

# The Historian

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## Belle Ville: Exploring a Distinctive Landmark in Warsaw

Warsaw grew up at the crossroads of two Indian trails that became colonial highways. At this intersection also lay the original tract that came to be called Belle Ville, "...on the East and North side of the main county road from the Glebe to Totuskey Bridge." So described were the original three-hundred acres when sold in 1747 to Richmond County lawyer, Charles Beale by George Berrick. Convenient to the new courthouse (completed in 1748 on land also acquired from Mr. Berrick) Beale settled with his wife Mary Fauntleroy, a great-granddaughter of old Rappahannock County founding settler Moore Fauntleroy.

### The Colonial Home

The Beales established their home close to the village on the northeast side. A wood frame house with dormer windows, it faced south, with a steep roof extending over a front porch with a brick floor. The salt box shape of the house resembled the birth home of George Washington in neighboring Westmoreland County.



Residence of the Washington Family

In 1764, Charles Beale died, leaving the estate to his wife. Mary Fauntleroy Beale subsequently married the new rector of Lunenburg Parish, Rev. Isaac William Giberne (Pronounced Gibbony) who then "was generally considered to be the most popular preacher in the colony," according to the diaries of Fithian. Recently arrived from England, he is also mentioned in the diary of George Washington who was eager to meet him. They socialized at Fox's Tavern in Port Royal in January, 1760.

Giberne served both the upper and lower churches of the parish, from 1762 until 1795, some 33 years. His friend and fellow planter, Landon Carter often recorded his visits to Sabine Hall in his diaries. The rector was a convivial drinker, an avid card player and an active Whig. Mrs. Giberne's sister, Judith Fauntleroy Carter, was the wife of Landon Carter, Jr. Giberne died probably about 1801.

Mary Giberne lived on to the age of 95. Having no children when she died in 1820, she left the Belle Ville property to her nephew Charles L. Carter of Fauquier County, son of Landon Carter III. The following year Charles Carter conveyed the land consisting of 465 acres to his relative, Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough.



The present Belle Ville house was built by Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough between 1826 and 1830, just in front and to the right of the colonial house. The earlier house was being used as servants' quarters when destroyed by a fire in 1873. Photo by C. E. Miller

## The Federal House

Colonel Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough, the builder, was born in Richmond County in 1780. He was the son of Colonel Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough and grandson of Colonel William Brockenbrough, born in Richmond County in 1715. His grandmother, William Brockenbrough's wife, was Elizabeth Fauntleroy, daughter of Major Moore Fauntleroy of Crondall. This Moore Fauntleroy was the third to possess that name in Virginia and so cherished it that he left his "manner plantation" and the lands commonly known as The Island to his "son Moore and the heirs of his body - and if he dies without issue, then to each of the daughters in turn who has an issue bearing the name Fauntleroy." (Will of 1739). It appears that the name Belle Ville derives from an earlier home, that of Captain Newman Brockenbrough of "Bell Ville." His wife was Katherine Gwynn whose mother's portrait hangs at Mount Airy.

Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough served as justice, sheriff, and a member of the legislature (1810-1811, 1815-1816). His wife was Sarah Waller Smith of Tappahannock. The couple reared six sons and two daughters at Belle Ville.

Two of the sons, Colonel John Mercer Brockenbrough, C.S.A., and Benjamin Waller Brockenbrough owned the plantation known as, "The Island." Another son, Littleton Brockenbrough owned Crondall. The Brockenbrough family owned the ferry from Hobbes Hole (Tappa-



On a carriage ride in the early 1900s, one of the mistresses of Belle Ville and a companion pause beside the front porch. The school building that housed Warsaw Female Institute is visible on the left.

Courtesy of the Sullivan Family



Belle Ville in the 1990s Courtesy of the Sullivan Family

hannock) to the landing in Richmond county beginning in early colonial times. Colonel Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough possessed seventy-six slaves in 1830. Besides engaging in agricultural and domestic duties, some served as hands for the ferry. Doubtless, others labored in the construction of the new house.

Built sometime between 1826 and 1830, the Federal style house has two stories and five bays, above a high English basement. The bricks, laid in Flemish bond, were made on the property. A depression where they were manufactured created a small pond used by local children for ice skating. There is an ample classical style front porch with four columns, gable end toward the lane, reached by a flight of steps its entire width. Other outbuildings included an ice house, kitchen and a small law office.

A long straight drive with an allee of locust trees near the house leads to the front entrance. The allee once continued in the rear of the house through several levels of terraced gardens, remarkable for the beauty of their flowers. To the left is a two-story frame school house known as the Warsaw Female Institute. Here Brockenbrough women oversaw the education of several hundred local children between 1871 and the mid-1920s.

By the time he died in 1845, Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough had increased Belle Ville to 750 acres. He left the estate to his wife Sarah who managed the property and increased the holdings to 1700 acres. Her 1860 will left all the property acquired during her widowhood to her two daughters, Alice and Georgetta. At her death the core of the Belle Ville property was left to second son William Fauntleroy Brockenbrough, who had been born in the old colonial house in 1826.

William Fauntleroy Brockenbrough and his wife Eliza Bland Smith Brockenbrough managed Belleville through the difficult days of the Civil War and Reconstruction. When William died in 1890 at age 65, Eliza inherited 750 acres. One of their four daughters, Sarah (Saide) Smith Brockenbrough had married Chancery Court Judge James Christian Lamb of Richmond in 1885.

The couple had three children, William Brockenbrough, James Christian, Jr. and Eliza Bland. Born in 1898, this daughter who became mistress of Belle Ville for many years is fondly recalled by residents of Warsaw as a kind and dignified lady who remembered birthdays and special events of neighborhood children with shiny silver dimes in the shape of a cross glued to greeting cards. Miss Eliza Bland Lamb died in 1989.



On their wedding day in May, 1921, Eliza Bland Lamb poses with groom, Walter R. Griffith of Westmoreland County at Belle Ville. Between them is the family domestic worker, Ella Cox (1850-1927) called "Mammy" who recalled picking cotton as a girl on the Fauntleroy plantation at Naylor's. The marriage was short lived. Photo : Sullivan Family



Parlor at Belle Ville as it looked when Miss Eliza Bland Lamb lived there. She cared for her aunts, Alice Waller (Sis Allie) Brockenbrough (1870-1955) and Agnes Atkinson Brockenbrough (1876-1967) in their later years. Photo courtesy of the Sullivan Family

Present owners Pete and Pam Sullivan purchased the house and a number of surrounding acres in 1999, and are preserving lovingly the historic estate known as Belle Ville.

David Jett

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