generally a large punch bowl of rare china and two or four flagons of china with handles and covers of chased silver. They held about one quart each. These flagons held the famous stirrup cup from which the guests were treated to costly drinks...The old fashioned silver of different shapes the tureen imitated in the cream jug and a small silver ladle dished out the cream for the teas. They were, Bohea [a black tea from china], gunpowder, imperial, young hyson, etc.” Buffets held silver coasters for the decanters and other articles for daily use. Five pronged steel forks in bone or ivory handles accompanied the steel knives.

The furniture [often used in homes] was of a rich, dark, mahogany from Honduras. Drop-leave tables with claw feet were used for the breakfast and dining tables that were closed and removed after each meal to the side of the room. “There were no extensive leave to the dinner table. It consisted of three large pieces of solid Mahogany. There was no veneering on this dinner table. The mahogany logs were brought from Honduras and sawed in Alexandria. (Hinges were used to hold up the leaves of the table). Our tables of solid mahogany were waxed, corked and rubbed daily until they shone as mirrors. Damask table clothes, some costing 50 dollars each, were used and then gathered up with each course. When all table cloths were removed, coasters were returned to the table. Since they had thick baize under them they were slipped along the table hence they were called coasters...after that a glass of wine was taken by the gentlemen and the ladies and the gentlemen escorted the ladies to the door, returned to the wine and nuts to discuss politics, the ladies were left to their amusements until the gentlemen went to fetch them at the tea table at about 9 p.m.”

“In my childhood there were doorknockers of various shapes and metals. Ours was of brass. It was on the center of the front door. Others were of bronze and some of iron. They were invariably placed very high on the door, a custom that probably originated from the desire to prevent the nuisance of small wandering children from striking the knocker, which sent its ringing notes through the whole dwelling and needlessly called to the front the occupied servant whose duty it was to be prompt in appearing at the door in reply to the call.”

[“Negro” Quarters] “The negroes learned and appropriated the exhibited arrangement with their cut and scalloped paper or cotton covering of the kitchen mantel shelf of their masters and utilized them to hold the solid brass candlesticks, the flat irons, and the highly polished pewter dishes for holding roasted oysters. In their own cabins might be found a shelf for their ornaments...The house negroes were everywhere devoted to two domestic comforts. One was a feather bed, the other a whole or cracked mirror to be placed on their primitive toilette table.”

“‘Negro quarters’ was the usual term for the cabins on the ‘planters estates’”. These cabins were almost invariably grouped with an allowance of land to each of them varying in size from a half to two acres, agreeably to the will of the planter, the size of the estate, or the number of negroes in each family. The land appropriated for the use of each family was enclosed in some cases with a wattled fence, in others with a post and rail fence. These little clearings were in the permanent possession of the negroes, often descending from sire to son. They were theirs without molestation or taxes. The profits from cultivation, and they were sometimes well tilled grounds, were theirs. They usually had a piece of ground set apart for a hog pen, and in each year had numerous little shoats to be sold and also chickens, ducks, eggs, and sometimes early salads. The overseers were often elderly, honest, and trusted slaves, who attended to the labors of the field hands. Many of the overseers were from the extreme northern states and there was a very general belief, whether well founded or not that they were the hardest task masters on the plantation. I knew of several who were dismissed for cruelty.”

Slave women could sell their produce for market value. “Very many ladies allotted to the mothers with babes and elderly negro women first, a certain weight of wool to spin and then knit into socks or stockings for themselves, their children, and the field hands, and to the more aged was assigned hospital necessities for the care and nursing of the little negroes. A household servant went with these applicants to the grocery room and to the smoke house and granary and received the knitted work and weighed out for the coming week their wool, meat, bacon, and groceries. There was no obligation that they should sell their goods at their master’s house, they could sell them where they desired to go.”

(The following is from the folder entitled “Musings”) Mary Louisa contrasts the importance of the kitchen in Massachusetts country life with that of the south. Whereas the kitchen is the focus of country life in the north, it is separated from the family’s residence in the south as are the wells which were not often near the house. “The log cabins of the ‘negroes,’ who were field hands, were remote and grouped with one or two acres attached to each cabin which was a family home. The household servants had rooms over the outside kitchen or near it, but rarely in the house.”

The southern boy, unlike the northern boy, who early learned to trade and prized education and thrift, instead prized robust, manly exercises, such as fishing, boating, riding horses, and hunting at a very early age with guns. “He often tested in playful trial of strength with the little negroes or other farmer’s sons.” He put very little emphasis on the hoarding of money and was the inheritor of the legends of his cavalier ancestors.

Chapter 5- “My Father, Why don’t he Come?”

“Late in that night, there was an alarm of fire in the town. The securities for life and estate were widely different then from the perfected arrangement of the now-advanced century. The strong, long black leather fire-buckets were unhooked, and my father with two of them in hand started to the scene of the conflagration. He went to aid his fellow townsmen in their simple arrangements to battle with the formidable destructive element of fire. Each householder was compelled by law to have his long leather fire-buckets in order, with his name on them in white paint, to keep them in a front or rear hall where they could be open to inspection; and to hasten with the men of

his household to take their place in the ranks, forming from every neighborhood pump corner. When the pumps gave out the lines were extended down to the Potomac. The buckets filled with water were passed from hand to hand. The returning empty ones were carried along a second line, to be refilled from pump or river. In the meantime, fire bells rang awakening appeals; and if the fire was of large advancing force, the courthouse and the church bells added their clangor, and the watchmen wound their shrill-sounding horns while the alarmed people ran through the streets crying, 'Fire, fire!'

"That winding of the horns was as regular a night performance as ringing the curfew bell was in England; save that the hour in our old town was extended to ten o'clock. At that hour the watchmen assembled in the market square, passed from the upper watch-room to a small balcony where for fifteen minutes they blew their shrill ear-piercing horns. They called it 'winding the horns.' It was to give notice that the city was then surrendered to the night watch. After that they separated, each man 'to his beat.' On the first alarm that things were going wrong, the watchman nearest the disturbance or the fire swung his rattle for an alarm. It was responded to by others, who, running forward, sent the sounds of commingling rattles far and wide."

"It was, I think, believed that none but honest and strong-bodied men were of those who kept watch and ward in the town of Alexandria. I distinctly remember that in my early childhood I was often awakened and terribly frightened by these noises of night proceeding from the horns and rattles. I, however, was often consoled as I heard the watchmen, as they tramped the streets with lanterns in hand, loudly proclaiming the hour and state of the atmosphere...[the watchmen would call] 'past ten o'clock and a starlight night,' or 'past eleven o'clock and a snowing night,' and so on, until the light of dawn released these watchmen."

