Growing Up in Early 20th Century
Essex County

as told by a “Native Son”

The best thing that could happen to a child born into a large family is to be the youngest. So says Carroll Garnett who freely admits to having been wonderfully spoiled by his six older brothers and a sister. The shared knowledge and experiences and the intellectual stimulation and challenge among these siblings and their parents provided a firm foundation for developing character and skills.

In addition, the activities, atmosphere, and attitudes of the Essex County neighborhood of which this busy family was an integral part, built on that foundation to expand all its young people’s knowledge and skills, integrity, sensibilities, perception, and superior standards of value. Some of the activities furnished lessons in self-reliance and self-respect as well as how to deal with peer pressures and handle dangerous situations. They also promoted imagination, ingenuity, and resourcefulness.

Typically, Carroll Garnett’s life in Dunsville Elementary School, grades 1 through 6 beginning in 1926, illustrates how he and his peers acquired many of these worthy qualities.

In warm weather, walking barefoot on the sandy road made the journey to school a bit more pleasant, especially when the fox grapes along the way were ripe. His Cousin Manie Garnett was principal of the two-room school and cousin or not, Carroll felt the full force of her no-nonsense methods of teaching and discipline.

In contrast to the fearsome regimen of the classroom, the schoolyard activities were exuberant and free wheeling. Do today’s TV cartoons, MTV, and Nintendo games help children develop strong muscles, quick reflexes, enthusiasm, teamwork, and self-control that such games as “Ante Over!” did? One team formed on each side of the school house. One of those had a ball. At the signal “Antel!” and the response from the other side “Over!” the ball was pitched OVER the roof to the yell, “Here She Comes!” The receiving team’s objective was to charge around the building and “tag” a rival member with the ball, thus eliminating that player from the game. Whoever survived this alternating attrition was the winner. Many rules and strategies were developed to make this a highly competitive and exciting contest.

“Horses” was favorite fun also. Sometimes the harness would be a small rope around one boy’s shoulders. His “driver” held the ropes and the pairs raced around the school yard. A special harness was made with a discarded inner tube: a strip went around the shoulders, the two ends reaching about mid-way of each leg. An opening large enough to put the “Horse’s” foot through was sliced in each end. The result was a great feeling of power as the rubber stretched up and down when the “steed” pumped toward the finish line.

“Dare Base” pitted two teams against each other to see which side could capture the most of the other’s players as they “dared” to leave the sanctuary of their own bases. Another version of this was “Prisoner Base”. The boy who was caught became a “prisoner”. He stood on the enemy’s base, arm extended, hoping one of his teammates could free him by charging over and touching him before being intercepted. This became a very vigorous exercise as determined young runners clashed.

Then there was “Mumblety Peg”. This one-on-one contest involved dropping an open pocket knife from 12 precise prescribed body positions so that the blade stuck into the ground each time. The one who achieved this feat of dexterity had the privilege of driving a two or three inch peg into the ground with 3 taps of a knife handle. To the winner’s demand “Root, little pig, root” the loser was obliged to get on all fours and use his nose to dig the peg loose, then remove it with his teeth. The hands could not be used at any time.

A sport that was popular with the truly intrepid seems to have been based on emulating squirrels or circus flagpole acrobats. A player climbed 25 feet or so up a very flexible sapling, usually pine, and then using body weight, made it sway. When it leaned close enough to another such, the climber transferred to that other tree. Whew!

An extra-curricula activity which stands out in his memory took place on the school grounds later. Some time around 1934 the Coast and Geodetic Survey erected a 100 feet tower just behind the school house. It was a skeletal temporary affair, with a platform at the top so the people doing the survey could make their sightings. Access was by a corner ladder built into the frame. Most of the boys around had scaled the tower when ever the CGS people were away. Betty Mae Tyler lived across the highway from the school on the land next to Carroll’s home. Hill and Dale”. There were no other girls her age nearby so consequently she played with the boys. She was a good sport and fit in fine. At the first opportunity, Carroll challenged her to climb the tower. She didn’t hesitate. Hand over hand she went — up the ladder to the very top.
They lingered there, enjoying the sweeping view of the Rappahannock, all the way down to Bowlers, and across the river to Warsaw. When it was time to come down, Betty froze. On top she had the opportunity to see the tremendous height and now the realization struck her. After about 15 minutes of persuasion, Carroll convinced her of a method of descending which gave her the courage to try: he would go down one or two rungs first, then she would come down one or two. He would always be just a few rungs below her. It worked. Did she ever climb the tower again? No!

