

A Sketch of my life
and
our family record
by

Willis, M. Carter,

Preface

My own inclination would naturally lead me to say as little as possible about myself and ~~our~~ family; but as some record is necessary for the satisfaction of every well regulated family I will have venture to record the most particular incidents and other subject-matter relative to our family; all of which I hope may serve as a benefit some time to its members. In view of these facts I deem any apology that I might make for this, my feeble production, entirely unnecessary and out of place.

Yours Respectfully

H. H. Carter

yr. mo. da. / 849

1869

188

1869

1895

1869

29 yrs. old.

(410)

1869
38

1869

1917

I was born at Locust Dale
Virginia, in the county of Albemarle,
the 3rd of September in the year
1852, the first of eleven children
of Rhoda Carter the wife of Samuel
Carter, my lot being that of a
slave,

Although it was an age of
ignominy and one in which we
were surrounded by the ascending
crisis of the oppressed for mercy which
was produced by the tyrannical and
iron hand of slavery accompanied by
some of the greatest inhumanities
that have ever stained with cold
blood the pages of the history of
any nation I can not reflect with-
out pleasure on the bounty of
nature which cast my birth into
the hands of a philanthropic family
of honorable rank and decently en-
dowed with fortune, and on
the other hand with a woman

who was highly respected by both the white and sable races for her honest, impartial and christian character,

Owing to the educational advantages enjoyed on my mother's side of the house, we have a very correct history of ^{our} lineage on her side which dates back to their home and country in Africa, the land of our fathers. My great grand mother on my mother's side was ^{during the colonial days of} born in that part of Virginia now called Augusta county. When a girl seven years of age she ^{was} purchased by the Wynns whose home was in a part of the same state now called Caroline county.

According to the old family record and the statements of my great grand mother she descended from a party of Africans known in the Portugal history as the Ambakistago, who came from Africa in the 17th century and were settled in Brazil. It is also stated by travelers in those parts

were famed for their knowledge of history and
intelligence generally.
~~sold in Virginia, and hence the~~
~~nick name they gave her "The~~
~~Ethiopian" which ^{was} derived from her~~
~~complexion, hair, and temper being~~
~~characteristic of a true blooded~~
~~Ethiopian.~~ And it is simply
useless to say that she and her
posterity have been much cared
for in the face of the numerous
educational attainments received
by them at the hands of their
owners and the very strict family
history of them kept by the same.
My great grand mother became
early in years the wife of Harry
Yarber. He belonged to the Wynns
also, and was his masters confident
ial body servant. He entered
the British war of 1812. with a
heroic heart, and as ^{governor} captain of
a wagon train, during which
contest he obtained great favor
in the eyes of his master by
meritorious deeds and acts of

bravery rendered in behalf of the
American Republic. He retired
home from the great American
conflict where he died in peace
and gratitude

His wife, my great grandmother
lived to a good, and ripe old age when
her head had blossomed for the tomb
when early one bright morning
about the rising of the sun she
slept—

A sleep in Jesus
Blessed sleep
From which none ever
Wake to weep"

Many a child had played
around her door among which
was a daughter whose name was
Clara. She became when in her
fourteenth year the wife of Wild's
Brown, after whom I ^{at present} take my
first name. Now in the
Wyman family was a brilliant

daughter by the name of Ann
who married John Goodloe after
which Clara, my grandmother,
fell as a bridal present to her, ²
My grandmother received from
Ann Goodloe many glorious
privileges almost equivalent to
freedom among which was the
hiring of her own time for a very
small sum which was paid
annually. She had this ^{right} granted
her from a very early age, till
the emancipation of the American
slaves, Rhoda (her oldest daughter
and my mother) was never sold
nor hired out, but was kept
at home, and thus, she was
enabled to give attention to
the raising of her children, a
^{grand} privilege of which so many
thousands of our race were
deprived.

The only one of mother's children
ever away from her during the whole

time that we were possessed by the
goodloes were sister Jennie and my-
self. And it is with much pride
that I can say that ^{we} were not out of
the family; for Mrs. Ann Goodloe,
who cherished us as if we had been
two Alaska diamonds instead of
two young sables, and who use to
call us about her knees, and tell
us the most interesting tales of the
day to which as children we listened
with delight and gratitude - for her
memory was stored with a never-
ending stock of stories, many of which
were wonderfully like those I
have since heard while sitting in
social and respectable companies
of the American cities - allowed us
only to go West with her two married
daughters - Maria Stephens and Fannie
A Jackson - my sister being with the
former and myself with the latter.
This occurred in the fall of Eighteen
hundred and fifty nine, and in my

eightth year. We were West in the
little town of ~~Yan~~ ^{Yan} ~~Lee~~ ^{Lee} nearly two
years, after which, in the summer
of sixty one, we were returned home
to see once more our friends and
relations.