"On the fatal night when my dear father hastened from his house, he was in fine health, and more vigorous in muscular power than the majority of his contemporaries. The fire of that September night originated among ignited shavings in the miserable little shop of a cooper. It raged with force. Its forked tongues passed fiercely onward. Where they touched, they destroyed. House after house smoked from smoldering flame, then blazed, crackled, and fell, burying in the fall the wares and [fancied] ownership of those who in one brief hour were obliged to pass from prosperity to poverty."

"It was the time of the autumn equinox. A high wind, another uncontrollable element, gave force to the fire, which in its quick progress soon claimed the [lofted] warehouses bordering the wharves, among them two belonging to my father. They were filled with recently-received merchandize [sic]. A brig and large schooner which he owned had that week arrived in safety from the West Indies, and on the morning of the fire the prosperous merchant had refused many thousands of dollars for the sugars and liquors to the stores, as there was but little in the market."

"The sugars and the liquors and their merchantable values were not that night his care. He well knew their power to feed the approaching flames. It was his books, his papers, [and] his desk he endeavored to save as he struggled into a warehouse seemingly for the moment, safe. It was filled with hot air and smoke. He did not reach his desk, but struggling to return, gasping, almost exhausted, he fell against a faithful slave, a sailor recently arrived on the brig 'Louisa.' Hensen was seeking his master. They both would in a few minutes more have been lost, save that the negro, by a glowing flash of flame, saw a white sail that was spread as a protection over the wheat in bulk. It proved the

protection of master and of man- it was near the stairway. It guided them to light and life.”

“The warehouses were, on the following day, a piled-up mass of smoking brick and mortar...”

As a result of the fire, Captain George Slacum, father of Mary Louisa, became ill from inhaling the smoke. Dr. Craik, the physician to both the Slacum family and George Washington, attended to the Captain and the treatment was mostly successful. The next week, however, as George Slacum set out for his home on the Eastern Shore of Maryland he became ill with pneumonia but was still able to reach his home. Mary Louisa remembers seeing her father arrive at their Eastern Shore home supported by Doctors Craik and Elisha Dick. After his arrival she received her last kiss and hug from her father. George Slacum’s condition quickly deteriorated and he ended up dying during his stay at the Eastern Shore. Mary Louisa was not told of her father’s death because during this time she suffered from trembling fits, loss of hair and was considered weak and nervous. This created much confusion for her as she misunderstood the adult’s conversation about the illness and death of her father as pertaining to her own condition. It was not until well after the fact that Mary Louisa finally learned from her mother the fate of her father.

Folder 7 - “Parson Muir” (Chapter 8)

Summary- Mary Louisa describes Parson Muir as a Presbyterian Parson, a Scot by birth, and he lived at the intersection of Fairfax and Wolfe Streets where a high brick wall was all that could be seen of the meeting house and graveyard. The Parson was also a living pallbearer of George Washington. There were rumors of ghosts of former people in the graveyard. Mary Louisa recollects one instance in which John Wilber had seen his dead mother in the corner tree of the graveyard. Another ghost sighting from the large old tree in the burial ground of Parson Muir was the one related by John Vowell, a companion of her two brothers who were students at the Alexandria academy. He was the son of Mr. Thomas Vowell who lived on ‘the mall’ in what is now known as ‘the Snowden Mansion’. John Vowell asserted “that he had, when returning one moonlight night heard his mother’s spirit moaning and calling she was in the old tree on the Fairfax side of the yard. I looked up and I saw her with her little dead baby in her arms rocking to and fro crying piteously.” He ran home, scared.

Folder 8 - “Meade’s Virginia Families and Churches” (Chapter 22)

Folder 9 - “Bishop Meade/ Meade Family” (Chapter 22)

Summary- Folders 8 and 9 of the manuscript and chapter 22 in the Stark book deal with the beginnings of the Episcopal Church in Virginia (early buildings, early parsons, books in the libraries of the parsons etc.). William Meade was the Parson who taught Mary Louisa her catechism, his church was in Georgetown which in the early part of the 19th century was the nucleus of fashion. “Its hotel Crawford’s I think they called it had a better reputation than any then existing in Washington. Many of the most cultivated among the representatives and senators lodged there. And Crawford’s stages were kept busy running between Georgetown and the Capital a distance of three miles.

Gadsby still held on as the proprietor I think of 'the old city tavern' of Alexandria where George Washington passed a portion of each week of his life. It was there he transacted his business after his retirement from the presidency and his return to Mount Vernon. To this experienced horseman, whose animals were the admiration of all, the ride of nine miles from Mount Vernon was only a healthy morning exercise. The Alexandria bank where his money was deposited was across the Market Square opposite the old city hotel. The Masonic lodge of which he was a member was in a hall on the second story of the building on the north side and above the market. The free school, which he founded and nursed with parental care and provided for in his will, was not far distant. His duties as a vestryman of old Christ's church called him to Alexandria whenever they held a meeting. He never neglected his Church duty. His very large landed estate and the business connected with his commercial arrangements all called him to Alexandria at seed time and at harvest time." The Reverend Walter Addison, whom the Slacums met once at Shooters Hill, and Reverend Meade were against duelers and dueling and gave sermons against it which greatly displeased Mr. Wise.

The elder Meade, an aide to General Washington, was very fond of *Blair's Sermons* which were most popular at that time. "If the young daughters of the family became boisterous or rude, the mother would hasten to read to them Blair's Sermon of gentleness. Whenever a slave died, Mr. Meade, in the absence of clergy, read and preformed the burial services in the log cabin, and on the next Sunday he read Blair's Sermon on death."

Folder 10 - "The Washington's of Mount Vernon" (Chapter 10)

"My first visit to 'Mount Vernon' was while a guest at 'Woodlawn,' the country seat of Mr. Lawrence Lewis, the nephew of General Washington. His mother, Betty Lewis, [was] the only sister of the General; and his beautiful wife was Nellie Custis, the grandchild of Mrs. Washington. Mrs. Lewis has, by portraits and engravings constantly reproduced, made us all familiar (so far as portraiture can) with her face and form; but it was in the family circle and among her associates and friends that her magnetic charm of a beautiful and sweetly-modulated voice and winning smile, coupled with her grace of manner and always appropriate conversational powers, gave her a marked ascendancy over those who were associated with her. She was an Episcopalian, a woman of sincere faith and while her religious sentiments were never obtrusively intruded on her many guests at 'Woodlawn,' they were a permeating influence on all from the visiting Bishop to the humblest slaves of her household."

