

Recollections
of
Early West Point

Recollections

of

Early West Point

Mrs. MARY LIPSCOMB

In Collaboration with

Frances Healy

1931

Recollections

of
Early West Point

MR. MARY LIPSCOMB
in Connection with
Francis Henry

1891

DEDICATION



Miss Mary New Lipscomb, Mrs. Lipscomb's daughter, to whom the memoirs are affectionately dedicated by her mother.

FOREWORD

The men, women, events and places which are due mention in a historical sketch of West Point are legion. Here, a town, and with it, a history, has been built—in all an intricate woven pattern, which a small pamphlet embracing memoirs of the first native of the present West Point, Mrs. Mary Lipscomb, does not dare attempt to trace. Only the nuclear points of the pattern have been touched upon, and many of those have, of necessity, been omitted.

It is not, then, the purpose of the booklet to give in any way a complete history of the early town, but only to publish the “now and then” memories of one who has lived longer in West Point than any other of her citizens.

AUTHORS.

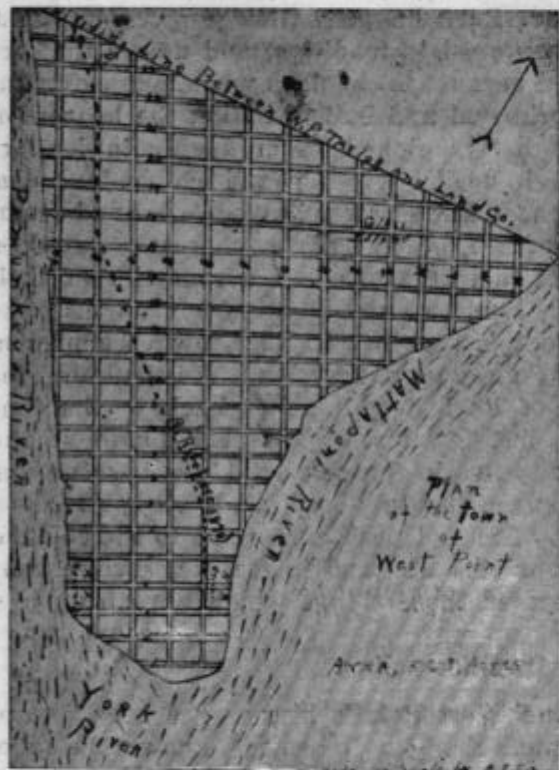
THE FOUNDING OF THE TOWN

The history of many Virginia towns is similar. Each has its hallowed spots, its buildings wrapped in tradition, and names that are sacred because in the days when men overcame the primeval and built a nation the bearers of those names etched them deeply in its lore through deeds of valor and stupendous consequence. These towns have grown and become modernized, but there is ever present a suggestion of their agesomeness, a reminder of their history, and an atmosphere of unchangefulness.

To this type of Virginia town the present West Point does not conform. It is true that the span of its history reaches back to the time when but few towns had been founded, and when to live in the new land was heroism, but who knows the details of this history? Destruction by fire and pestilence came to the colonial town on this site, and in that destruction were obliterated those things which have been preserved in many other places, and around which their traditions cling.

And West Point's history has been one of continual change. It has not known the quietude of constancy that broods over many places. In the "backward look" through the chapters of this booklet will be noted this quality of fluctuation characteristic of the town, old in its antecedents, but young in its present structure.

West Point owes its being to railroad expan-



Plan of the Town of West Point. (Sketch made by Pollard Fox.)

sion. The present town originated with the extension of the tracks of the Southern Railway from White House to a large farm at this location owned by Honorable William P. Taylor, son of the distinguished John Taylor, of Caroline. It was largely due to the efforts of Mr. Frank New, Mrs. Lipscomb's father, and Mr. Alex Dudley that the railroad was expanded to the "point." This led to a further development, the formation of the West Point Land Company, the directors of which held their first meeting in March, 1856. Five hundred acres of land were purchased from William P. Taylor by the land company, composed of influential men from King William, King and Queen, and surrounding counties. Mr. John Pollard, grandfather of John Garland Pollard, the present governor of Virginia was secretary and treasurer of the organization, which sold lots to incoming settlers here at the new terminus of the Southern.

West Point was not incorporated as a town, however, until the year 1870 and the first mayoral election was held here on September 3 of that year. A list of the mayors (to the year 1889) is as follows: John Whitbeck, A. Robinson, John S. deFarges, E. Wilkinson, William D. Pollard, E. Wilkinson.

According to established and fairly dependable tradition the site of West Point was formerly owned by Sir Thomas West, whose possession of the "point" antedated that of William P. Taylor by many years. From the West family the town took its name, and not from one of the points of the compass as is commonly supposed.

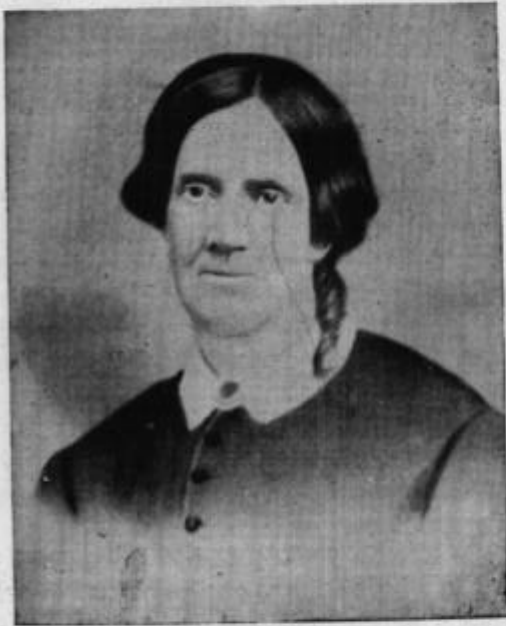


Mrs. Lipscomb's father, Mr. James Frank New, who with his wife, was the first resident of the village which became the present town of West Point.

