

CHAPTER VIII

MANSKIN LODGE

On the "New Castle" estate there were two large fields which formed a neck of land which protruded into the Pamunkey. The greater of these was known as the "River" field, and a common road extended through it, from the wet, marshy grounds along the river, on up to the road which led from the town of New Castle to Hanover town. Above this field, in King William County, was another slight peninsula, known as Mankind Neck, after a tribe of Indians of that name. This land was part of a patent of 13,500 acres, secured in 1699 by Ralph Wormeley II, of "Rosegill."¹ During the 1840s Ralph's great-great-grandson, Dr. Carter Warner Wormeley, settled with his family on this point of land, and used the roadway as a landing for his ferry.

The Wormeley family relinquished a portion of their grant, in favor of the College of William and Mary.² Dr. Wormeley's father, Warner Lewis Wormeley, was born at Rosegill in 1785. By that time the family's property in Mankind Neck consisted of slightly more than 5,600 acres of land,³ and when Warner inherited the tract, only 2,900 acres remained. This acreage consisted of two estates, "Mankind Lodge" and "Wormeley Grove."⁴

In addition to a landed inheritance, Warner Wormeley's forebears passed on a tradition of public service. Ralph Wormeley II, the builder of Rosegill, was a powerful member of the King's Council during the rule of Gov. Sir William Berkeley. He, also, was the first native-born Virginian to graduate from Oxford.⁵ This public responsibility was assumed by succeeding generations of Wormeley heirs, down to Warner's father, Ralph, the fifth. Warner, however, was not of such bent. He was educated from 1801 to 1804 in England, first at Ashford, Kent, and then in London, at the school of one Thomas Reeves, Merchant.⁶ So delinquent was Warner in his studies, however, that his father once referred to him as "remarkably ignorant" for his age, and in a state of pique, threatened to take away the lad's inheritance.⁷

Shortly after his stay abroad young Warner was married to Maria Carter Hall, daughter of Dr. Elisha Hall, of Fredericksburg. Through her mother, Maria Wormeley was a great-granddaughter of "King" Carter, of Corotoman, and thus the blood of Virginia's royal family was



Manskin Lodge, around 1896. Guernsey cattle and old "Uncle Isaac," in right foreground

brought into yet another house on the Pamunkey. The Wormeleys had four children, of whom two sons, John Tayloe and Carter Warner, survived infancy. Warner Wormeley died in 1814, and Carter was born early in the next year, at "Wormeley Grove."⁸

A year before his death, Warner Wormeley placed his land, slaves, and personal property in the hands of trustees for the support of himself and his family. At that time, "Manskin Lodge" had 1,923 acres, and "Wormeley Grove" had 1,000 acres. The trustees, Garret Minor and Robert Stanard, of Fredericksburg, were to receive "six percent commission on all sales, receipts, collections, payments, and compromises,"⁹ carried out during their management. Maria Wormeley retained the services of these gentlemen after her husband's death, and returned to Fredericksburg with her sons. Early in her widowhood, she attended a performance given in Fredericksburg by a company of touring actors, led by a young Englishman, James Henry Caldwell. Mrs. Wormeley was quite taken by this young man, and, according to the story, she "found the actor-manager irresistible, and threw herself at him, scandalizing the staid Virginia gentry."¹⁰ Caldwell apparently returned the affection felt by this young widow of means, and the two were married.

During the years after her second marriage, Maria Caldwell lived in Fredericksburg. Within five years she gave birth to four children, of whom two, a daughter and a son, lived to adulthood. Her Wormeley sons, Carter and John, were sent to a boarding school at the "Glebe," in Middlesex County, where young Carter wrote to his mother, on 19 May 1823, that he and his brother were "nearly through the English Reader."¹¹

James Caldwell pursued an active career in bringing the theatre to the Lower South, especially to New Orleans. His first acting-house, the American Theatre, was built there in 1824. He later constructed the "St. Charles," "the grandest theatre the South had ever known,"¹² and was responsible for launching the American acting career of Junius Brutus Booth.