"Mr. Lewis was a gentleman of lofty stature quite as tall as his uncle, the General, and he strongly resembled all the portraits I have seen of his uncle. He presided with dignity at his table and, associated with Mrs. Lewis's conversations, led to the development of the tastes and inclinations of their many guests."

"I have known all the Washingtons who inherited 'Mount Vernon' from the General, to the last owner of that world-renowned estate. There was not a man of six feet among them nor one of apparent physical strength until we reach John Augustine, the last owner."

"Judge Bushrod Washington was, at the time of my first visit, a man of delicate conformation, of an agreeable presence, high mental and moral cultivation, and held in

the Supreme Court of the U.S. the character of a learned jurist. He was also very popular in private life. He inherited under the will of his uncle, 'Mount Vernon.' He was childless, but the proximity to Mrs. Lewis and her family combined with frequent and lengthy visits from the relations of himself and his invalid and secluded wife enabled him to have always some presiding gladly at the table. To Mrs. Washington, as I always heard from the family, he was unwearied in tender, nay, almost chivalric love and attention. I never saw her but once, and it was at the home of their adopted daughter, Mrs. Noblett Herbert, who lived in the corner house on Fairfax and Cameron Streets, opposite the Bank of Alexandria."

"There was in Alexandria one Mr. Alexander Moore. He was a man much esteemed in society for his grace of deportment, drawing musical sounds from his favorite fiddle bow, and a wealth of witty sayings that dropped from his lips. He was an invited and always welcomed guest at private dinners and a manager of public entertainments. He was a natural inheritor of good humor and wit and music from his invalided war-worn veteran father, Captain Cleon Moore, who was the author of Washington's March and, at the birth of this century, Register of Wills for Alexandria County."

"On one occasion Alexander, or as his town-people called him, Sandy Moore, was dining with Judge Bushrod Washington and several English gentlemen of note in their own country. Sandy, who was placed near one of the British subjects, proved himself quite up [to] the mark in responding to the note-taker who has his little tablet at hand on which he was more industriously than politely jotting down Sandy's answers as received. At length, the puzzled stranger, holding up one of the gold banded china plates, said, 'this is very peculiar, very.'"

"How so,' said Moore."

"Why, I perceive in the centre of this plate the gilt cipher E. Pray, may I ask what was Mrs. Washington's maiden name?"

"Certainly, she, I believe was a Ms. Blackburn. The Englishman wrote 'a strange custom,' here the finest china of the Washington's has the cipher E,' which said Mr. Moore glancing at the tablet' and it stands for either."

"Sandy Moore was again a guest at 'Ravensworth.' Mr. Van Buren and a large party of distinguished guests including several ladies were enjoying the festivities. Mr. Fitzhugh, the host, was an accomplished gentleman; Mrs. Fitzhugh [was] the beautiful daughter of Governor Goldsborough of Maryland."

"The gentlemen, others besides Mr. Van Buren being from the North, had after dinner left the smoking room at the invitation of the host to see some of the young negroes dance a jig. Sandy Moore was drawing the bow across the fiddle, and the lithe, active, young negroes, boys and girls, were capering in perfect time to the merry music. It was to the Northerner an [ague]."³

"In the distance, the ladies heard it and while wondering at the noise a certain Mr. C, one of the guests, appeared in the drawing room and invited the ladies to go out on the balcony to see the fun. He was the owner of a capacious mouth and [was] a decided epicurean. He was noted for his finical manner. The appearance of the ladies led by this gentleman was a surprize [sic], and Sandy Moore without an instants pause sang on his doggerel song, but changed the words and sang."

³ It probably appeared to the company that they were having paroxysms.

“And while the ‘niggers’ danced their jig.
Mr. C ate up all the cold roast pig.”

“The abashed intruder was defeated. Sandy afterward said he was a Moore too much for Mr. C. The young negroes, abashed at the appearance of the ladies, broke up their fun, and the boys, jerking the forehead front-lock, bowed; and the girls, lifting the side of plaid cotton gowns, curtsied to the company, and they all ran away. Mr. C never forgave Sandy Moore.”

“Mr. Justice, the Judge, had a nephew, Richard Washington, generally called ‘Master Dick,’ who lived at Mount Vernon and supervised the place. He also was a man of slight frame of medium stature, wiry and elastic in movement with very bright dark eyes and an expressive face. He was fond of the rod and of the chase and dancing. He was much in Alexandria society. When Mr. Justice Washington died he was succeeded by his nephew, Mr. John Washington of ‘Blakely,’ Jefferson County, Virginia. His wife, nee Miss Jane Blackburn, outlived her husband by many years; and her sister, Misses Judith and Christian Blackburn, lived with her at ‘Mount Vernon’. She was a model wife, mother, mistress, and Christian, and perfect in social life. [Since she was] very frequently in Alexandria, we saw her often. All the Washington’s who have owned and lived at ‘Mount Vernon’ were Episcopalians, but it was not until John Washington of ‘Blakely’ inherited the estate that there were young children, their own who might reasonably look forward to the possession of ‘Mount Vernon.’ Lawrence, the elder brother of George, died childless. The General adopted two of his wife’s grandchildren.”

“The three children of that household [John Washington’s] were a daughter Maria, who married Doctor Fontaine Alexander; a son, Richard, who married Christian Washington of Jefferson County; and John Augustine, who married E. Love Selden, daughter of Wilson Cary Selden (she was commonly called ‘Nellie’) “Exeter,’ Loudon County, Virginia. These, the three children of Mr. and Mrs. John Washington, were all parents. Mrs. Fontaine Alexander had quite a numerous family, her brother, Richard, had several children and John Augustine, the heir and proprietor of the Mount Vernon estate, had five daughters and two sons, they were Louisa, Jane, Eliza, Maria, and Nellis. The sons were Lawrence and George.”

“[This account covers] the ‘Mount Vernon’ family from the General down to Augustine, the proprietor, [who] was driven to sell ‘Mount Vernon.’”

Folder 10- “Mount Vernon” (Chapter 11)

“My intimate personal acquaintance with the Washingtons at ‘Mount Vernon’ commenced in the early part of my life, under circumstances that were very favorable to secure to me accurate and not now forgotten statements.”

“My intimacy with France Parke Lewis that had commenced in Philadelphia at the then-celebrated boarding school of Madame Greland, was continued after we reached our homes.”

“Frances was the daughter of General Washington’s nephew, Lawrence Lewis, whose mother, Betty, was the General’s only sister. The mother of Frances was Nelly Custis, by birth the grand daughter of Mrs. Washington; by adoption the child of General and Mrs. Washington.”

