

The Historian

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Island Farm

No one could remember when the tall, sturdy farmhouse with twin outside chimneys was built or who built it. Then suddenly it disappeared. Though the frame house stood unoccupied for nearly twenty-five years, it remained a welcoming sentinel for travelers along Rt. 360 going to and from the Downing Bridge over the Rappahannock. By the spring of 2016 it had become a dilapidated liability and was dismantled and burned.

This large tract containing about 850 acres today has been called “The Island” from colonial times, once part of the vast holdings of 17th century land baron, Colonel Moore Fauntleroy, so named because it is largely cut off from the mainland by meandering Little Carters Creek on one side and bounded by wide marshes and the Rappahannock on the other.

Moore Fauntleroy was the first Englishman to establish a home on the land that would become Richmond County. He was born circa 1610-17 in Crondall (rhymes with bundle) Parish, Hampshire County, on the southern coast of England. Less than four miles from the town of Crondall is the village of Farnham, just across the border in the



A empty Island Farm house in 2016

In 1650, the land-hungry colonel acquired his Farnham Grant of 5,350 acres on both sides of Farnham Creek. At Fauntleroy’s plantation home here, the first court for Lancaster County was held in 1651.

Moving up the river, Moore Fauntleroy patented an additional 1800 acres, a tract called Mangorite, located adjacent to the present bridge to Tappahannock. The name derives from a Rappahannock Indian town, Manaroca, that was mapped by Captain John Smith during his voyage of exploration on the river in 1608. This tract probably included “The Island” where tobacco would have been grown with the labor of African slaves. The extensive marsh here is known today as Mangortite Marsh. Colonel Fauntleroy died in North Farnham Parish in 1663.

For generations, this tract descended in the Fauntleroy family and in 1739, the third Moore Fauntleroy received from his father, William Fauntleroy, the land “commonly known as “The Island” and Crondall where he made his home. The tract north of and adjacent to The Island, called Crondall, consists of about 157 acres today. The names of these two farms and the site of the ferry to Tappahannock are often linked in the early wills.



Little Carters Creek looking south from Rt. 360 in 2018.

The son of Major Moore Fauntleroy of Crondall, also called Major Moore Fauntleroy, was born in 1750. He died unmarried in 1793 and in his will left his property to his “natural” or illegitimate daughter, Maria. Maria Fauntleroy married John Murphy, Jr. County tax records show that John Murphy Jr. owned the island tract and Mangorite marsh in 1814. Subsequently the property passed to their son, Arthur F. Murphy.

Arthur F. Murphy owned the “Ferry and Elmore tracts.” According to Richmond county records, in 1833 he leased the use of the ferry to John A. Parker of Essex for \$500.00 annually for a term of five years.

In 1835, Col. Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough, (1780-1845) and his wife Sarah Waller Smith of Belle Ville in Warsaw, Richmond County, purchased the tract of land called “Crondall, Fauntleroy’s Ferry and Island” from Arthur F. Murphy of the city of Richmond for the sum of \$11,000.00. The sales agreement required payment in installments of two thousand two hundred dollars per year from 1836 until 1840.

Moore F. Brockenbrough, who built the present Belle Ville house about 1830, and his wife, Sarah had six sons and two daughters. The oldest son, Benjamin Waller Brockenbrough was born at Belle Ville in the old colonial house there in 1824. Moore Fauntleroy Brockenbrough of Belle Ville died in 1845, leaving the Crondall and Island tracts to his wife and children



Belle Ville, home of the Brockenbroughs seen from the rear in 2014. The former Warsaw Female Institute is on the right.

David Jett, photo

In 1853, at age 29, Benjamin Waller Brockenbrough agreed to purchase from his mother and siblings shares of the land they had inherited from his father. The next year he sold Crondall farm, then 471 acres, to his brother, Littleton for the sum of \$7,000.00

Richmond County tax records show that in 1860, Benjamin Waller Brockenbrough owned the land called “Island near the ferry” consisting of 767 acres. He is listed in the census that year as a farmer, age 35, living near the Stony Hill post office in the county. Also in his household were his younger brother Edward, 24 who would be killed in the Civil War in 1862, and a black woman, Rachel Tickner, age 22. An increase in the taxes on the Island property from \$350 in 1860 to \$2000 in 1861, almost certainly indicates that the farmhouse was built between those years.



Island Farmhouse in the early 1900s courtesy of Connie Gallagher

By 1870, Benjamin Waller Brockenbrough had become deputy Clerk of Courts for Richmond County. At this time, his brother Confederate Colonel John Mercer Brockenbrough, veteran of the Battle of Gettysburg, was listed in the census as a farmer, age 40. The Tappahannock newspaper, *Tidewater Index* for May, 31, 1873 features an article about his management of Mangorite marsh adjacent to Island Farm.