Across the road from "Hill and Dale", on the way to school, were a number of apple trees, property of Mrs. Ainslie. The school boys did not hesitate to sample the fruit. Mrs. Ainslie complained to Mrs. Garnett that some boys were stealing her apples. When his mother could speak with him alone she asked Carroll if he had been among the culprits. He answered truthfully but immediately regretted the confession. His mother's instructions that he report his transgression to Mrs. Ainslie and apologize sent a current of fear and shame through him. He could barely bring himself to say, "Mrs. Ainslie, I know the name of one of the boys who were stealing your apples." "Who?" she cried. When Carroll answered that it had been he, Mrs. Ainslie said, "Well, that's perfectly all right" and gave him several dozen apples to take home! He ran all the way to his mother with the news. She, realizing that a great object lesson had just been learned, merely smiled.

Along with the adventures of school was sharing the business of maintaining the family home and farm. By the time he was six years old, Carroll was entrusted with the responsibility of keeping the seven fireplaces at "Hill and Dale" supplied with wood and kindling and starting the fires in the morning. Wells often did not furnish enough water to fill the needs of the family and farm so water had to be fetched from a spring. Care of the animals was routine and could never be neglected or postponed. Cows had to be milked every morning and evening. Horses, mules, cows, guineas, pigeons, pets, all were eager for their evening meal as the sun began to sink. Even wild ducks, especially in the fall, came winging in at the dusk, close to the ground, circling the house, then landing in a flock to claim a share.

Once the little boy was given a fine sow. His father cast him a quizzical look when he said he was going to call it "Bulldog" but agreed that "Bulldog" it would be. This presented a problem sometime later when "Bulldog" had eight little pigs.

Dinnertime at "Hill and Dale" was a regular occasion for practicing proper manners and gracious behavior. Mrs. Garnett had learned the importance of etiquette and been well trained in the social graces at her childhood home in Louisiana. Her example and firm insistence on compliance produced polite, self-confident adults who could move with poise and ease in the most cultured and sophisticated company.

Carroll had not attained his full statue when he was ready for the daily bus ride to Rappahannock District High School at Center Cross so there he acquired a nickname: "Little Runt". Those became fighting words and the early days at RDHS were not as pleasant for him as school had been before. Things were especially hard for him during his 15th year when his father died.

However, he excelled at sports - all very different from "Ante Over" and "Dare Base", but requiring the competitive drive, determination, skills, and strength developed on the little Dunnsville school yard and in the fields and woods of "Hill & Dale". On the track team he won the 100 yard dash at Field Day in King and Queen, played short stop on the baseball team, was captain of the basketball team, and learned enough about boxing to be able to beat the intramural champion when he got to V.P.I. as well as being named to Tech's All Star softball team.

Mr. Carleton Jenkins, Principal of RDHS, took a special interest in Carroll, recognizing in him an exceptional quality of mind and spirit. Inspired and encouraged by this wise and sensitive man, and fortified by the training and influence of his parents, Carroll went on to fulfill his great potential and achieve success wherever he directed his energy.

Dunnsville was the hub of the community around "Hill and Dale". There were two general stores, Ware's and Atkins, where a penny bought as many as three pieces of candy. Eggs and butter could be traded for one pie crust or pans or brooms—such things which could not be made by even the most skilled hands at home. The inventories would rival the modern discount store for the variety of merchandise in stock—lace collars to horse collars and innumerable items in between. Any excuse served as a reason to go to the store because news and information and gossip were always available there, too. Bob Beazley performed feats of strength and skill in his blacksmith shop while customers and passers-by lingered under a huge oak tree to visit and exchange stories. His service of repairing spokes for wagon wheels and refitting metal rims as well as shoeing horses and mules was dependable and indispensable. Virtually every household had at least one horse and buggy or wagon for transportation from farm to farm, or to church, to the wharf, or the store. Sometimes the route ran along the river shore so the length of the visit depended upon the state of the tide. During a ride up a sandy lane through open fields or tree lined driveway to the houses someone often had to get down from the buggy to open one or several gates, wait, then close each very carefully from the other side to keep the farm animals from straying.