“Their home ‘Woodlawn,’ an estate bequeathed to them by the will of General Washington. Originally, it was a part of the large land estate bequeathed to Washington in his early English colonial life by his brother Lawrence. In contemporary history it has always been called ‘the great estate on the Potomac. It was called ‘Mount Vernon’ in honor of old Admiral Vernon by whom Lawrence had been most kindly treated when he was a Colonial volunteer ‘fighting in the service of the King’ at the unfortunate siege of Carthage. This was in 1741. At the time his half-brother George was only nine years of age.”

“This great estate bequeathed to the child-subject of George the 2nd of England, was a place endeared to him throughout the remarkable changes of his life; changes that developed a character that stands in the pages of history as one great combination of all that can ennoble man.”

“He is styled ‘Father of his Country.’ He had let to him a sword by Frederick the Great of Prussia, ‘Presented by the oldest General of Europe to the greatest General of the World.’”

“The house at ‘Woodlawn’ was an extensive brick mansion. A very wide hall separated four large apartments on the lower floor, and the same arrangements were above. Two wings were, one at each side of the house, slightly curved. All the grounds surrounding that mansion that was soon after to pass away from the inheritors, were in excellent condition. Flowers were abundant. In the great hall were comfortable chairs and sofas. The walls of the hall were lined with large maps, and a terrestrial and a celestial globe were there. The dinner and tea service were of handsome china and silverware. The attendants were all boys and maids, the well-mannered, well-contented, well-cared for slaves of Major Lewis.”

“Circumstances as related in the memories of my childhood had so interwoven my thoughts of Alexandria and ‘Mount Vernon,’ that it was not strange that when one morning we were all assembled at the bountifully supplied and gracefully presided over breakfast table at ‘Woodlawn,’ I was delighted to hear Mrs. Lewis read from a letter addressed to her by Judge Bushrod Washington, nephew of the General, to whom he had willed ‘the great estate of the Potomac,’ a very cordial invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, their family and guests at ‘Woodlawn’ to dine on that following day at 2 pm.”

“The guests of that day as I recall them were Misses Douglass’ of New York, miss Margaret, Harriet, and Betsy Mary; George, their brother, jocosely called Lord George Douglass; Col. Watts of South Carolina, Major Vandevender of the army and my eldest brother George. Visitors were constantly arriving and departing from ‘Woodlawn’. It was a home embellished by a lovely and most gracious hostess, an urbane, well-bred host, and daughters and a son that they both were proud of. I was at that time there for the visit of a fortnight. Mrs. Lewis was very fond of the New York Douglass ladies, and they made several visits to ‘Woodlawn.’ I think Miss Margaret never married. Harriet became Mrs. Unger, and Betsy Mary married a nephew of President James Monroe, last seen in our home in Alexandria.”

“A pleasant drive of nearly three miles over the plantation road brought us to the front door steps of the great General. The judge stood ready to receive us. I was then at the [height] of my hopes.”

“At dinner Mrs. Washington did not appear. Her frail health confined her to her chamber. In her absence Mrs. Lewis presided. After that time I was quite often a visitor

at 'Mount Vernon' and she never but once appeared. Mrs. Washington was, I think, Miss [Julia] Blackburn."

"The Judge was, as the General had been, childless. They had an adopted daughter, their niece, she married Mr., Noblett Herbert of Alexandria. His house was at the corner of Cameron and Fairfax Streets, opposite the Bank of Alexandria, where General Washington kept his back account. Mr. and Mrs. Noblett Herbert were both [Alexandrians,] she was a very small delicate person, very fond of giving handsome dinners. I was often at those dinners, always mixed ladies and gentlemen. Mrs. Judge Washington, her aunt, frequently remained with her in Alexandria when the Judge was in Washington, and sometimes where he held court in Philadelphia. Really, she was almost as great a recluse as her niece, Mrs. Herbert, when at 'Mount Vernon.' Her aged maid, a negress called Mammy Betty was fidelity impersonated, always neatly dressed in cotton Shepard's plaid gowns of navy blue and white, a little shawl pinned over her bust, a light colored plaid banana kerchief on her head. She deserves honorable mention due to her polite respectful demeanor to all persons."

"Judge Bushrod Washington was of medium height, slight figure, well learned in law; one of the justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. He was esteemed as one of the most charming conversationalists of the time. He had the happy knack of leading the tabletalk to objects of interest to his visitors, never monopolizing but appearing to seek to derive knowledge from his 'Mount Vernon' guests. At his table I met several of the judges of the United States Supreme Court and other distinguished persons, both American and foreign."

"While at this venerated home during the life of Judge Washington, I have often hand in hand with Mrs. Lewis, walked throughout the house, pausing every few minutes to receive her anecdotes, of 'grandpa' and 'grandma' and the visitors at 'Mount Vernon' in her early youth. There was a key of the demolished Bastille sent from France to what they called 'The Defender of Freedom,' the portrait of Louis the 16th of France the faithful but unfortunate sovereign whose friendship for us led to sadder revolutionary results in his own kingdom. The pitcher picture of General Washington and the beautiful eulogy written on the back of the frame; the chaste and elegant marble mantle in the banqueting hall. In that room, she and some young ladies who were staying with her decided to assist George Washington and Lafayette and two or three other young noblemen guests at 'Mount Vernon' to repaper the room. The General laughingly consented. They made an excursion to Alexandria, nine miles over a hilly road to purchase the paper. The young noblemen succeeded well with step-ladder work. Miss Custis and her friends carried the paper rill in their pretty muslin aprons and served the paperers at the foot of the ladder."

"The gardens, green and 'hothouses,' were in admirable condition, and the grounds kept in order. Mrs. Lewis lived with her grandparents until her grandmother died."

"On one occasion among the dinner guests was Mr. Alexander Moore of Alexandria. He was a cheerful, bright, witty gentleman, much sought for in society, and dull indeed must have been the company which he failed to enliven. I remember several of his strokes of wit. Clever as they were they contained personalities, the recital of which might wound some living hearts. The wit and his wisdom and they who were the victims are in the silent cities, but some descendant may be an earth inhabitant and

wounded by my record; I, therefore, forbear. There is eloquence in death. Older nations have better understood that than we do.”

“In the front parlor of ‘Woodlawn’ was a portrait of Mrs. Lewis painted by Stuart (as I understood) at the time he painted the General. It represented what she most undeniably was, a very beautiful woman. Age softened but never obliterated her loveliness of expression, her beautiful eyes, and the combined qualities of grace, intellect, and dignity that characterized her youth. That portrait, I have recently heard, is in the possession of her son’s widow, Mrs. Lorenzo Lewis at ‘Audrey Hall,’ Jefferson County, Virginia.”