But we all were in dire
distress to find not Mrs. Ann
for during ^{our} sojourn in the West
she had, in submission to the
will of God, gone the way of all
the earth.

As I have said, our return
was in the summer of Eighteen
hundred and sixty one, which year
brought with it the beginning of
one of the most cruel wars ever
known in the history of the
world.

At a certain period during
this great civil strife in which
the father vied with the son, and
the son with the father, imprisonments
began upon the poor bondmen in

the South for the purpose of getting
men to throw up breastworks at various
points in the South. So the poor
slaves were seized in every section,
chained brutally to different places,
and forced under the scourge to
build fortifications, not only against
those in whose hands was held
the proclamation of their emancipation,
but to defeat if possible the men
who sought to save the Union from
a slavish disgrace that had
already with its heinous crimes
shocked the world from its centre
to its circumference. My father,
who belonged to Geo. A. Farrow in
Albemarle county Virginia, fell a
victim to this terrible command.
He was impressed in eighteen
hundred and sixty three, was
taken below Richmond Virginia to
help fortify it. Where, soon afterward,
he had an attack of pneumonia

which proved fatal.

The war raged on till by the ever ruling hand of the All Wise the North was victorious in Eighteen hundred and sixty five, which put an end to ^{the} atrocious war, and with it brought the emancipation of all the slaves throughout the South.

I was then in my thirteenth year and was seized with a greater desire to improve my mind, which spirit had shown itself from early childhood; for I have often heard my aunt Harriet say that I, when but a boy five years old, could count a hundred by twos, threes, and fives, and when in the West at Jane Lew I would, every opportunity I could get, go in the white school and hear them recite their lessons, also succeeded in getting a spelling book of my own and would learn by chance, so when the

emancipation came I was very good
in spelling and reading, and it
was now that I was like one who
had wandered in a wilderness of
darkness with a hope of seeing the
bright beams of the Heavenly sun—
arrayed in all his glories and
brilliance—and who suddenly escap-
ing from this forest of despair,
leaps with joy over the great bon
of Providence which had placed
him in sight of the desired glories.

But still, under existing
circumstances I saw that it would
be a rigid task to ever accomplish
my education and, my mother
being a widow and I the oldest
child and son, would undoubtedly
have to work constantly in assisting
~~my dear~~ ^{her} mother to gain subsistence
for herself and family. And under
these circumstances it was plain
that, should there any provision be
made for the elevation of the much

degraded, but deserving race of which I was a member, I could not be able to attend regularly.

Having thus conjectured my future course, I provided myself with such books as I needed; and with the courage and resolution of a Julius Caesar, I determined to confront all difficulties, and in the event of my not having an opportunity to enter school I would make my way to a classical education by private study. And to my good fortune, my striving for improvement met the hearty approval of the Goodloe family, and from one to another I received great aid in my educational efforts. But those most conspicuous in the work of my advancement, and to whom I owe so much gratitude for the laying of the foundation of my education, were the two amiable and younger daughters of the Goodloe family, Suey and

Living. Under their generous attention which was always rendered so willingly, I advanced amidst every day duties, very rapidly toward my desired literary attainments.

These advantages I enjoyed from the spring of (1865) until (1870) excepting one winter which I spent at Neckum River with my grandmother, who had moved from Charlottesville to Neckum River immediately after the civil war.

On March 4th (1868) my mother moved from the old "homestead" to Goshen in Bell's valley about 31 miles west of Staunton Va., continuing with the Goodloes who were carrying through a lumber contract with the Chesapeake and Ohio R. R. Co.

I was here employed by Mr. James Goodloe as screw turner at the saw mill; as he had, as he said taken notice of my very good knowledge of figures.

After serving a short while at this, I was promoted to the position of fireman, continuing still my studies which were made very progressive by the attentiveness of the Goodloes.

I attended Sunday school, which was begun at Craigsville by a white gentleman sent out to do educational work among the colored people of that section. This was in (1868.) in the autumn of which the Goodloes retired east from their business leaving my mother and her husband in charge of their property.

They returned the following spring, broke up their works and moved east to a place near Fishersville called the Centry where they began their business again.

But my mother here discontinued her business with the Goodloes and went to Nechums River where she lived with her mother for awhile, moving very soon to Tenet Dale or

the old "home stead" while I was still in ^{the} employ of the Goodlows at their place of business,

In the Spring of (1870.) she moved to the Entry, where Robert Spears her second husband died. After his death we moved, in the autumn of the same year, to Hangers farm, a mile north of Waynesboro Va. on which farm I was employed as laborer. We continued here until the fall of (71.) when we bought a house and a lot on the Winchester road a mile east of Waynesboro and there my mother settled down on her home.

I was employed on the section (of the C & O R. R.) which passes through Waynesboro, from the first of January (1872.) to first June (1873.) serving most of the time, as flagman, a position of considerable trust.