The earlier town at this location was one of the fifteen Virginia towns alive in 1705, and some of the state's early history was enacted in this vicinity. Mrs. Lipscomb remembers hearing her parents tell of this ancient town which stood here in colonial days. There are few documents preserved which give any written history of this predecessor of West Point, yet, in her childhood days, lower portions of brick and stone houses, old foundations and brick curbs stood here, and perennial flowers cropped up, which someone unknown to the new inhabitants had planted. Then, too, here and there, were shrubs whose age no one could tell. The remnants of those houses, Mrs. Lipscomb said, showed that once there had been magnificent residences here, and evidenced a people of wealth. Tradition says that a dread disease broke out, striking down a large per cent. of the inhabitants, a number of whom fell dead in the streets. Those remaining, panic stricken, deserted their homes, whereupon the Indians from the Pamunkey came and destroyed the town with fire.

The West Point cemetery originally extended over the whole square on the corner of which is located The Tidewater Review office, and on its tombstones were engraved dates of the colonial era. A slab which remains at the present time bears the date of 1728.

Mrs. Lipscomb has in her possession an inscription found on a grave marker there years ago. The stone was erected to the memory of a sea-faring man, and its message read as follows:



Mrs. Lipscomb's mother, Mrs. Margaret Carlton New.

“Though Boreas blast and Neptune wave
Have tossed me to and fro,
In spite of all by God's decree
We anchor here below.
Now here do I at anchor lie,
With many of our fleet;
Yet once again we must set sail,
Our Savior, Christ, to meet.”

A few months ago the stone bearing this inscription was rediscovered and unearthed on the old cemetery site. This follower of Neptune could not have been struck down by the pestilence that wiped out his “city.” He lived and died before it came, else none had been left to carve this verse upon a stone to mark his grave.

Back of the colorful colonial era, the imagination pictures here the wigwams of the Indians, the canoes skimming silently along the rivers, the red men in their fantastic and rhythmic dances, or giving their blood curdling war-whoops. It is a far cry from the modern West Point. Only the Mattaponi, the Pamunkey and the York have remained unchanged through the centuries.

Opecanough, brother and successor of the powerful chieftain, Powhatan, and instigator of the terrible massacre of 1622, is said to have lived upon Broaddus Hill, within the corporate limits of what is now West Point. The story is told that, on the shore of the York in West Point, Captain John Smith, in search of food for the starving colony at Jamestown, found that Opecanough was plotting to betray him. Smith seized the chief by his hair, and pointing a pistol at his head, forced him to have the white men's boats loaded with corn.



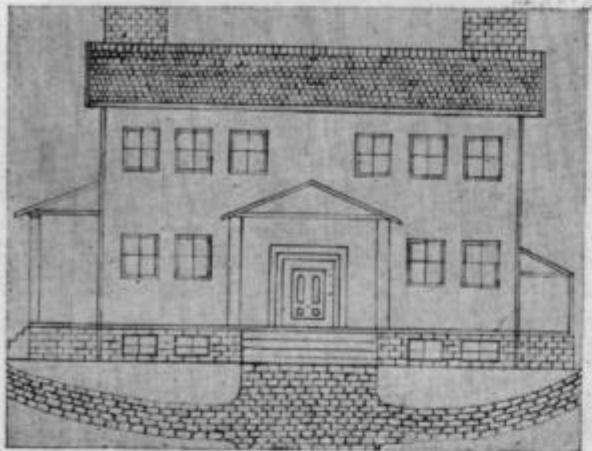
Mrs. Mary New Lipscomb at 30 years of age. Mrs. Lipscomb was Mary Carlton New, the first child born in the present West Point.

(This story is often related as occurring in New Kent county. The error is traceable to the fact that New Kent once embraced King-William county, in which West Point is situated.)

In the days gone by this section was famed far and wide for its fine hunting. Deer were here in abundance, and venison was a frequent meat dish on the tables. Plump partridges were thick in the fields, ducks and geese were numerous on the rivers, and in September and October the mysterious sora appeared on the marshes.

well as... in New...
 rest of... The...
 main... King William...
 which West Point is situated.

In the... the...
 was... and...
 there... and...
 were... and...
 and... and...
 and... and...
 and... and...
 and... and...
 and... and...



The Grove Hotel, which antedated any other hotel at the "point." (Sketch made by Pollard Fox.)

INDUSTRIES OF EARLY WEST POINT

A town's industries are basic, laying the foundation and structural framework for her life and growth.

A sawmill business, West Point's earliest industry, was started here by Mr. Frank New, soon after the incorporation of the town. Mr. New conducted a moderately large business, and shortly before his death, sold his plant to Mr. Ed Wilkinson and Mr. David Treat. A similar industry was carried on by the sawing and planing mill owned by Ruark Brothers, which was located on the Mattaponi river at the foot of Ninth street, and from which was descended the business conducted by the late R. E. Richardson.