“Lorenzo was, at the time I have been recording, still at the Alexandria Academy. There had been in that neighborhood and town a strange itinerant wayside preacher, Lorenzo Dow by name. The boys at school teased young Lewis often asking, ‘How are you related to Lorenzo Dow? It must be a family name. Surely no one ever heard that there was any other Lorenzo.’ Mrs. Lewis waited until his complaint was ended, then said, ‘Ask them, my son, if they have never heard of Lorenzo the Magnificent.’ She drew herself up to her full height, and as the words fell from her lips you would have thought that the blood of the ‘Medici’ was in her veins. Lorenzo grew into manhood. He was handsome; he was tall with a Roman cast of face. He usually rode up to Alexandria with his attendant servant in knee breeches and fantop boots riding about twenty yards behind him. He was punctilious in making his calls and, fond of female society, he was at nearly all the parties and at many dinners given in Alexandria. He reserved his love for a more northern maiden and, in Philadelphia, wooed and won the beautiful Esther Coxe. She was the daughter of a most celebrated physician, and I believe is still living cheered in her age by her descendents.”

“Frances, who was highly educated, was an enthusiast in regard to military affairs. She was above the average height of women, had large dark hazel eyed, bronzed hair, an aquiline nose, and lovely teeth held back by most expressive, if sometime haughty, lips. The vicinity of the old Fort Washington to ‘Mount Vernon’ and ‘Woodlawn’ enabled the officers to man their barges and row across the broad Potomac to partake of the hospitalities at the homestead and return to Fort Washington on the Maryland shore. It was over at the Fort that Frances could enjoy the walks on its walls and show so intimate an acquaintance with military technicalities of defenses and munitions of war as to rather confuse some of her young epauletted escorts. She married an army officer, one of the old Butler family. Their home was in Louisiana where, within a year or two back, her life voyage ended. Angela, a mother’s darling, was quite young at the date of my first dinner at ‘Mount Vernon.’ She married Mr. Charles Conrad of Louisiana. He was of the old Virginia Conrad family and became rather celebrated as a scholar and politician.”

“I think it was my youthful enthusiasm and thirst of knowledge regarding ‘Mount Vernon’ and the last of the lives of the General and her grandmother, that caused Mrs. Lewis to take so deep an interest in my questions, so patiently reply to them, to give me so many anecdotes of her life and surrounding. Her husbands, Major Lewis, was tall, dignified, and wore a strongly marked resemblance to his uncle. He is so much like him that he would have been taken for a son rather than for a nephew. I had often heard of the attempt made by a foreign servant, employed on the estate, to steal from the vault the corpse of the General and convey it to Europe. Mrs. Lewis confirmed the story. The

vault was entered and the [text unclear], a member of the Washington family, a negro servant discovered what was going on, and the depredator of the dead escaped, but without his body.”

“At the home of Mrs. Noblett Herbert, nee Washington, there was a great deal of [activity] because almost daily, society assembled. Mrs. Mary Allibone and her sister Jane Turner, passed one of two winters with their cousin Herbert. Jane afterwards became Mrs. Byrd and was very handsome, and was a most sweet singer of ballads. At our Philadelphia school she captivated at that time young Persifor Smith. He was most desperately in love, and she- but it did not result in marriage. He was a law student then. He was afterwards a distinguished General. I shall, further on, catch up from memory my last interview with General Persifor Smith. It was in the winter of 1830-1849 at the St. Louis Hotel, New Orleans. It was a historic interview with General Andrew Jackson into which the lawyer-general was dovetailed.”

“As I thus far have said nothing of female costumes, it appears I ought to at least glance back to some of them. Mrs. Allibone, the wife of a Philadelphia lawyer, and her sister Jane, who was much with her in that advanced city, were related to the Washington family through the wife of Judge Washington. Their first winter in Alexandria, they wore lemon-colored cloth pelisse⁴, close fitting, with small round capes, and velvet bonnets of a cerulean blue just the color of Jane’s eyes. The bonnets were large and adorned with long sweeping ostrich plumes. Tan-colored gloves and boots of the same tint completed the winter walking costume of these maidens of the fertile valley beyond the chain of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Their father (Mr. Henry Tucker) was wealthy, lived on his estate in handsome and hospitable style. Judge and Mrs. Washington had carried these young relatives to pass a winter in Philadelphia, and it resulted in a mismatched match between Mary and Mr. Allibone, who might have been a good lawyer, but was an indifferent husband. I write that with knowledge- the Judge said he was. Young Tom Tucker, their brother, was often in Alexandria and a great gallant. I passed several weeks at their home ‘Wheatland’ in Jefferson County.”

“I must return to our sheep and tell more of ‘Mount Vernon’ and its different owners as I saw and as I knew them.”

“Judge Washington had a nephew, Richard Washington, who resided at ‘Mount Vernon’ and had general supervision of ‘the great estate.’ I have always thought the estate had from the death date of the ‘father of his country’ a tendency downward. Even at the time I first passed through the entrance lodge gated, they were open and somewhat out of repair. The attendant gate keeper was not in place, and at his door were several little negroes having a dust fight as they were throwing dust at each other’s faces and merrily laughing.”

“Richard Washington was a peculiar man. He was also below the medium height and slight of form; fond of the chase and of the rod, a lover of neither; and fond of Alexandria and its people. Otherwise, a good man of high moral principle. He was a most indefatigable dancer and very gallant. With the death of the General, the Washingtons that succeeded to the great estate were under-size and slight of frame. At one time during the administration of ‘Master Richard’ as the slaves called him, I visited ‘Mount Vernon;’ the vehicle, a sleigh drawn by four horses with their tinkling bells. We were that day the guests of the negro servants and this is how it came to be. An important

⁴ A long cloak or outer coat.

debate in the House of Representatives had brought to Washington a party of New Yorkers to pass a few days. Among them were some friends of my brother George. They notified him of their arrival. He went to Washington. A heavy snowstorm of the preceding day and night had been followed by a cold day. It made capital sleighing. When they told my brother of their desire to visit 'Mount Vernon' as soon as the snow melted, he advised an immediate movement as, if one warm sun lighted day fell on the snow, it would prevent sleighing and render a carriage drive difficult, if not impossible from the slop of melting snow; and, if after that a freeze set in, the frozen clods would make the journey a most cheerless and jolting one. Put to vote, it was decided to start at once on the pilgrimage. Three sleighs were ordered with four horse attached to each. A servant was sent in advance to Alexandria to ask my sister Adela and me to get ready promptly, brother having promised these New York ladies our company. He sent word to us to have plenty of wraps and as many foot stoves heated as we could command. Soon after this announcement we heard the merry bells coming down Fairfax. Then, only stopping for a few moments to enjoy the warmth of the Richmond coal fires blazing in the open grates, we were traveling onward over Hunting Creek toward 'Mount Vernon.' That road so little traveled lay in the soft white covering of snow; and pendant from many of the pine trees that lined the roadside were icicles glittering like gems. It was a lovely ride. When we reached 'Mount Vernon' the house was empty, nay, worse than empty, it was fireless and freezingly cold. The servant who had admitted us said that Master Richard had started early in the day rabbit hunting. He was followed by his dogs. His return was uncertain. They said, 'He might git home before night, or he might go on along down as far as Gunston Hall, or go to Mr. Tool's at 'Hayfield,' but they were mighty sorry and know that Master Richard would be awful downcasted when he comes to know his friends from Alexandria had been there."