Cars began to appear on the narrow dusty roads. Horses, meeting them, were startled by the noisy contraptions and sometimes reared and bolted. Children marveled and admired and learned to identify each new model which was paraded by its proud owner: Model Ts, Chevrolets, Hupmobiles, Essexes, and Eddie Kriete's spectacular Auburn.

Gradually the horses and buggies disappeared, the roads were widened and surfaced, supplies and products were delivered and shipped by trucks instead of steamers. The pot-bellied stoves were replaced by central heating, the water buckets by indoor plumbing, the kerosene lamps by electric lights, and the news came from around the world on the radio or across the fields by the telephones. The little school house was abandoned and classes 1 through 12 were conducted in separate rooms in big warm buildings a long bus ride away in Tappahannock.

World War II scattered many of the boys and girls who had absorbed the basic lessons along with Carroll, playing "Ante Over", performing their share of the chores of day to day living, helping their neighbors, learning how to make the most of circumstances. Some went off to college on the proceeds from an asparagus crop, crab pots, a melon patch, or a litter of pigs. Most then served their country in the uniformed services or on the home front.

In the second half of the century the pace of change accelerated sharply. Those who returned to Essex brought new skills and a mature perception of its opportunities. New comers, attracted by the natural advantages of the area, contributed energy and imagination in its development. The enduring character of the county and its people has preserved it as a beautiful, safe, pleasant, and rewarding place to live.
THE ESSEX COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY met at 3:00 P.M. Sunday, April 22, 1990 in St. Margaret's School Chapel, Mr. Wilson Ware presiding.

Reading of the minutes of the January meeting was dispensed with since they are recorded in the Bulletin which all paid up members received in the mail with notice of this meeting. Mr. Smithee, Treasurer, reported a balance on hand of $1611.39. He announced that anyone who had not paid their dues could pay today following the program. Mr. Ware then asked that guests be introduced. Mrs. Wright introduced Mr. Edgar Blount of Tappahannock who became a member at this meeting. Mrs. Agnes Ware introduced Mrs. Mary Walston, also living in Tappahannock. Mr. Smithee introduced Mr. and Mrs. H. VanArsdale who had become members at the January meeting. They have recently moved to Tappahannock. Mr. Kenneth R. Davis of Callao, Va. joined the society at this meeting. These guests and members were welcomed warmly by the president and all other members present.

Mrs. Wright announced that the committee appointed in January to organize social hours for this year: Mrs. Nancy Tuck Ball, Mrs. Jeannette Ellis, Mrs. Polly Taliaferro, Mrs. Elizabeth Smithee, met in February and asked the following members to act as chairmen of refreshment committees for the quarterly meetings: Mrs. Jeannette Ellis, April; Mrs. Ruth Little, July; Mrs. Nancy Ball, October; Mrs. Eldon Christopher, January, 1991.

Mr. Ware was happy to have these appointments made and thanked the committee for its fine work. He announced that the social hour and refreshments would be in the upstairs entrance hall following the day's program. He thanked the hostesses, Mrs. Jeannette Ellis, Chairman, Mrs. Mittie Wellford, Mrs. Helene Garnett, Mrs. Lib Smithee, and Mrs. Daisy Gouldin.

Before turning the meeting over to our program chairman, Mr. Ware announced our July 15th meeting will be at "Monte Verde", home of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Lindsey near Bowlers.

Colonel Stockdon, Vice President in charge of Programs, introduced the speaker, Dr. Louis Manerin who is Chief of the Archives for the State of Virginia. A native of Washington, D.C., he earned a B.S. degree at Western Maryland University, an M.A. and PhD at Duke University. He has published information relating to collecting and preserving historical data. He edited Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee, and wrote History of Henrico County. Colonel Stockdon cited an instance in which Dr. Manerin's expertise was invaluable in helping him locate some important records.

Dr. Manerin reviewed some of the early history of Virginia. Christopher Newport, recognizing the threat of the Indian presence, saw to it that forts were built at strategic locations along the James River. Thomas Dale established an iron foundry at the fort at Henricus and a hospital in Chesterfield. Dr. Manerin stressed the importance of finding, preserving, and using records of past actions and transactions. He reminded the group that proper care of current records is also essential. The Virginia legislature recognizes this and has put an extra tax on deeds and other legal instruments recorded in clerks' offices for the purpose of protecting them.