Variety of industry began to develop, and a factory established here by Mr. John Cox, of Philadelphia, began the manufacture of shingles. Then a marl factory was built here by Mr. Thomas Henley, and produced much of the fertilizer used by the farmers of this and more distant sections. A canning factory operated at one time in West Point, canning the tomatoes, green peas and other vegetables grown in this locality.

At the foot of Fifth street on the Mattaponi was located the first oyster house in town, which was built by Captain Bill Marshall and Mr. Henry Marshall. Mrs. Elizabeth Marshall had



The present home of Mrs. Morgan Treat, the older portion of which was the earliest postoffice building here.

charge of its operation. The York river yielded a fine quality and an immense quantity, and the Marshall house did a large business. It is interesting to note, however, that Richmond marked the limit of the shipping territory, as methods of transportation in those days would not insure them against spoilage, if sent to more distant points. Captain Walter Allmond, of Gloucester, came to the "point," and opened one of the earliest oyster houses here, also conducting a profitable business. Mr. A. F. Smither and brother operated a similar business in West Point. At one time Booth and Company, then the largest canners and packers of the product in the United States, built and operated here the biggest oyster house in Tidewater Virginia. Hence the beginning of the fame which still attaches to the York river oyster.

A unique industry, indeed, was that carried on here by the Marsden Company, whose plant was located on the present site of the Chesapeake Corporation mill. It was commonly known in West Point as the "cornstalk" factory, since it used a combination of cornstalks and marsh grass in the manufacture of a product said to fill up bullet holes and prevent sinking of ships, in case of attack. The "cornstalk" factory was destroyed by fire.

The manufacture of hosiery was also an industry of early West Point, before the advent of the sheer silken stockings of today, and only the plainest cotton socks and stockings were made here. The plant, which an old historic sketch of West Point says, "is a real blessing to the community," employed about seventy-five girls. The factory was established here through



The Ware property, which was the first printing plant, built by S. R. Donahoe.

the efforts of Mr. Thomas Henley, and was subsequently sold to Mr. Ed Wilkinson.

At a little later date, a plant in which were constructed boxes and different kinds of crates, such as those used for berries and small fruits, was located here. It developed into a tray and veneer factory, with the later transition to the West Point Panel Mill. It was situated on the site now occupied by the Standard Oil Company station.

West Point's broom factory, though not built until 1897, should be mentioned in this article. Broom corn, to supply the necessary straw, was raised extensively in this section, but much had to be shipped in from other sections to supply the large demand at the factory.



The Davis House, which was the first boarding house in West Point. Erected by Mr. and Mrs. Tom Davis, it was owned by them until their death. It is now the property of Mr. P. B. Hughes.

BEGINNINGS OF HER INSTITUTIONS

Mrs. Lipscomb has known the beginnings of West Point's institutions, has watched them grow and become diverse.

An old newspaper account which Mrs. Lipscomb has in her possession, gives the facts presented in the following paragraph of church history. Prior to the establishment of any church here, however, residents of all denominations gathered for services at the Grove Hotel, where the ministers who came in from other sections were entertained free of charge.

About 1869 the first church edifice was erected here by the citizens and attended as a free church. In 1870 the Methodists organized here, bought this earliest church structure, and held there their services for many years. The Baptists used the same building for their fifth Sunday services until their church was completed. The old "free church" was eventually moved from the site and was used for a long time as a colored school.

Minutes of the West Point Methodist Church record as charter members, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Carlton and Mrs. New. By 1872 the following members had been added to this small group: Dr. Ernest and wife, Mr. Guthrie and wife, Miss Guthrie, Mrs. Cox, Mr. Cavan and wife, Miss Willis, S. E. Ball, Mrs. S. E. Ball and Miss Ida Guy.



First brick building, located on C street between Tenth and Eleventh, built by Mr. Eddie Ball and bequeathed to his son, Eddie Ball, Jr., now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Wolfe.

Organization minutes of the First Bapt. Church read as follows:

"In response to a call of the Baptists of West Point, King William county, Virginia, a council composed of Revs. Alfred Bagby, John William Ryland and Alfred Bird, met at West Point Sunday, the twenty-first day of December, 1873, for the purpose of organizing a church. After the usual devotion delivered by Rev. J. W. Ryland, Rev. A. Bagby delivered the charge and proceeded to receive members into the church and extended to them the right hand of fellowship, at which time the following named members were received by letters from sister churches: brethren—A. G. Ware, William G. Brookes, T. R. Watlington; sisters—Mary G. Williams, Susan Davis, Frances Mount, M. L. Brookes, Mollie Watlington, Elizabeth Anderson, Virginia Robinson, Lavinia Whiting, Martha Stark, Mary C. Dansey."

Mail was first handled in a room in the Grove Hotel, and West Point's first postmistress was Mrs. Camilla Carlton. The older portion of the home of Mrs. Morgan Treat on E street, then the home of Mr. and Mrs. David Treat, was used as the first post office building.

Mrs. Lipscomb states that Mrs. Lavinia Couch, grandmother of Mr. Willie Davis, came here as the first school teacher, and conducted a small private class, which she attended. The beginning of the present school system in West Point was made when the town hall was converted into the first public school building and Mr. Walter Lipscomb assisted Mrs. Couch in teaching under the new arrangements.



Home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Stark, a Federal hospital during the War Between the States, and owned after the war by Mr. Bolivar Stark, father of the present owner.