On the 8th June (73.) I went to

Capen Springs in Hampshire county
N. Va. where I served as waiter during
the whole season, after which on the
12th of September I went to Hinton, in
Summers county N. Va. where I again
worked as laborer under V. B. Sheppard
who was building a round house for
engines on the C. & O. R. R.,

I came home from there in
December of the same year and entered
school first Jan. continuing to the
24th of Feb. when I was engaged at a
Porcelain Works 7 miles west of our
home, serving till the first of June
on the 10th of which I again left for
Capen Springs N. Va.

After having spent an agreeable
and successful summer at Capen,
I went home where I remained till
9th of Oct. when I left for Washington
city in which to pursue a course of
study. My studies were continued
very rigidly ^{but} ~~privately~~ till first May 1731 after
which on the 10th of July became Head

waiter for Daniel O'Brien, a proprietor
of a dining saloon in Washington,
continued in this position
until the 27th of June (1876), July
2nd left on the 9.40. P.M. train for
the Ocean House New Port R.I.,
passing Philadelphia about 4. A.M.,
on the 3rd, got to N.Y. about 7.30. A.M.,
where I remained till 5. P.M., at
which time left for New Port R.I.,
arriving there 3.50 A.M. the 4th July.

Spent two months and nine days
here during which I made many
pleasant acquaintances. Left on
the 12th of Sept, 1876, by the 9.00 A.M.
boat (Providence) for Washington.
Arrived in N.Y. 7. A.M. the 13th.
Left on the 9.25. boat for Jersey City
where I took the 9.40. train for
Philadelphia arriving there 12.30. P.M.

Remained to see the Centennial,
visited the Centennial on the 14th.
Left on the six P.M. train for Wash D.C.

by way of the Pa. route. Arrived at
Washington D.C. 12.15 A.M. Sept. 15th - 76.

Sept 26th opened private school
on Pa. ave. Washig D.C. Was elected,
in Oct. Vice Pres. & genl. manager of
"The Young Mens Dramatic Association"
a club organized for the
moral and intellectual culture
of its members. I appeared in all
of its literary and dramatic enter-
tainments, and every time, but more
in the leading role. Among the
many successful plays given by the
Association were: "Lucretia Borgia"
in which I appeared as: "Lucrea",
"Lady of Lyons" in which I was:
"Melmoth", "Mascariello, or the
Dumb Girl of Portici" in which
I appeared as: "Alfonzo".

On the 22nd June - 77. went to
Capon Springs, spent the summer
there and at Rock Ewon, after
which returned to Washington
where I spent the term - 1877-78 in

school at Columbia law building
Spent the summer of '78, from
20th of June to 4th ^{at Capon Springs} Sept, after which
time returned to Washington, where,
on the 25th of Sept-78, I entered
"Wayland Seminary" and finished
there, the term of '78-79. On May 14th
received telegram of my mother's sudden
death, I went home, arriving too late
to see her, remained a week and
returned to school, stood my examination
and at the close of school received the
first prize as best speaker of my
division, I spent also the term of
1880+1881 at the same school, graduating
May 25th '81, taking the prize of \$5.
as best speaker of the graduating class
I received also in '80 what was known
as the first "Tom Brown Prize" as
the best speaker of the Institution.
Spent the summer of '81 at Crossot ^{Spring} in
Pa as Hotel waiter. Returned to Waynesboro
Va, on the 18th Sept., on the 20th was examined
for a public school teacher, received certificate

of Supt. Grattan in Staunton and
opened school ^{Smoky Row} on 24th Oct. '81. My term
of five months closed March 17th '82. But
during this session death again visited our
family, and our sister Clara at the age of
21 was taken from us on the 5th of Jan.
Taught again the Smoky Row school the
term of 1882-3, 6 months with great success.
In the Autumn of 1883-became the
the Principal of the West End school on the
Western Suburbs of Staunton, holding said
position for ten consecutive years, ^{and still there at this writing,} Was two
^{from 1886-8} years President of the Augusta county
Teachers Association, declining reelection
for the 3rd ^{year} ~~term~~ upon the ground that
I believed in rotation in office. Was three
¹⁸⁸⁹⁻⁹² years President National Memorial Association,
resigning on account of business. In 1891-92
was editor of the Southern Tribune, a weekly
newspaper published at Staunton Va by the
colored people and President of the company
publishing the paper. ~~In~~ ^{to} 1888 Sept 13th 1888, I
married Miss Serena B. Johnson of Middlebrook
Augusta county Virginia. In description Miss

Johnson was tall, graceful and of a
comely figure, possessing a wealth of dark
hair, of very light complexion with sparkling
blue eyes. Her education was such as the
Public schools of her neighborhood ^{afforded}, with private
tutorage. My first child, Roseve Wilson Carter,
was born July 4th 1889 about 11 a. m., at 905
West Beverly Street Staunton Va, in the house
owned by Wm B. Lavenport and his mother,
and which ^{were} ~~was~~ rented at the time.