“Our salt water marshes are about to yield thousands and thousands of dollars annually – heretofore regarded as valueless or nearly so. Col. John M. Brockenbrough of Richmond County, whose efforts to cause immigration entitle him to the thanks and gratitude of the county, is the pioneer in this business. He has ... a contract with Mr. Sands, editor of the *American Farmer* ... to cut , cure, bale and ship all the hay on his large marsh of 1100 acres. Fifty hands are now being engaged to commence work on 9th June.”



James Robert Sanders, left, managed Island farm in the 1920s. His sons Lowery and Everett Sanders stand in the front yard. James Robert and his son Everett bought adjoining Crondall Farm in the 1920s. Courtesy of Connie Gallagher

The 1860 farmhouse, two and one half stories high and two rooms deep, was constructed on a brick foundation without a basement and was entered in front from a side hall on the left which had a staircase. Walls were lath and plaster. Downstairs was a living room or parlor in front that connected to a dining room behind, and each of these rooms also had a door to the stair hall and a fireplace. On the second floor were three bedrooms, one was above the front of the stair hall. The attic had a window on each gable end.



The chimneys after the burn in 2016 show how each of the four major rooms had a fireplace, with all but one bricked up then. David Jett, photo

A small two-story wing on the right rear may have been added later since it covers one of the chimneys. Its rooms served as a storeroom and a bedroom. A breezeway connected the main house to a kitchen located in the left rear of the house.

Mrs. Connie Gallagher, currently a resident of Warsaw was born at Island Farm in 1927. Her grandfather, James Robert Sanders was the farm manager. She recalled that stock included cattle, sheep, hogs and chickens. Five hundred baby chicks were ordered in the spring. Corn and tomatoes were grown and sent to the local canning factories. Muskrats were trapped on the marsh, skinned, the meat salted and stored for later shipment to buyers in Baltimore. The Sanders family had a muskrat dinner once each year. Delicious hams and roasted lamb were other products of the productive farm. An artesian well provided water from a spigot.

A hunting lodge accommodated shooters from Richmond and Baltimore and a tenant house housed black farm workers, some from the Cook, Epps and Canada families. In



The Sanders family in the yard of the Island Farm house in the 1920s. Back row, l to r, Carroll, Everett, James Robert, Lina, Annie; Front row, Lowery and Sedwick. Courtesy Connie Gallagher

a cook house food prepared for workers often included corn cakes and syrup. The farm hands would go to Alex Mallory's store in Warsaw on Saturday evenings to be paid.

Annie Sanders married Alfred Pemberton, Jr. who worked on the farm; Connie Gallagher is their daughter.

Sources

Richmond County Deed Books and Land Tax records
 Interview with Connie Pemberton Gallagher, 2018
 Thanks to Wesley Pippenger, Shannon Brumfield, and Susan Marsh for records research assistance.
Richmond County Virginia, A Review Commemorating the Bicentennial, Elizabeth Ryland, editor, Richmond County Board of Supervisors, 1976.

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Lighting Our
Tree of Love
Has become
a Tradition
Please Join Us



Sunday December 2nd at 5 p. m.

In the Historic 1748 Courthouse

Reading of names in memory and honor of loved ones,
special choral music, refreshments. Get in the Spirit!

Littleton Brockenbrough owned Crondall only three years, from 1854 until his death in 1857 at age 29. In 1867, his brother John Mercer Brockenbrough purchased the farm from Littleton's widow, Lucy Claiborne Shackelford Brockenbrough for \$8,000.

In 1879, Israel Miltiades Parr (1822-1901) a Baltimore Grain Commission merchant, acquired Island Farm from John Mercer Brockenbrough, and his wife, Austina for \$14, 536. The transfer included the "Ferry Landing of W. (William) F. Brockenbrough" another of the sons of Moore F. and Sarah Brockenbrough of Belle Ville. Judge Thomas Croxton of Tappahannock is listed as trustee in the transaction which may indicate that John Brockenbrough still had some debt on the property.

County court records indicate in the absence of banks in the Northern Neck in this period, I.M.

Parr provided one source of capital. In 1870, Thomas Jones of Warsaw, father of Congressman William Atkinson Jones, signed a deed in trust naming "crops of wheat and corn now growing on Cottage Farm in Richmond County in trust to Israel M. Parr and Son for the payment of all the monies now due from the said Thomas Jones to them."