Mr. George K. Carlton's home on the corner of Fourth and E streets, owned by Mrs. Camilla Carlton until her death, and which was used by William P. Taylor as an office, is the oldest house in town. Next to it in age is the residence owned by Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Stark on Fifth and D streets, which was used as a Union hospital during the War Between the States.

The first store in West Point (which is still standing) was a grocery, operated by Mr. William T. Mitchell, and located at the corner of Third and D streets.

West Point Lodge No. 238, A. F. & A. M., was chartered December, 1882, with the following members:

Officers—C. E. Snodgrass, master; R. H. Spencer, S. W.; E. Wilkinson, J. W.; T. W. Sharp, treasurer; George Lindsay, secretary; W. A. Trigg, S. D.; C. A. Alphin, J. D.; D. W. Winn, chaplain; T. L. Davis, tiler.

Members—T. M. Benson, R. H. Cox, J. R. Davis, B. F. Eaton, G. P. Hudson, J. E. Lemoine, D. W. Morris, W. Mizell, G. W. Nelms, T. J. Neal, John R. Ogden, C. W. Otey, F. E. Pearce, L. T. Roane, W. H. Stewart, J. W. Shackelford. The lodge was formed with a total of twenty-five charter members.

Fidelity Council No. 58, Jr. O. U. A. M., was instituted by P. E. Throckmorton, No. 12, October 2, 1893, with the following men as charter members: R. W. Turner, R. P. Turner, J. P. Thornton, J. P. Trimyer, W. S. Sweet, W. W. Richardson, H. T. Roane, A. J. McDowell, J. E.



Home of Mr. and Mrs. James Mayo, of which Dr. Herndon, the first physician here, was the builder.

Mann, J. T. Martino, Joseph Dew, J. U. Fogg, D. F. Gregory, H. L. Chalkley, H. J. Coleman, and I. J. Snell.

York River Lodge No. 42, K. of P., the original members of which are unknown, was founded in 1875, reorganized in 1884, and re-named Chelsea Lodge No. 59.

Mrs. Lipscomb has in her possession accounts that state that the York river line of steamers was established between West Point and Baltimore in 1867. The Kenebec and the Admiral plied the Pamunkey as far as the White House until the railroad was completed to West Point. In 1869, a line was also established to Norfolk, and the Mystic ran to White House, stopping, in passing, to accomodate West Point travelers and commodities. Boats docked on the York at the end of D street in the early days of West Point.

Where now are bridges were formerly operated ferries, one across the Mattaponi known as Dudley's ferry, landing vehicles at Brookeshire, and the other running across the Pamunkey to New Kent county.

Mr. W. T. Chalkley came to West Point from Richmond in 1876 as a building contractor for the Southern Railway. In 1886 he entered the undertaking business, which was taken over by his son, Mr. Harry L. Chalkley, at the death of the former. In 1915 Mr. H. L. Chalkley took his son, Arthur W. Chalkley, into the firm. Thus three generations have conducted the business begun in 1886.

No sketch of early West Point would be complete did it not mention a well known figure, Charlie, the Barber. The veteran colored bar-



The Fox House, over 50 years old; owned by Mr. Thomas Jeffries.

ber, Charles H. Clarke, has served his trade here for more than half a century, and by his quiet satisfactory service has maintained a position high in the respect of the people over a wide radius of territory. His two sons are in business with him.

Beverly Allen and wife were West Point's first colored residents, and some of their descendants are still living in the town. Allen was a member of the first West Point Town Council.

AMUSEMENTS IN EARLY WEST POINT

Amusements in the early days of West Point centered around the old Grove Hotel, the rendezvous for the young people of King William and adjoining counties. Frequent tournaments, colorful and spirited affairs, followed by coronations in the hotel yard, took place on its grounds. Each month there was a dance, largely attended, in the ballroom with its waxed and highly polished floor, and its many chandeliers hung with myriads of glittering lights. Mr. Frank New, Mrs. Lipscomb's father, who owned the "Grove," kept in his employ a stringed orchestra to furnish music for these occasions.

The ballroom scene, as described by Mrs. Lipscomb, must have been an entrancing sight. The ladies wore Tarleton dresses of white, pink, blue, green and lemon color, made with French waists and long full skirts, some carrying trains a yard and a half long. Low cut necklines and short puffed sleeves were features for evening wear, and each dress was spangled all over with "diamond" and "gold" dust. The women powdered their hair, some sparingly, while others made their locks a snowy white. The hair was arranged in puffs across the forehead, with one or two curls caught back by a rose or some other bright flower, hanging down on the shoulder. "A young girl didn't feel stylishly dressed without a flower in her hair," Mrs. Lipscomb said. With her "crowning glory" a mass of snowy white puffs and curls, glittering with spangles; a pink rose back of one ear;



Early home of West Point, the residence of Misses Annie and Lelia McCanna, built by Mr. John Cox, of Philadelphia.

a low cut, long flowing dress sparkling under the lights, and white kid slippers, the dancer was a picturesque and comely sight. Milady's skin was delicately fair in those days, for long sleeved mittens and wide brimmed hats were constantly worn to prevent tanning from the sun. In the ballroom of the old Grove Hotel were danced the stately minuets, the artistic Virginia reel, polkas, schottisches and waltzes.