Dr. Manerin was very gracious in answering questions in discussions following the talk.

Anne T. Wright, Secretary

THE ESSEX COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY met at "Monte Verde," the beautiful colonial home of Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Lindsey on Sunday afternoon, July 15, 1990, Mr. Wilson Ware presiding. Reading of the minutes was dispensed with as they are printed in the Bulletin for all members to be informed. In the absence of the Treasurer, the reading of his report was omitted but the report was filed for the auditor. Mrs. Wright stated that she would receive any dues forthcoming.

Mrs. Ruth Bland introduced her guests, Captain and Mrs. Hipp who live in Tappahannock on Water Lane.

There being no old business for consideration, Mr. Ware introduced Mrs. Ruth Little. She is a genealogical and historical researcher, a member of the Essex County Library Board. She described the work of a couple from McLean, Va., Ruth and Sam Falucia. Working with very specialized new equipment they have abstracted and indexed all the old Rappahannock County records which are in the Essex County Court House. These cover the years from 1656 to 1677. The index of material in 9 Deed Books and other papers greatly facilitate locating specific references. A second project, not covered by the abstracts for the years 1677-1721 which a Mr. Dorman had done previously, was completed by the Fulcas for the remaining later records. The charge for copies of the first work is $200, and for the later period which included more material is $317. Mrs. Little suggested that the Essex County Historical Society buy the indexes and place them in the Historical Research Room of the Essex County Library where they would be accessible to all interested parties. It was moved and seconded and agreed that the ECHS purchase the 1st book. Mrs. Little offered to arrange to have it bound. If the index proves to be as useful as it is believed it will be, the ECHS hopes to be able to buy the second one later.

The Fulcas have performed the same service in many other Virginia counties, including all of those surrounding Essex. Mrs. Little showed one of those volumes and read some excerpts, one of which was a reference to Smith's Mill.

Mr. Ware introduced Mrs. Douglas Lindsey who spoke for a few minutes about her home, "Monte Verde". The Program Chairman then introduced our guest speaker, Colonel Philip Semsch. Colonel Semsch is retired from the United States Army Intelligence Section, and now lives in the Northern Neck. He was educated in his home state at the University of Minnesota and in Virginia at the University of Richmond. His military service was chiefly in the Middle East and in Washington, D.C. as an expert on Middle Eastern Affairs. He has been editor of the Northern Neck Historical Society Quarterly. He teaches History, Government, and Foreign Affairs courses at Rappahannock Community College, Warsaw.

After the program, Mr. Ware thanked Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey for making their home available for the meeting, and the ECHS's hostesses: Mrs. Ruth Little, Chairman, Mrs. Frances Garrett, Mrs. Madelaine Ware, Mrs. Coty Dowell, Mrs. Alga DeShazo, for providing refreshments.

Unfortunately some of our members missed this particularly pleasant experience because they were attending the King & Queen Historical Society's meeting where one of our most respected members was the guest speaker, Miss Betsey Fleet.

Anne T. Wright, Secretary
Monte Verde
Remarks by Sara Ann Lindsey

In 1790 Joseph Janey immigrated to the United States from France. In 1815 he purchased 793 acres on the Rappahannock River in South Farnham Parish, Essex County. It was the part of the original patent of Thomas Bowler which retained the name, Bowler. By 1815 Janey had purchased and built a county seat on the adjoining 750 acres. In 1826 he acquired 900 acres of “Corbin Hill” from the grandchildren of Carter Braxton, the Signer. He also owned “Snow Hill” which was probably contiguous to the other three tracts but this has not been determined as of yet.

When Janey bought “Bowlers”, “Corbin Hill”, and “Snow Hill” they were already named. He, however, chose a name for the tract between “Bowlers” and “Corbin Hill” where he built his county seat. He called the place “Monte Verde”, an Italian name translated as “Green Mount”. It was a suitable name as the house sits on the brow of a green hill.

The choice of an Italian name sprang from the cultural trend in the United States at the time. The leaders of the young republic looked back to classical Greece and Rome for inspiration for their government, laws, architecture, and decorative arts. Many town names were borrowed from ancient places such as Rome, Athens, Sparta, Syracuse, and Memphis. Thomas Jefferson chose an Italian name, “Monticello”, for his plantation. So, Joseph Janey was simply indulging in the fashion of the time when he gave an Italian name to “Monte Verde”.

