

Exerpts from
On Deep Water
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CHAPTER VI

PAMPATIKE AND PIPING TREE

The wedding of Mary Page to William Newton was quite a festive occasion. No doubt those who knew the family well especially rejoiced at the potential happiness which awaited the once sad little heiress of "Summer Hill."

Mary Page chose, as her wedding party, twelve couples from among her close connections. In writing her memoirs, Mrs. Kate Christian described her mother's retinue:

The 'first' bridesmaid and groomsman went down in the history of those times as the handsomest couple in Virginia-Miss Ann Eliza Pleasants (afterwards Mrs. Douglas Gordon of Balto.) and Dr. Thomas H. Carter of Pampatike Eleven other couples of equal prominence, if not dowered with such good looks, made up this wedding party.¹

Thomas Henry Carter was a cousin, through the Carters, the Nelsons, and the Pages, of Mary Page. At the time of the wedding he was a young man of twenty-two, who, though trained for the medical profession, had given up his practice to manage "Pampatike," in King William County, for his father, whose overseer had died quite suddenly.²

In 1853 "Pampatike" was comprised of 2,250 acres, worked by a force of 150 negro slaves.³ Its fertile expanses had been patented on 20 April 1685, by Capt. Francis Page, the brother of Matthew Page, who settled "Rosewell" and became the ancestor of Mary Page. "Pampatike" had been sold long before that, by the Queen of the Pamunkeys, to one Boothe.⁴

Francis Page lived in Williamsburg. He married, and had one child, Elizabeth Page, who inherited her father's estate, which included his "land in King and Queen County, called 'Pamputike.'"⁵ Elizabeth married her cousin, John Page, a lawyer, in 1701, and died the following year, without issue.⁶

Matthew Page died at "Rosewell" in 1703. His widow, Mary Mann Page, a young woman of forty-five years, married her husband's cousin, John Page, widower of her husband's niece, Elizabeth. Mary's son, Mann Page I, who had inherited "Rosewell" from his father, thus became the stepson of the man who possessed the inheritance left by Mann's uncle, Francis Page. This created a complicated situation, however, Mann's mother died, and John Page returned to England, where he succumbed, at Stepney, in 1710. The children of Mary Mann's new family elected to remain in England, and, consequently, Mann Page inherited claim and title to all the Page lands in Virginia, by virtue of being the only male heir, in this country, of his grandfather, Col. John Page, of Williamsburg.⁷ Under these circumstances, "Pampatike," essentially, became an outlying plantation of "Rosewell."

Mann Page I was a man of considerable property, and, in 1725, he began, at Rosewell, the construction of "the largest house in America."⁸ This undertaking proved a financial mistake, and

the "large and costly" house was barely completed when Mr. Page died there in January 1730. His wealth proved an illusion, as "he felt he was rich because he had inherited vast forests."⁹ He left great public debts, and for this reason, the colonial legislature suggested in 1744 that a portion of the Page holdings be dispersed. ¹⁰ Around this time Pampatike was purchased by, or in some way devised to, John Carter of Corotoman, heir to "King" Carter and brother to Mann Page's widow, Judith Carter Page. By his marriage to Elizabeth Hill, Carter had acquired "Shirley," ¹¹ and, Pampatike, once a dependency of Rosewell, became, around 1744, a landed arm of an opulent James River plantation.

John Carter's property descended to his son, Charles, who was twice married, possessed 25,000 acres of land, and fathered twenty-three children.¹² Among his first offspring was the wife of Col. George Braxton, whose King William farms lay near Pampatike. From the second marriage came thirteen children, and among them was Dr. Robert Carter, who became heir to Shirley, as well as to Pampatike and other outlying properties. ¹³ He married Mary Nelson, a daughter of Gov. Thomas Nelson of Yorktown.¹⁴ Their youngest son, Thomas Nelson Carter, inherited Pampatike when he was five years of age, and went there to live after his marriage to Juliet Muse Gaines, in 1828.¹⁵

A sort of hunting lodge, or similar dwelling, had been built at Pampatike during the late eighteenth century. This was enlarged, and Mrs. Juliet Carter planted cedar trees down the long drive which led into Pampatike from the main road. Within six years, Mrs. Carter gave birth to four children, and died, at the age of twenty-eight years, in 1834.¹⁶ Her third child, Thomas Henry, was three years old.

Thomas Nelson Carter did not remain a widower for very long. In November 1835, he married Anne Willing Page, daughter of William Byrd Page and his wife, Evelyn Byrd Nelson, of "Page Brook," in Clarke.¹⁷ Around this time Mr. Carter added to Pampatike by purchasing Goodwin's Island, a tract of land consisting of 900 acres, lying in the Pamunkey marshes. ¹⁸ The island was surrounded by a very deep creek, an arm of the river. Long ago, the Indians carried their dead to this place for burial, and, at one time, two large mounds were visible there. Mr. Carter put his negroes to work, and constructed a system of dams whereby most of the island's rich terrain was reclaimed for farmland. Probably for this reason, the narrow body of water surrounding the island became known as the "Dam Creek," and the Carters built a landing on its shores. "Pampatike" thus had two outlets on the river. The "lower" landing was on the Pamunkey proper, and the wharf on "Dam Creek" was the "upper" landing.¹⁹

Thomas Carter lived in King William for only a short while after taking a new wife. He purchased "Annefield," in Clarke County, and moved his family there around 1836-1837.²⁰ Thomas Henry Carter, then, must have spent his childhood in Clarke County. He graduated, eighth in his class, from the Virginia Military Institute, in 1849. Two years later, he received a medical degree from the University of Virginia, and did further study at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Carter then spent a year as an intern in Philadelphia's Blockley Hospital, and wished to pursue a medical career. Pampatike's overseer died quite suddenly, however, and, at his father's request, Dr. Carter sacrificed his ambition, and assumed the management of that farm,²¹ around 1853.