Riding horseback was a favorite sport of young ladies in the early days of West Point. They rode "side-saddle," and wore a riding habit consisting of a high hat, a tight fitting waist with loose flowing sleeves, and a long flowing skirt. The costume was always made of a dark material. The young ladies, clad in their riding habits, would join in the popular sport of fox hunting, and would ride over many miles of territory in King William, especially around Chelsea Farm. They were good sports-women and kept their spirited horses under excellent control. Fences were taken with ease in the chase for Reynard.

Bowling was among the leading sports in those days, and the young people would engage in the game for hours at a time.

Bicycle riding came later as a recreational fad, and the tandem, "the bicycle built for two," proved especially popular.



Old home of West Point, the property of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Mayo, built by Mrs. Fannie Anderson.

WEST POINT AN OUTING CENTER

Years ago West Point was an important outing center, with the old Grove Hotel as the pivotal point of activity and amusement. Virginia Beach, Ocean View and Buckroe had not gained their present popularity and status, Mrs. Lipscomb explained, and seekers of recreation came in large numbers to West Point, where three Virginia rivers offer the proper facilities for summer sports.

Her father built and owned the Grove Hotel, which antedated any other structure of the kind at this point. Mrs. Lipscomb described the hostelry yard as being fenced in, with an entrance gate on each of the four sides, and containing a large dance pavillion, a bowling alley and a lemonade well, something which is perhaps unheard of today. The lemonade well was constructed of a hogshead sunk in the ground over which stood a windlass to draw up the beverage, which sold at the rate of two glasses for five cents. For the entertainment of his guests Mr. New also built a bathing house out in the York river at the end of D street. Around the central bathing pool were the dressing rooms from which steps lead down to the water. Ropes were suspended from the roof, and the bathers swung back and forth in their sport. People swam inside of a house in those days to keep out of the sun, and women's bathing suits, in the summer seasons of the eighties, had



Dwelling of Mr. and Mrs. James O'Connor, one of the town's early homes. Erected by Mrs. Ned Anderson.

elbow length sleeves, and stockings and high topped shoes were worn.

Every day from May until September Mr. New would organize a large company of excursionists in Richmond, and arrange for transportation on the trains to West Point. He would hire a band to accompany them. On arrival here the band would strike up some energetic tune, and the visitors would march in a great company to the Grove Hotel, where all four gates would be thrown open at their approach.

Sometimes the ladies would get off the train when it stopped near the site of the Chesapeake Corporation plant, and gather dogwood and daisies; in a festive mood weaving them into garlands to wear around their necks. With their huge "sundown hats" and flower decked costumes, they were a picturesque sight as they stepped from the train.

"I had fine times in those days," commented Mrs. Lipscomb. "Every month there was a big dance and tournament, and I was nearly always given the honor of opening the balls." After the tournament followed the courtly and colorful ceremony of crowning the queen.

Thus the summer season in the days when the town was young was gala throughout, enlivened and made merrier by the laughter and sport of her visitors from the city.



West Point's first store, built by Mr. William Mitchell. It stands at the corner of Third and D streets.

INCIDENTS OF HER EARLY HISTORY

The laughter of her thousand vacationists, the scintillating life that centered about the old Grove Hotel are among the brighter veins of her story. Like the rising and falling tide, the town has waxed and waned; and splendid and coursing like her rivers, the picture has changed in a few hours to the bleak desolation of ashes and ruins. The resident whom we have been quoting has known days of despair for West Point, which form the darker threads in the weaving of her history.

As a tiny child she remembers the gruesome arrival of the Federal gunboats during the War Between the States. A fleet of union vessels would loom suddenly on the York, and as she put it, "the shore would soon be black with Yankees." These gunboats landed many Federal troops here, who erected extensive fortifications which could be seen many years after the war, but which have now been levelled. Some were near the "point"; others were about a mile above West Point on the road to King William Court House. The "Boys in Blue" were for substantial protection, making their ditches and embankments deep, steep and high, and extending them almost from one river to the other.

Another mark of the war which remained for some years afterward was a magazine, the ruins of which are remembered by several of the older citizens. It was built by the Union



Oldest residence in West Point, which was William P. Taylor's office. Now owned by Captain George Carlton, whose grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John Hughes, purchased it from Mr. Taylor.

soldiers as a storage vault for gunpowder, and was located on C street between Seventh and Eighth, near the upper end of the block. Earth was banked against the structure, part of which was constructed of walnut lumber, and the powder was kept in a heavily boarded interior case. It was estimated to have been about sixty feet in length.

Mrs. Lipscomb's childhood days were those of the dread Reconstruction period, which followed upon the war of the sixties. Mayor Massey held sway, and employed as his enforcement agent a colored policeman, a giant negro, who patrolled the streets carrying a heavy club. His victims were whacked over the head and thrown into his cart. Offenders against Reconstruction rule were taken to the whipping post at the corner of Eighth and C streets, their shirts stripped off; and strapped to the post were beaten until the blood streamed from their backs.

A barroom was only a short distance from any point in town, there being as many as fifteen here at one time, several of which were clustered around the railroad station. Mrs. Lipscomb states that on account of the prevalence of drunkenness, it was dangerous for women to go alone on the streets.