The earliest record of the name “Monte Verde” appears on the Mutual Assurance Society fire insurance policy Janey purchased on July 17, 1816. The will of his widow, Adelaide Janey, written on April 29, 1846 reaffirms the spelling. She bequeaths “the tract of land on which I now reside, called "Monte Verde", to her granddaughter, Adelaide Lorimer.

It is interesting to review the evolutionary process by which the spelling and pronunciation of the house’s name was changed. Other examples of this in Essex County are the changing of Thomas Waring’s “Goldborough” to “Goldberry” and the changing of the part of the Thomas Bowler patent left to his son James in his will of 1678 as “Mary Gold” to the present “Marigold”.

When Janey died in 1832 his widow ordered a tombstone from Baltimore, Maryland. The stone cutter dropped the “e” from Monte and listed his residence as Mont Verde. This bastardize printing was neither Italian, French nor English, and from that time forward the spelling and pronunciation of the name went awry.

On March 17, 1861 the deed of February 25, 1858 was recorded at the Essex County Court House. This deed indicated the sale of Monte Verde (not Monte or Mont Verde as formerly recorded) by Cosmo and Adelaide Lorimer Gordon to Robert S. Hipkins. Had the community begun to believe that a “u” was left out of Mont on the tombstone rather than an “e” having been dropped? The name was still spelled “Monte Verde” on many surveys and tax records but the Clarksons sold the property to Clayton Stafford about 1896 as “Monte Verde”. Unfortunately, when the 1920 printing of OLD HOUSES IN ESSEX COUNTY was published the house was listed as “Mt.” Verde. This spelling was picked up by the Interior Department in the 1937 Historic American Building Survey and repeated in the VIRGINIA CATALOG in 1976.

While the written name had incorrectly passed from “Monte Verde” to “Mont Verde”, to “Mount Verde”, then “Mt. Verde”, the pronunciation of Verde changed even more drastically. Descendants of the Clarksons and relatives of the Staffords verify that the property has been pronounced “Mount Verd” (rhyming with bird) throughout the Twentieth Century.

This was the state of affairs when Lt. Col. and Mrs. William M. Fleming purchased the house and thirteen acres from Fred L. Garrett, Jr. in 1951. The tombstone listed a name of which the first word Mont was French and the second word Verde was Italian or Spanish. The community at large spelled the name “Mount Verde” yet pronounced it “Mount Vird”. The Flemings threw up their hands in despair and completely renamed the house Omnium Hill, the name of a place in a Trollope novel they were reading.

In 1965, when Douglas and Sara Ann Lindsey purchased the house from Mrs. Fleming, they felt that the name of the house should be returned to the original name given it by its builder and first owner, Joseph Janey. Research of County court records, secondary material, and oral interviews has verified that the house has now regained its rightful name - "Monte Verde". However, in as much as the “e” has been left off “Monte” on Janey’s tombstone in the pasture southeast of the house there is no guarantee that the proper spelling “Monte Verde” and the proper pronunciation (moan-tay ver-day) will persist.

In Memorium

Robert B. Rouzie died on Sunday, June 24, 1990 at his home in Tappahannock. He is buried in Essex Cemetery.

Retired in 1973, he had been employed at the Southside Bank for 53 years. He served two tenures on the Tappahannock Town Council totalling 36 years. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1938 to 1945. He had been Commander of American Legion Post No. 64, Commodore of the Tappahannock Yacht Club, Treasurer of the Industrial Park Association. He had been a president of the Rotary Club, Essex Men’s Club, and the Essex County Historical Society, a member of Arlington Masonic Lodge 126, a charter member of Tappahannock United Methodist Church and a member of its Board of Trustees for 50 years.

Officers of the Society

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Vice President ............... Colonel Wallace B. Stockdon
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Meetings are held quarterly in the Essex Court House, or in an historic home or church of the County. Dues are $1.00 per year. For copies of publications send $1.00 to Mrs. J. M. Evans, Box 8, Tappahannock, Virginia 22569

Colonel Semisch's Address will be printed in the next issue of the Bulletin.

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