The Caldwell's daughter, Sophia, was born during the year of her father's initial successes with the American Theatre. Shortly after this James decided to abandon the Virginia circuit and to remove, permanently, to New Orleans. Maria refused to go with her husband, and, within a few years, the couple became estranged. The situation was made worse by Mrs. Caldwell's refusal to grant her husband a divorce,

even after he scandalously fell in love with his leading woman, Jane Placide.¹³

In her dejection, Maria sought the comfort of religion, and found further consolation in the upbringing of her four children. Carter continued his education at the University of Virginia, the alma mater of his brother, John. Carter was a student there from 1830 to 1832, and the following year he entered the Medical College of the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.¹⁴ His choice of the doctor's life was probably due to the association with many of his mother's family, while Mrs. Caldwell lived with her children in Fredericksburg. Carter had never known his father, and the men of the Hall family probably provided the only continual masculine influence felt by Carter and his brothers during their childhood. The boys' Grandfather Hall was a prominent Fredericksburg physician, and Maria's brother, Benjamin Harrison Hall, had an outstanding medical practice in St. Louis, Missouri.¹⁵

Carter studied in Philadelphia for three years. His mother was unwell during this time, and letters written to her "precious duck bones" were filled with complaints. Her devotion to her religion remained constant, however, and in a letter written to her son in December, 1833, Mrs. Caldwell spoke of attending a prayer meeting, and told her son not to "forget to pray," to "remember that Jesus Christ died for you," and to "bear this in mind and ask him for his Holy Spirit."¹⁶ Carter graduated from medical school in 1836, and in October of that year he was married to Ellen Bankhead Lightfoot, whose parents were Philip and Sally Bernard Lightfoot, of the little town of Port Royal, in Caroline County, not very far from Fredericksburg. The young couple temporarily made their home in Port Royal, where their first child was born one year later.¹⁷

The birth of her first grandchild, though a rite of passage in the life of any woman, did not relegate Maria Caldwell to the halls of retirement. She was still a parent with responsibilities. Carter's marriage and removal from home was followed by the matriculation of his younger brother, William Shakespeare Caldwell, at the University of Virginia. He studied there for one year, and later went to New York City to practice medicine.¹⁸ Sophia, a blossoming teenager, became Maria's last boon.

In November, 1837, Maria Caldwell and her estranged husband put on straight faces long enough to relinquish to her sons Carter and John

all claims to the estate of Warner Wormeley. By this time only 1,142 acres, a part of "Manskin Lodge," was all that remained of this property. Minor and Stanard, while serving as trustees, had in the course of managing the Wormeley estate, been forced to sell all of Wormeley Grove, and a portion of Manskin Lodge, in 1822.¹⁹

John Wormeley sold his share of his father's property to his brother, Carter, and, thus, the young doctor became the sole proprietor of Manskin Lodge. He and the former Miss Lightfoot had ten children, five born in Port Royal, and five born at Manskin, where the family had become permanently established by 1851.²⁰ Though Warner and Maria Wormeley had once inhabited Wormeley Grove, none of the family had ever lived at Manskin, and the only dwellings there were those of the field hands and the tenants who worked the land. Dr. and Mrs. Wormeley enlarged the overseer's house, and embellished its rooms with new furniture and with silver and portraits from Rosegill. Among Dr. Wormeley's possessions were the old seal of the Wormeley family, graced by an agate handle; a pair of candlesticks whose bases were engraved with the arms of the royal silversmith, no doubt the gift of a grateful British monarch; and, a very large sterling tureen.²¹ Dr. Wormeley also built a fine library.

Of the children, Sally Lightfoot Wormeley was the oldest. She was followed by Warner Lewis, Ralph, William Baynham (called Baynham), Maria Carter, Sophie, Philip Lightfoot (called Lightfoot), Carter Landon, William Braxton (called Willie), and Ellen Byrd Wormeley. Sally was born with a hearing impediment which resulted later in total deafness, Warner was born sightless, Ralph died as an infant, and Baynham died when fifteen years of age. Of ten children, eight lived to adulthood.²²

When Carter and Ellen Wormeley brought their family to Manskin, the community around Old Church was filled with married couples who, like themselves, had young children. As I have mentioned, up-country King William was lonely territory, and to be nearer to his sociable Hanover neighbors, Dr. Wormeley purchased from his friend and distant cousin, Carter Braxton, five acres of land in the forks of the road below Old Church. Here the Wormeleys built a summer house named "Forkland."²³ Near this parcel of ground was an eighteenth-century farmhouse, also owned by Mr. Braxton. His nephew, Braxton Garlick of Waterloo, in New Kent, used this dwelling as a summer house, thus adding, during the warm months, another family to the

congenial group already in Old Church. In 1853 the youngsters of the neighborhood held their "Queen of May" celebration at "Forkland," and Ella Bassett of "Clover Lea" composed the recitations.²⁴