The older citizens of West Point remember a peculiar experience in the life of Mr. James Garrett, who was town policeman for many years. One night while on his beat he was attacked by robbers, who forced him to go to the post office, located at that time on the site adjoining Mr. Leland Treat's store. In the post office the policeman was bound, gagged, tied to



First young lady to come to West Point, Miss Camilla Hughes, who transferred her residence here from Louisa county when 16 years old, and lived here until her death at the advanced age of 87. She became Mrs. Milton Carlton, the mother of Captain George Carlton.

a chair, a mail sack was pulled down over his head: and was guarded by one man, whose two accomplices conducted the burglary. Having secured the funds, which happened to be only a small amount, the robbers made their getaway, and Mr. Garrett, tied to the chair, dragged himself to Mr. Sam Bland's store, and pounding on the door, was let in and loosed from his bonds.

Forty-five years ago there occurred a tragic accident, chronicled in the West Point Star of June 17, 1886, in which a highly esteemed citizen of the town, Mr. Fisler, and his small son were drowned while rowing on the Pamunkey river. Another small son of Mr. Fisler was also with them. Their boat was in collision with a sailboat occupied by four negroes, and Dan, the elder of the boys, was knocked overboard. The account in part reads as follows: "The men claim that Mr. Fisler's boat struck theirs; the little boy who survives says the men ran into Mr. Fisler. . . . Mr. Fisler then jumped overboard, swam to Dan, and came to the surface with him in his arms. He tried to swim, but could not and they sank together. The news of the accident spread like wildfire, casting a heavy gloom over the town and the popular feeling against the colored men was so great it was feared this indignation might overleap the bounds of prudence, but no demonstration against them was made."

West Point lies like a wide-edged wedge between her river boundaries, her shores washed by the Pamunkey and the Mattaponi, the union of whose waters gives rise to the York. Mrs. Lipscomb has seen the town inundated by the tide as far as E street on the Mattaponi side



First colored home, built by Beverly Allen, Sr., now the property of the widow of Beverly Allen, Jr.

and to C street along the Pamunkey. Residents near the railroad were forced to abandon the lower floors of their homes and live on the second stories until the tides subsided. People from the wharves came into town in rowboats.

In 1893 there occurred a snowstorm of long duration, which covered the ground to a depth of from 10 to 15 feet. During the same winter ice of great thickness formed on the rivers. Young people skated for miles on the frozen surface and men drove double horse wagons across to the opposite shores.

More recently—on May 3, 1903—the heart of the town was reduced to ruins by a fire which started at the location of the present Hughes Motor Company, and which, in a few hours, had swept throughout the business section. Residents fled across the rivers to escape the sweeping flames. Fifty-two buildings were burned and Mrs. Lipscomb, herself, lost five houses in the fire, the cause of which has remained an unsolved mystery. Stores owned by the following parties were destroyed: Henry Corr, J. W. Owens, Nathan Hess, P. J. Shelton & Co., Phil Hughes, Rothschild and Iseman, Richmond Bland & Co., Morvitz & Cabe, and W. C. Davis. But the gloom of ashes and ruins was rapidly and steadily dispelled by the work of rebuilding which went on apace till the heart of the town was restored.

Booms have come and Mrs. Lipscomb has watched a thousand workmen come up from the wharves when work was over. West Point was formerly the shipping point for an immense export trade in cotton, and she has seen as

many as nine foreign ships waiting at anchor for cargoes of this product of the Southland. Cotton was grown extensively throughout the state, and much of it was shipped to this point, being transferred from the trains to the ocean going vessels. Two compresses were located near the wharves. At one time five hundred Canadians, whose business it was to load cotton in the holds of the ships, were employed here.

Mr. W. M. Lipscomb, who was the first to publish a newspaper in West Point, was the first to publish a newspaper in West Point. The Weekly Star was the first newspaper published in West Point. The Weekly Star was the first newspaper published in West Point.

THE LINEAGE OF HER NEWSPAPERS

Since West Point became an incorporated town in 1870, many newspapers have started here, some to flourish for many years, and others, started largely for political purposes, to go out of existence soon after beginning publication.

Mr. Frank New, father of Mrs. Mary Carlton Lipscomb, was responsible for starting the first newspaper, which was called the West Point Star. It began publication in 1871, with Honorable S. R. Donahoe, as the first editor and publisher.

Some years later an additional paper, The Tidewater Virginian, moved here from Gloucester, but it operated for only two months, at the end of which time it consolidated with The West Point Star, the two uniting to form The Virginian Star. About 1893, the name "Star" was dropped and the weekly became known as The West Point Virginian. At this time the town was experiencing an immense boom, due to a large export trade in cotton carried on here. The population increased to almost 5,000 people. A daily paper called The Daily Virginian appeared, but was destined to be only short lived and closed publication after a few months. The West Point Virginian was eventually sold and moved to Pheobus, this transaction ending the line of papers that descended from the old West Point Star.

Mr. W. R. Broaddus then purchased The Plain Dealer from Mr. C. L. Morrison. After a year's publication its name was changed to The Weekly News, when its publishers wished to take Caroline county into its territory. Succeeding The Weekly News were The West Point News and the present Tidewater Review. Additional papers that sprang up from time to time, mainly for political purposes and destined to be only short-lived, were: The Virginia Advertiser, The State Republican, The Farmer's Advance, The West Point Sun, The Tidewater American, and The Sunny South.

Leading newspaper men of earlier and more recent years are Walter Lipscomb, who was connected with a number of newspapers in this section, Thomas P. Bagby, E. Wilkinson, Thomas B. Crittenden, Thomas B. Henley, L. C. Catlett, L. S. Cottrell, James N. Stubbs, Jim Hart and R. B. Edwards. Mr. Hart was later the originator of the Farmville Herald.