"While this explanation was going forward, fires were kindled, and soon warmth came cheering our benumbed bodies. The chief dining room servant of the Judge then came forward to say that 'the dining room would soon be very comfortable and they would do their very best to give us all the refreshment they had.' 'Master Richard,' he added, 'had had a front shoulder of very nice bacon boiled the day before, and it was hardly touched by him.' We gladly accepted their civil offer. I had heard the great thumping sound from the outside kitchen that told me they were pounding biscuits, a most delicate Virginia bread. When invited to the dining room it was past one p.m. We found the promised shoulder of bacon, with hot broiled ham, pounded biscuits, hoe cake and ash pone. These two last dishes were prepared for the servant's dinner, but they contributed it to ours. Buttermilk and butter, that morning churned and two large stone milk pans, with their contents, and a deep covering of thick cream on them. We feasted royally because most enjoyably hunger whetted our appetites."

"The New York ladies were amused and much pleased to partake of hoe cake and ash pone, bread which they had never until then heard of. Interested in inspecting the house, they were amused at being the guests of the servants. The memories of one or two of the old servants were called into recollection by the inquisitors. It was, after all, a day marked by a white stone. Such days are forever gone from Old Dominion of Virginia."

Folder 11- "Washington Lodge" (Chapter 12)

"On Friday April 15 1791 in Alexandria there appeared the commissioners appointed to superintend the 'fixing' of the first corner stone of the federal district of Columbia. The commissioners appointed by President Washington to locate the spot where this stone should be placed were the honorable Carroll of Duddington and honorable David Stuart. Honorable David Carroll was then one of the four proprietors of the land where the 'federal city' was located and I think that the honorable David Stuart was the second husband of the widow of Mr. John Parke Custis. Mr. Carroll's home was then at the foot of what was called Capital hill and on New Jersey Avenue, it was called Duddington and he was called Carroll of Duddington. He was a tall, finely proportioned gentleman, dignified and urbane. He had, when I knew him, retained a large amount of ground for his own handsome establishment which wisdom should have counseled what family pride prevented: his acceptance of the offer made by Stephan Guard of two hundred thousand dollars for his real estate in the 'Federal City.' Carroll of Duddington estimated at one million dollars, so high were the hopes and the belief of the original holders of that real estate. Where his home is situated it is now. It was a home of hospitality and refinement and Mrs. Carroll was the mother of several engaging, fair-haired young daughters whose deportment emulated that of their parents." (Mary Louisa in her childhood, was often at their home.)

(Mr. Carroll's home) "A high brick wall, capped by free stone concealed the grounds from public view. There was a large spring of pure water, and lofty trees shaded it. Iron gates opened for the carriage entrance and drive and beautiful fragrant flowers bordered the drive." William Thomas Carroll lived at Duddington with his uncle's family; he was a daily visitor to the Slacum home and became clerk to the Supreme Court.

"Now I return to that point of land where lies unnoticed and little known the first corner stone of the District of Columbia. It is imbedded at Jones Point at the mouth of Great Hunting Creek on the west bank of the Potomac and the southern termination of Alexandria. It marked the southeast corner of the District of Columbia, 'the mayor and Commonality together with the member of the different Lodges of the town, at three o'clock, waited on the commissioners Daniel Carroll and David Stuart at Wise's tavern where they dined, and after drinking a glass of wine to the following sentiment 'may the stone which we are about to place in the ground remain an immovable monument of the wisdom and unanimity of North America,' the company proceeded to Jones' Point." (This account of the corner stone is from the Lodge of Washington)

"I must condense the narration as sketched in the Philadelphia paper from its Alexandria correspondent of April 15 1791 and acknowledge the obligation I am under to F. L. Brokett, Past Master Lodge No. 22, for his most reliable and interesting History of the Alexandria Washington Lodge..."

"Present were also Doctor Elijah Cullen Dick, Worshipful Master who performed the ceremonies. At their conclusion Parson James Muir, Chaplain of the Lodge, delivered an address."

"Dr. Dick was my mother's family physician and in several alarmingly threatening illnesses he, associated with Dr. James Craik, attended me. Dr. James Craik [was] born in Scotland about the same time that Washington was born in Virginia. He

was my father's doctor, and these were the gentlemen so well known to me in my early life, who were the medical attendants at the death-bed of General Washington and afterwards at that of my own father."

"General Washington came to Alexandria with one slave riding behind his master and dined with his neighbors. He was escorted back through King Street and near the head of the great Hunting Creek crossed at the Cameron Run Ford on his way to Mount Vernon."

"The stone was placed; the deposit of corn, wine, and oil was placed upon it, and then the Reverend James Muir a foreigner by birth and education in the words of eloquence and ammunition addressed and delighted the assembled Americans."

'Of America it may be said, as of Judea of old, that it is a good land and large, a land of brooks, of waters, of fountains, and depths that spring out of the valleys and oil, olives and honey- a land wherein we can eat bread without scarceness and have lack of nothing- a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass- a land which the Lord thy God careth for- the eyes of the Lord thy god are always upon it; from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. May Americans be grateful and virtuous, and they shall ensure the indulgence of providence; may true patriotism actuate every heart; may it be the devout and universal wish. Peace be within thy wall o America and prosperity within thy palaces! Amiable it is for brethren to well together in unity; it is more fragrant than the perfumes on Arron's garments; it is more refreshing than the dews on Hermon's Hill. May this stone long commemorate the goodness of God in those uncommon events which have given America a name among nations. Under this stone may jealousy and selfishness be forever buried. From this stone may a superstructure arise, whose glory, whose magnificence, whose stability, unequalled hitherto, shall astonish the world, and invite even the savage of the wilderness to take shelter under its roof."

"The exact spot on which the stone was to mark the southern end of the district of Columbia was to be placed by Mr. Elliot in the presence of the men selected by the illustrious chieftain then peacefully presiding in executive guardianship over what his sword, his courage, his endurance and clustered virtues had won on many hard fought fields of battle."