In 1880, a deed between Judge Thomas Croxton of Essex County and I. M. Parr and Son stated Parr "has contracted debts he is unable to pay in full." Nevertheless Parr remained the owner of Island Farm until his death in 1901. His wife Mary B. Parr and daughter Mary Parr Diggs retained the property until 1909.

During his ownership, I.M. Parr resided in Baltimore, relying on managers to run the farm. In July, 1897, the *Northern Neck News* reported: "Mr. W. H. Davis, manager of the Island Farm,



The original lane leading to Island Farm connected with the road that led to the ferry which would have been on the right in this view. This photograph, taken before 1912 by Albert Warner of Warsaw, was made into a post card. In 1927, the Downing Bridge was opened along with the present highway to Warsaw, which ran behind the house as it is pictured here. The familiar view of the old farmhouse from Rt. 360 actually was the rear of the house. The front faced the old ferry road.

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from 175 acres seeded realized 4,625 bushels of wheat, full measure.”

In April, 1897, the paper reported a mishap involving the farm manager’s son: “Whilst returning from this village to the Island Farm on Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Davis, Jr. and Miss Watts were thrown from a dog cart in which they were riding, near Berlin’s shop. The horse got away but was later captured. Aside from being frightened, Mr. Davis and Miss Watts suffered no injury.”



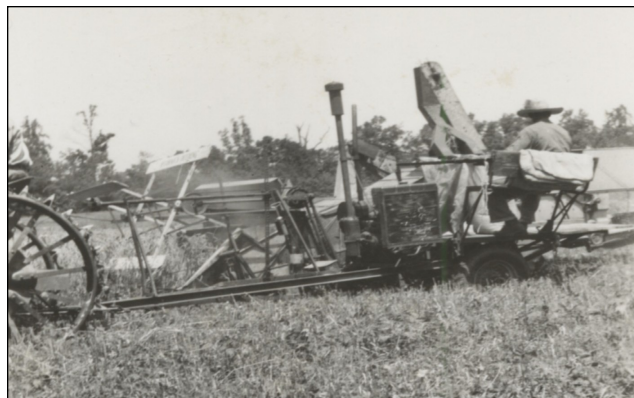
A dog cart is a two-wheeled, horse drawn cart with cross seats back to back, originally incorporating a box under the seat for sportsmen’s dogs. Gail Thornton website

I. M. Parr died in February, 1901. In May, 1901, the Irvington *Virginia Citizen* reported :

“H.W. Harrington has arranged to take charge of Parr’s Island farm next year, and Crondall is now awaiting a tenant. W.H. Davis goes back to Maryland and all wish him success in his new home.”

In October, 1909, Mary Parr Diggs sold the tract of land known as Island, described as 900 acres of high land and 1200 acres of marshland to a partnership of three Warsaw men: Joseph W. Chinn, Jr., Alexander Baylor Mallory and Dr. H. L. Segar. The deed describes the transfer of “horses, mules, cattle, sheep, hogs, straw, household and kitchen furniture, a saw mill and a separator.” The sale price was \$22,500.

Alexander B. Mallory owned and operated a general merchandise store in Warsaw, located where the Daily Restaurant is today. At his death in 1933, his son Alexander (Alex) B. Mallory, Jr. (1904-1959) assumed his portion of the partnership and oversight of the farm.



A threshing machine, Island Farm, 1920s Connie Gallagher

In 1943, Alex Mallory and Dr. H. L. Segar placed an ad in the *Northern Neck News*: “Wanted, salaried manager for Island Farm, man with grown sons preferred.”

About 1948, Henry Headley, Sr. from Callao, in neighboring Northumberland County became the manager of the farm, living in the farmhouse with his family. The Headleys remained there until he retired in 1992.

In 1953, Alex Mallory and Dr. Segar offered “For Sale, Bailed Clover Hay, \$40.00 per ton.” Apparently Joseph W. Chinn, Jr. was no longer a partner in the farm during these years. A similar ad in 1956 offered: “Clover and Timothy hay, wire bailed, \$30.00 per ton. Island Farm, A.B. Mallory, Jr. Mgr.”

Robert H. (Bobby) Mallory inherited Island Farm when his father died in 1959 and with his cousin Alexander Mallory Clarke is the owner of Island Farm today. The current crop is soybeans.



Hunters on Island Farm in the 1920s

On December 21, 1900 the *Northern Neck News* reported, “The Messrs. Davis of the Island Farm killed one day last week 75 mallard ducks; and in February, 1901: “Mr. Johnson who has been hunting the marsh at the Island Farm killed thirteen geese at one shot” Courtesy Connie Gallagher