The Manskin household was rounded out by Northern governesses whom Dr. Wormeley employed to teach his children. One of these ladies came from Maine, and when young Baynham died in July, 1858, one Miss Lishin was the children's teacher.²⁵

Maria Caldwell was somewhat overwhelmed by the sudden death of her grandson, and sympathetically invited her son and his wife to join her later that summer on a peregrination to the Rock Alum and White Sulphur Springs.²⁶ Dr. Wormeley declined this offer, and, in doing so, he may have refused his mother's last great act of affection. A year after her holiday, the former mistress of "Wormeley Grove" came to her end in a house which she and her daughter Sophia occupied in Richmond. She was buried in a lot purchased by her children in Hollywood Cemetery.²⁷

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¹King William County, Virginia, from old Newspapers & Files. (Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, 1955). P. 63. Compiled and annotated by Elizabeth Hawes Ryland.

²*Ibid.*

³King William County Land Books, 1782-1787. Microfilm, Archives Division, Virginia State Library.

⁴Reference to acreages in deed of 15 April 1813, Warner Wormeley to Minor and Stanard, trustees. Wormeley papers, Virginia Historical Society.

⁵Dowdey, Clifford. *The Virginia Dynasties: The Emergence of "King" Carter and the Golden Age*. (New York: Bonanza Books, 1969). P. 45.

⁶Letters of Ralph Wormeley of "Rosegill," to his son, Warner Lewis Wormeley, while the latter was in school in England, 29 June 1801 to 14 July 1804. Wormeley papers, Virginia Historical Society.

⁷*Ibid.*, 29 June 1801.

⁸"The Wormeley Family," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Historical Society). Vol. 37, No. 1, 1929, p. 84.

Tombstone of Dr. Carter Wormeley, Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond.

⁹Deed to Minor and Stanard, 15 April 1813. Wormeley papers, Virginia Historical Society.

¹⁰Dorman, James Hunter, Jr. *Theater in the Ante-Bellum South, 1815-1861*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967). P. 47.

¹¹Letter of Carter Wormeley, "Glebe," Middlesex County, to Maria Carter Caldwell, Fredericksburg, 19 May 1823. Wormeley papers, Virginia Historical Society.

¹²Kane, Harnett T. *Queen New Orleans, City by the River*. (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1949). P. 174. Caldwell's career discussed pp. 167-177.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 170, 171, and 173.

¹⁴*Students of the University of Virginia*. (Baltimore: Charles Harvey and Company, Publisher, 1878). Pages unnumbered.

¹⁵"Hall Family of Tacony, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania." Communicated by Dr. J. Hall Pleasants, of Baltimore, Maryland, for the *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*. Series One, Volume 22, No. 1, July 1913. P. 136.

¹⁶Letter of Maria C. Caldwell, Fredericksburg, to Carter Wormeley, 319 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2 December 1833. Wormeley papers, Virginia Historical Society.

¹⁷Register of Immanuel Episcopal Church, Old Church, Virginia, 1851-1926. P. 4. Photostatic copy found in Archives Division, Virginia State Library.

¹⁸*Students of the University of Virginia*, op. cit.

¹⁹Deed of 7 November 1837, James and Maria Caldwell to Carter and John Tayloe Wormeley. Wormeley papers, Virginia Historical Society.

²⁰Land Book, King William County, 1851. Archives Division, Virginia State Library.

²¹Items in possession of the Virginia Historical Society and of the devisees of Mrs. Sarah Blair Harvie Wormeley.

²²Register of Immanuel Church, 1851-1926.

Statements of family members.