Type was set by hand in the West Point printing offices until 1903, when a type setting machine was installed in the plant publishing The Weekly News. The first linotype was a Junior machine brought here in the latter part of 1903. The News was also the first plant to use power, a Fairbanks-Morse gasoline engine being installed in 1902. Prior to this time the "big press" had been operated by man power.

WEST POINT IN MEMORY

(Margaret Bagby Nance)

It is a serious moment when one is confronted with the request, "Write of West Point when you were a girl." So many things are hazy in the distance.

My earliest thought is of the night so many people left the town for Pinner's Point. The Southern Railway had moved its shops to that point and many of the people who had been employed by the company here went to work for them there. Our next door neighbors, Mr. Thomas Sharpe and family, were leaving—the children in the two families had played together for years and now were to part. All over town an exodus was taking place and for many years West Point did not recover from this night and other days, to follow.

I remember when there were no ice cream parlors. The only way we could have ice cream was to make it in our homes in the old fashioned freezer or order it from Richmond. Mrs. "Carlie" Lipscomb rented an office building, formerly occupied by a dentist, on Main street between First Baptist Church and Mr. Walcott's residence, and on certain afternoons and evenings sold ice cream. It proved to be very popular and people flocked to the first ice cream parlor which I remember in West Point.

At about five-thirty each afternoon all of the young people and many older ones, dressed

in their best, went to meet the train, which arrived about six o'clock. This was a real social event each day.

Beach Park furnished amusement for us also, later. An excursion from Richmond known as a twilight, came in every night about a quarter to seven and brought jolly crowds, who rode the merry-go-round, had delicious seafood suppers danced, went out on the river, or sat on the boardwalk and enjoyed the refreshing breezes from the York. Sunday Schools, railroad shops and Richmond department stores had their annual excursions here during the day. Sometimes there were as many as twenty coaches, and when we heard the train blow we would rush to the nearest corner to count the number.

One summer there was a regatta. The Maryland and Virginia boat clubs were rivals. They raced from the boardwalk to the lighthouse.

My mother, Mrs. Thomas P. Bagby, organized a Loyal Temperance Legion, which met in one of the churches each Sunday afternoon. Most of the young people in the town attended and for exactly one hour a sacred program was presented, teaching the boys and girls of West Point temperance. This organization, I believe, worked for good in the town.

One of the ministers of the town, feeling that the people needed recreation, started what he called "a penny show." We had a magic lantern slide and showed pictures, had recitations, stories, songs and sometimes plays. The minister's idea was to furnish clean wholesome amusement at small cost. These shows were held in what is now the store of Chandler and

Nance, which was at that time located between the residences of Mr. Ned Bland and Mr. Richmond Bland and was known as Tichnor's Hall.

I must not close without saying something of my school. The West Point School at that time had eight grades, differing, however, from the present system of grades, as after graduating here I entered Hollins Institute.

My teachers were Miss Estelle Bray, now Mrs. H. W. Boughan, Miss Lily Johnson, now Mrs. Thomas Harwell, of Petersburg, Mrs. Kate Richardson and Miss Katherine P. Howerton.

Before going to the public school I attended a private school on Fourth street, which was taught by Miss Emma Healy and Miss Matsie Gatewood. Dr. R. R. Spencer, of the United States Public Health Service, who has done such splendid work in the preparation of a vaccine against Rocky Mountain spotted fever, was a classmate of mine. West Point is justly proud of her sons and daughters.

A REMINISCENCE OF THE YEAR 1882

(Mrs. Herbert I. Lewis)

I was seated in my bedroom one evening, my young son in bed, and the cat stretched lazily out on the rug, attesting her appreciation of a good fire, when suddenly

"There came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping,
Rapping at my chamber door."

I at once opened my door and admitted my husband, and a very good neighbor of ours, whom I invited to be seated and enjoy the bright fire with us. I noticed he looked uneasy; something was evidently on his mind, and he soon astonished me by saying:

"I came to take you to my house; my wife is expecting you."

Oh, many thanks, I exclaimed, but it is nearly nine o'clock, rather too late to leave home."

"Yes, but I insist on it."

I nodded my head toward the sleeping child and added once more that it was impossible, then cast an appealing glance at my husband, who had so far stood silent. Great was my surprise when he said:

"Yes, you must go; there is no time for delay. Get what you need for the night at once. I will wrap the child in a blanket."

It was the work of a few minutes to extinguish lamps and lock doors. My husband carrying the child, and my good neighbor guiding my footsteps, we hurried along a back alley, across an old field, a path I had never taken. We had not gone far before I saw a figure pacing quietly to and fro. My neighbor stepped by us quickly, passed a few hurried words with the man; then our queer procession passed along.

When we arrived at our destination, I found another neighbor's wife who was taking refuge for the night. My woman's curiosity could not be kept in bonds any longer, and I begged them to throw some light on these mysterious proceedings. They told me that the cotton compress was to be burned down and, indeed, the whole town was in great danger; threats had been made, and since sundown, not a darkey could be found. They were supposed to be congregated in the woods and would sweep down on the town at midnight. The men of the town were all armed and would patrol the streets all night, guarding their homes and families. After this news our lamps were all extinguished and we assumed kneeling postures at the low windows, where, through the half closed blinds, we could watch the terrors of the night. Once I relaxed my vigil to remark that I wondered where Mr. B. was (he was noted for his timidity), and that I felt sorry for his wife, for his timidity would increase her fears, when from the opposite window my neighbor's wife exclaimed in emphatic tones:

"My stars! she is a grand sight better off than we, who have these husbands who are

not afraid of God, man, or the devil. She has her husband with her; ours may be at the cannon's mouth for aught we know."