"Jones' Point is Alexandria's southern landmark where the great Hunting Creek enters into the Potomac. Jones Point in my early life was a favorite afternoon walk, children liked to search for river shells on its white sandy beach. Later my eldest brother had it as his ground for ducking, I supposed he rented it. Two of the aged servants manumitted under the will of General Washington had their small cabin and my brother's boat house on it, as well as the blind behind which he waited for the feeding flocks of canvass back ducks. The wild water celery was abundant near the Point. His retainers, in their cabin, guarded his guns and kindled on their humble hearth stone the early fire. Old Assar waited on him while Maryanne prepared for the young master his morning cup of coffee."

"In some remote epoch of time, some stumbling spectacle-eyed archaeologist will disinter that boundary stone, and in perhaps another then the original language, write out

a learned thesis on the inscription as to the great discovery of a people uniting themselves with the Babel of construction workmen of all nations..."

"The Great Hunting creek sweeps as the westward boundary line around the town of Alexandria and is bridged with its toll gate. It originally separated Alexandria and Fairfax counties. Of how that creek was crossed ...I have no knowledge. I suppose by row boats, as there was outside the western limit of Alexandria a fording place across Cameron Run, a tributary of the Creek...There are legends pertaining to it. In a grove of fine forest trees on the plain on the right hand side of the road leading to Mount Vernon there is supposed to rest the remains of the Great Indian Chief 'Potomac,' whether true or false I know many times in the first quarter of the nineteenth century wandering Indians came by that southern road on their way to Washington to lay before the 'Big Chief' the story of their wrongs and necessities, and that they left their tales of the chief 'Potomac' as legacies to their hearers. Yes, even after the creek was bridge, the Indian chiefs and their families visited and rested at that grove."

Once, my sister Adela, as a little girl, was frightened when she encountered some Indians when we were buying seeds and bulbs at Peter Billy's garden, which extended to the bank of the creek. Adela fainted from fright although it was not a violent encounter.

Folder 12- "Washington City"

"Washington met the landholders Daniel Carroll, Notley Young, Samuel Davidson and David Burns to agree to the terms of purchase of the site of Washington. They met at the humble home of David Burns. He had one child, a daughter 'Marsha,' who in 1802 married General J.P Van Ness of New York. Her daughter, Anne Elbertina, was a classmate of mine at Madame Greland's, she was musical and a fine harpist. She was one of the Greland girls, as we were called, who were the bridesmaids of Maria Monroe, who was the second daughter of the president James Monroe, in March 1820. The other Greland girl was Anne Cazenove, daughter of Anthony Charles Cazenove, Swiss consul from Geneva, Alexandria merchant and personal friend of Albert Gallatin. He was an intelligent man and the perfect embodiment of old fashioned politeness. The Cazenoves were Presbyterian members of old doctor Muir's church on Fairfax on Wolfe Street. Anne Cazenove was handsome with blue eyes, long dark lashes, and abundant dark hair. A disappointed lover always referred to her as the 'gentle Jessica.' She married General Archibald Henderson and lived at the mansion at the Navy Yard, Washington. He was the head of the Marine Corp. The Van Ness home at that time was one of, if not the, handsomest home in Washington. I was a guest here as well as at the Decatur Mansion built on Lafayette square in 1819. I was also a guest at the home of the Livingstons and their daughter Cora."

"Baron Kindener at that time resided in the Corcoran Mansion built by Thomas Swann Esq. of Alexandria who was a lawyer of eminence. He, Swann, had several sons and one daughter, Mary, who was so sweet in manner and so beautiful that all of her father's law students fell in love with her. She finally married Major John Mercer. Honorable Charles Fenton Mercer of Aldie who was a distinguished member of Congress, introduced her to his kinsmen, the Major, who was the fortunate lover...Of Mr. Swann's sons I remember Edward and Thomas who I think in after years became the

governor of Maryland. The eloquence of Mr. Swann may be attested by his address to a jury in his 'dog case.'"

"The month of March 1820 was fraught with sudden and violent life endings of persons of exalted position..."

March 14- the death of King George III and his son the Duke of Kent (this was the date of when she heard of the death, when it actually occurred is unclear)

March 22- Stephan Decatur fought a duel with Commodore James Barron at the famous dueling ground at Bladensburg. Decatur feel mortally wounded, Barron seriously, but not fatally, shot.

March 24- News of the assassination of the Duke de Berri at the door of the opera house in Paris.

"Rock Creek Bridge was the separating line between Washington and Georgetown. The latter city of eminence early built up with the residences of people of position and intelligence. It was much more popular than Washington for trade, fashion, and the comforts of hotels. Mrs. Abbot, on Bridge Street, was in my early youth the high priestess of fashion and Crawford's the most desirable hotel."

Folder 13- "Monroe Wedding" (Chapter 13)

Summary- For a description of the religious services at the Capital and of the Van Ness, Cazeone, Clay, and Swan Families, and the Decatur Mansion in Washington see chapter 13 in Stark book which also includes descriptions of the marriage of Maria Hester Monroe and Samuel L. Gouverneur of New York on March 9 1820.

Parson McCormick had the position of preacher at the little brick Episcopal Church at the Navy Yard. He was quite known for aiding runaways to be married because he believed himself morally bound "to relieve them from their anomalous position, and by the Church service make them man and wife." Mary Louisa liked to watch the wedding arrivals at the parson's door. "On one wild day of storm with tempest looking clouds making all surrounding objects gloomy, there came rapidly riding upward three tall, florid looking young fellows. It was a midwinter storm, and each strong horse was carrying a double load, for behind each young man was a muffled female figure." At the end of the marriage ceremony, as was the parson's customs to kiss the bride, Parson McCormick lifted the veil and was surprised to find that she was a mulatto disguised with white face powder. This greatly disturbed the parson and he never again married a veiled bride.

Folder 16 "William" (Chapter 17)

Summary: In 1839, Mary Louisa received notice of the death of her youngest brother William, who was handsome, gifted, and adventuresome. He was an accomplished horseman, huntsman, and oarsman. Her brothers, as well as other boys, were educated to be respectful of the elderly and courteous to women. He was born in 1799 as the fifth child in the Slacum family. He went to the Alexandria Academy, also known as the 'academy on the hill' which was bestowed by General Washington as a donation for the annexation of a free school for orphans and indigent children.

One of her earliest recollections was that of Mr. Abiel Holbrook the schoolmaster of the Academy. He was very tall, very angular, and always dressed in olive green and did not powder his hair but instead wore it in a ponytail. He was an honored guest at the tables of the patrons of the school and was also an excellent teacher of English, Greek and Latin.