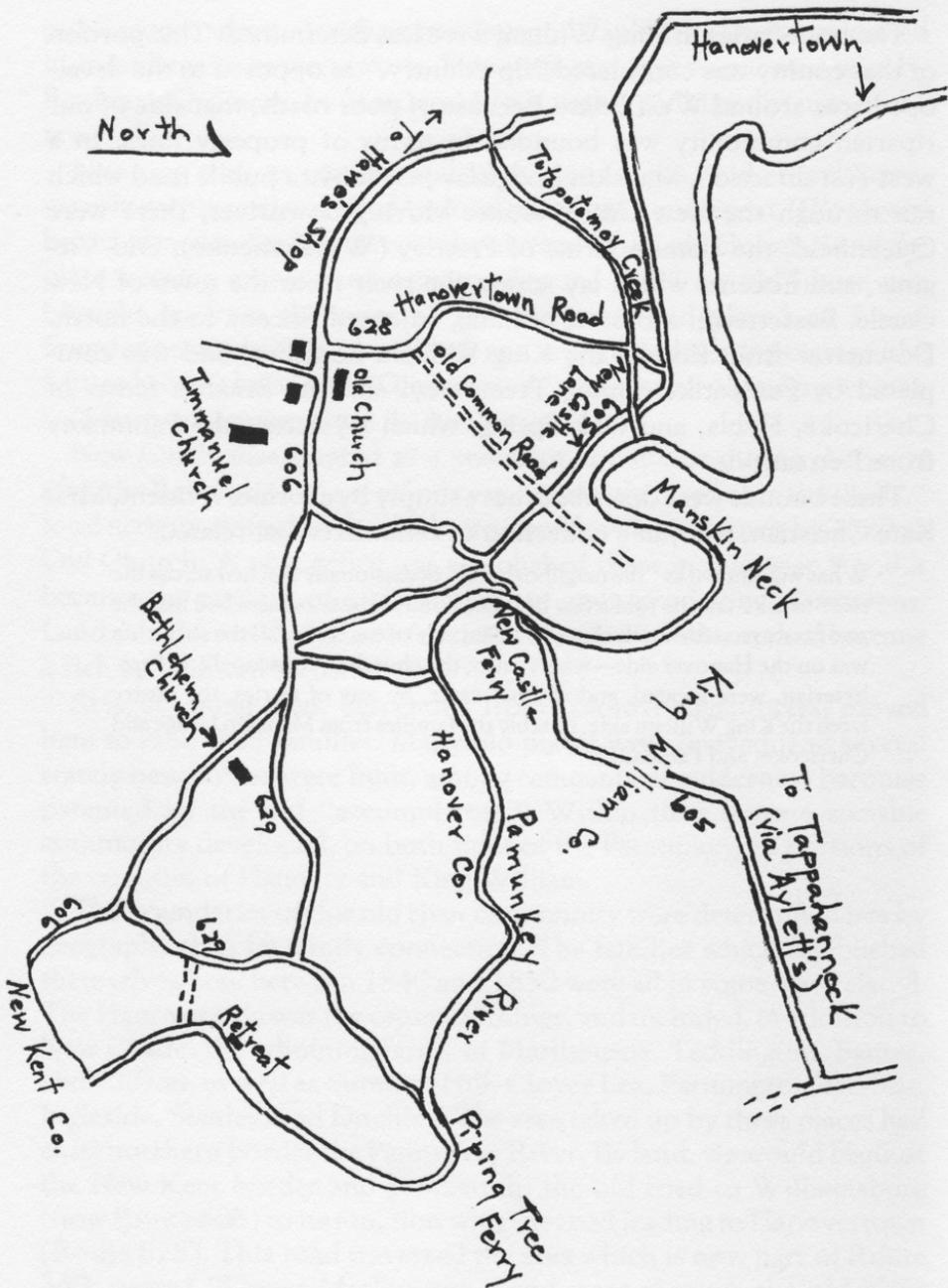
²³Reference made to this purchase in deed of 19 August 1870, Dr. Carter Wormeley to Bentley and Henry Tucker of Old Church. Hanover County Deed Book 4, p. 293.

²⁴Letter of Elizabeth Randolph Braxton of Ingleside, to her sister, Lucy Braxton, at the White Sulphur Springs, 2 May 1853. Folder 13, Johnston papers, Virginia Historical Society.

²⁵Letter of Maria Carter Caldwell, Fredericksburg, to Dr. Carter Wormeley, Mankin Lodge, 24 July 1858. Wormeley papers, Virginia Historical Society.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷Mrs. Caldwell died in September, 1859.



Map of Boundaries