I had no more to say. All was silent except for the tick of the clock, whose hands pointed to the hour of dawn. We soon learned that the warriors of the night with their old guns, had gone into their homes, and were resting after their expected labors, doubtless dreaming of the fireworks that never took place.

In the early morning I quietly wended my way home, and that memorable night in West Point was a thing of the past. But from that day to this any reference to that night in November, 1882, never fails to excite the risibles of the masculine portion of our community.

ANDREW WILLIS EASTWOOD

Andrew Willis Eastwood, who fought so valiantly in the War Between the States, and who was, for eight years, King William's representative in the legislature, is remembered as one of West Point's most valuable and popular citizens, as well as one of the handsomest. He was often asked in what way he was related to General Robert E. Lee.

His great popularity was proved when he was elected mayor of West Point, December 12, 1893, by a vote which gave him an overwhelming majority. This office he held until his death January 24, 1913, with the exception of a two-year term when his opponent defeated him by one vote. In the next election he was again named as a candidate, and again elected by a sweeping majority. On every election day, old and young would march up and down the streets shouting, "Vote for Eastwood."

Once, when a murder occurred in town, he said in his calm and stately manner, "Give me ten men." Thirty volunteered immediately. He stationed them in different points in town, and in less than half an hour the murderer was brought to him.

During his administration there were seven barrooms being operated in town. Excursions came daily from Richmond and occasionally

from Norfolk to West Point. The excellent order kept in town was remarkable. This was not due to fear of police interference, but to the respect in which the town's gray-haired mayor, the Honorable A. W. Eastwood, was held.

CONTEMPORARY WEST POINT

Contemporary West Point is a completely modern town, and its people are busy in their variety of business and social activities; but it is yet a place of serenity. Its largest industries are situated upon its outskirts, expressing their activity without the main body of the little town.

Versatility of industry is found within the present West Point. The largest industrial enterprise is the manufacture of pulp and paper carried on by the immense personnel and establishments of Chesapeake Corporation and Albe-Marle-Chesapeake Company, Inc.—West Point's great workshop. Erection of the latter plant was completed in 1930 at a cost of approximately two million dollars. It is said to contain one of the largest kraft paper machines in the world.

The manufacture of furniture is carried on by the Atlantic Woodworking Mills. Here the fish and oyster businesses are conducted on a large scale. E. D. Clopton runs a wholesale grocery business on lower B street and a wholesale confectionary establishment has been opened by W. L. Neale and Son. Among the other local industries are the manufacture of ice by the West Point Ice and Fuel Corporation, a lumber business operated by Veazey and Broadus, a wholesale fruit and produce business and a planing mill run by R. T. Bowden. The Tidewater Printing and Publishing Company pub-

lishes a weekly newspaper and conducts, in addition, a printing business. A branch of the Urbanna Feed Company was recently established in West Point. A pickle industry, maintained by the Virginia Packing Corporation, is located just outside of the corporate limits of West Point, in Port Richmond.

An attractive community house fills the need for a recreational center. In the community house is located the county library which maintains two traveling units in the schools of the county, and which has an annual circulation of 4,068 volumes. Public playgrounds provide space for outdoor play for children. The modern movie plant is equipped with the latest improved talking apparatus and furnishings.

In strong contrast to the West Point of Mrs. Lipscomb's childhood, the streets are paved and electrically lighted, service stations dot the town, and bulk gas and oil plants are located on sites fronting the rivers. Main or D street, in its business section, is flanked by grocery, clothing and hardware stores, two banks, two pharmacies, a furniture store, motor companies, cleaning and pressing establishments, as well as radio and other types of shops, etc. This central street, with its long vista of well kept homes, lawns and business houses forms an attractive avenue leading to the shore of the York. A volunteer fire department is maintained, telegraph and telephone offices and an office of the Virginia East Coast Utilities Company are located here; and several hotels, boarding houses and restaurants, an outing cavern built above the water surface at the end of a pier on the Mattaponi river, offer proper facilities for the business visitor or vacationist. Easy of access, the

town is connected with other points by railroad, bus and steamship lines, and hard-surfaced roads.

West Point boasts of several civic and social organizations, which have done much in beautifying the town and in improving health conditions.

At the present time a new Federal postoffice building, to be erected at a cost of nearly \$50,000 is under construction.

Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Disciples of Christ and Catholic bodies have built their church edifices here. The West Point Public Schools are conducted by a faculty composed of eleven members. There abounds among the people a high degree of culture and the graces attributed to true Virginians.

As stated in the opening chapter, few relics of the colonial yesterday have been preserved within the town proper, but interest has recently mounted in the history of the location and it is planned to place a marker overlooking the York, where French troops, during the Revolution, just prior to the surrender at Yorktown, erected fortifications. These redoubts were standing during Mrs. Lipscomb's childhood, but have since been razed. Much of colonial interest, too, could be related of the adjoining territory—historical old New Kent, the colonial homes of King William, the traditions of King and Queen, but that has not been the object of our story. Like an oak growing in the hallowed soil of an ancient battlefield, the town of West Point has sprung up amid surroundings rich in

colonial lore, the historical import of her three rivers as great as the sacred associations of her soil.