Her oldest brother, 'George Washington' had been at Cambridge but at the death of her father he returned to Alexandria to share some of their mother's responsibilities, and did not return to Massachusetts. He eventually began to study law with Thomas Swann, Senior, on Prince Street. Her Mother wanted William, the youngest son, to be a merchant and be involved in commerce but instead he was interested in the sea and joined the navy.

During their childhood there was a large ship yard in Alexandria, owned by Hunter and Son, which was located near the Slacum home at the foot of Wilkes Street. During his vacation hours, William would often play there on his father's ships.

"More interesting far than that was his gleaming descriptions of the recent capture and threatened bombardment of the town, with tales of the young English midshipmen who patrolled the streets as guards to prevent the desertion of the English sailors. Men, available for war service, had all, as I shall hereafter prove, hurriedly vacated their homes, and gathered into Hungerford's army across Hunting Creek; encamped between Alexandria and Mount Vernon. The object of General Hungerford, if my memory is correct, was to make a defense and cripple the returning fleet at, or near, the 'White House.' Horses were needed, and every animal that could be gathered had been carried by the citizens to the American army. The British had found the many flour stores on King and other streets filled with the barrels that held the flour from Loudon." English used their sailors to pull the 'captured staff of life' to the ships. There were soldiers on every corner to avoid desertion.

"My brother George, a young, well-mounted and uniformed lighthorseman, had gone under the command of Captain Joe Mandeville, to General Hungerford. My mother, after placing us under old Richard's care, returned to her mother and her home to endeavor to save her property from pillage."

Due to the captain, not advising them that there was an elderly French lady on board William and his friend believed that they would be dropped off at the capes of Virginia instead they got to 'draw straws' to see who got to go to Europe. William won.

William joined the commercial house of Adams and Herbert. "It was not long before his pleased employers sent him to Cuba as a supercargo. The vessel was the brig Juno; her commander, Captain Nelson, a man advanced in life, and with many years of nautical experience. He had through life carried onward the respect and confidence of his fellow man, for he was strong in religious faith and attached to the Methodists, a new but rapidly spreading sect of Christians. The mate was young Gilpin, son of Colonel Gilpin, one of our revolutionary heroes, and the neighbor and friend of Washington."

"The brig Juno was built of Honduras mahogany. 'She was a very heavy lumbering old tub,' sailors had said, but she navigated the old ocean so long in safety that fears had ceased to be expressed for her. Thus, they went, in fancied security, to sea; sailing down the Potomac, through the Chesapeake Bay, out through the Capes of Virginia, out into the oft-time treacherous Atlantic Ocean."

“The Caribbean Sea, and indeed the whole Gulf of Mexico, had had gangs of pirates whose deeds of crimes were numerous. They seemed to have been the legitimate inheritors of the worst men of privateering records. Privateering was legalized robbery, and the initiatory preceptor of slave-ship plunder and piratical cruelty.”

“Favorite retreats for pirates were the many inlets with naturally concealed entrances between the termination of Florida and Islands of the Gulf. Most of these harbors of refuge were called ‘Keys.’ From them would emerge piratical vessels, with the flag of England or the United States, the peaceful merchantman receiving his first intimation of a dangerous neighbor by running up of the black flag, and the salutation of a six-pound shot.”

“Our voyagers were speeding toward the Island of Cuba, when from out of one of the ‘Keys’ there came a swift sailing craft, that, in point of speed, was to the Juno what a well-trained racer is to the plough horse. The booming gun was heard, the black flag hoisted, the pirate vessel so near that the Captain and crew felt that there was no escape for them.”

“My young brother examined his pistols, then swiftly descending the companionway, stood at the foot with his face to the foe, feeling as he often told us, ‘that his last hour of life had come, but that others should meet death with him.’ He heard them as, with curses and yells of triumph, they came up the brig’s side. He heard the supplicating voice of the old Captain. He heard a mixture of foreign oaths, then a voice in English rose about the confused din; and commanding the silence, gave the order to hold on and he would presently ‘make swift work with the old man.’ The next moment the voice of Gilpin who said, ‘Why Halloo! Jack Lee, is it possible this is you, old fellow?’ It afterwards appeared that Jack Lee was the commander of the pirates. He seemed equally glad to see Gilpin.”

‘Lee, you are not going to harm old Captain Nelson, are you?’

‘No. I aint if the Cap’s a friend o’ yourn.’

Gilpin replied, ‘Well, he certainly is, and is a very good man.’

‘Oh - good men. I don’t believe in nothing good- except you Gilpin.’

‘Jack, there is a lad from our old town on board; young William Slacum.’

‘What! A son of the old Cap?’

“All this William heard. Quickly laying down the pistols out of sight he ascended to the deck, and with outstretched hand advanced towards Lee, the pirate, as he said, ‘If you are a friend of Gilpin I ought to know you.’”

‘Why, is this the little shaver as I ha’ seen in Jamieson’s cracker bakery?’

‘Yes Lee,’ said Gilpin, ‘but now you must unloose Captain Nelson.’ He had been bound and stretched on the deck. Gilpin’s recognition of the pirate Lee had changed the whole aspect of affairs.

“To condense this threatened tragedy, I will narrate that Jack Lee had in his very childhood been idle, aggressive, blasphemous, and cruel. He had no remembrance of parents. There was none to direct not to mourn for him. He was bound an apprentice to old Mr. Jamieson, whose extensive ship biscuit and cracker bakery had carried his name and fame over many seas. Gilpin had several times spoken kindly to this outcast who was no profit, but a source of trouble, to good old Mr. Jamieson. On one occasion, Gilpin, at noon, had gone into the yard where an unequal fight was going on, to the amusement of bystanders. It was a fight between a bleeding boy and a man nearly double

his weight. Lee was getting a terrible, perhaps deserved punishment. Gilpin interfered, and receiving a blow, made the fight his own, and rescued the battered boy. He was threatened with dismissal. That night he ran away. No trace of him was found. His memory died out. At a most opportune moment, he in after years, as a piratical commander, stood on the deck of the Juno; bloody in intention, but not entirely lost. One redeeming virtue was seen through his many crimes. It was gratitude. It brought a magic change to his previous ways, and rescue to all on board.”

“Wines and fruits and foreign luxuries were the free gifts of the pirates to Gilpin and his friends. It was a day of awful memory to William. The pirates drinking, cursing, boasting of scuttled vessels and murders on the high seas. Lee did not, perhaps could not, repress them. As the day declined, they left the Juno. She passed Morro Castle and they entered Havana.”

(The following information is from the folder entitled “Musings”) William had scribbled on the back of letters to his family the quotation from scriptures on his monument which is a broken column located in old Christ Church cemetery.