Pampatike was very isolated, because of its size, and because of its location in a county with an inadequate system of roads. By the time young Tom Carter came to live in King William, however, he had many young cousins, through Carter and Nelson blood, living along the Pamunkey. He became boon companions of the "Chericoke" boys, and often crossed the river to visit the Braxton girls at "Ingleside," as well as the people of "Summer Hill."²²

Located a little distance southeast from the Carter property was "Piping Tree," the site of a very important ferry. The story goes that early Indian councils were held here, with the white settlers. After the pipe of peace had been properly smoked, it was stored in the hollow of a tree. Whenever the Indians detected a breach of promise, they reminded the white men of the "pipe in tree." 23 A ferry was established here very early in the 1700s, 24 and later a tavern 25 and a warehouse 26 were built, so that the place became quite a center of activity. The ferry and its adjoining farm changed hands several times before becoming the property, first of William Gregory, then of his son, Dr. Fendall Gregory, who in 1857 derived an income of \$771 in tolls. 27

The Pamunkey winds, snakelike, until reaching Piping Tree, at which point it widens and assumes more the look of an avenue for oceangoing vessels of old. It is especially lovely here on moonlit nights, when one may be engulfed with quiet. The stillness is broken only by the call of an owl or the slap of a beaver's tail as he dives for fish. It was on one such evening that young Tom Carter and a group of his cronies barely escaped tragedy.

The young ladies of Chericoke had as their houseguest, Susan Roy, of "Green Plains," in the lovely Mobjack Bay country of Mathews County. A party was being held at "Ingleside," to which all the young people had been invited. Tom and his group of bachelor friends landed at Piping Tree just as the ferryman started across with the Braxton carriage, full of gleeful young women. Midway of the river the horses grew restless, and, when the moon broke suddenly through the clouds, the animals bolted, and one horse dove into the water. For an instant, it appeared as though the carriage would go, too, but the old driver cut the traces, and the horses disappeared beneath the boat. 28

Later on, Susan Roy married the young master of "Pampatike," and became the mother of six children, four of whom were born before the War Between the States. The eldest, William Roy Carter, lived a little more than a year. He was followed by James, Thomas Nelson, and Juliet Gaines Carter. 29

For more than a decade after 1815 Piping Tree was owned by a member of the Turner family. 30 In the summer of 1861 a scion of that household purchased "Eastern View," an old tract which adjoined Retreat, across the river in Hanover. 31 The house there had been built in 1740 32 on a prominence which commands a sweeping, sixteen-mile view of the Pamunkey.

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1 Christian, Mrs. Kate Brockenbrough Newton. "Summer Hill and Westwood," among her discourses recorded in "Once Upon a Time' Stories," composed in 1932. Assembled by William B. N. Brookes, from original manuscripts found at Summer Hill. P. 1-14 of Mr. Brooke's typescript.

2 Tyler, Lyon Gardiner, LL.D. *Men of Mark in Virginia: Ideals of American Life*. (Washington, D. C.: Men of Mark Publishing Company, 1908). Vol. 4, p. 62.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Harris, Malcolm Hart, M. D. *Old New Kent County: Some Account of the Planters, Plantations, and Places in New Kent County*. (West Point, Virginia: Malcolm Hart Harris, M. D., 1977). Vol. 2, p. 795.

5 Page, Richard Channing Moore, M. D. *Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia*. (New York: Press of the Publisher's Printing Company; second edition, 1893). P. 44.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 51 and 57.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

10 Hening, William Waller. *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of the Laws of Virginia, From the First Session of the Legislature, in the year 1619*. Published Pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly of Virginia, passed on 5 February 1808. (Richmond, Virginia: Franklin Press, 1819). Vol. 5, pp. 277-284, "An act, to enable Mann Page, Esq. to sell and dispose of certain entailed lands, to raise money for the payment of his father's debts, and performance of his will; and for other purposes therein mentioned," September

1744.

11 Freeman, Douglas Southall. R. E. *Lee: A Biography*. (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934). Vol. 1, p. 24.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Lancaster, Robert A., Jr. "Pampatike and Winton," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia Historical Society). Vol. 41, No.3, July 1933. P. 223.

14 *The Beverley Family of Virginia, A Genealogy*. (Compiled by John McGill. Columbia, South Carolina: The R. L. Bryan Company, 1956). P. 463.

15 Dulany, Mrs. Anne Willing Carter. *Some Recollections*. (Washington, D. C., 1936; privately printed). Pages unnumbered. Date of marriage from *The Beverley Family*, op. dt., p. 471.

16 *The Beverley Family*, op. dt., p. 471.

17 Page, Richard Channing Moore, M. D. *Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia*, op. dt., p. 145.

18 Harris, Malcolm Hart, M. D. *Old New Kent County*, op. dt., Vol. 2, p. 796.

19 References to these landings included among descriptions of the Pampatike property, found in King William County Deed Books 2, p. 443; and 41, pp. 127 and 132.

20 From information found in *The Beverley Family*, op. cit., p. 463, and from "Cemetery Record," *Old Chapel, Clarke County, Virginia*. (Berryville, Virginia: Blue Ridge Press, 1906). P. 55.

21 Tyler, Lyon Gardiner, LL.D. *Men o/Mark in Virginia*, op. cit., p. 62.

22 Reference to this in a letter written at Ingleside by Elizabeth Randolph Braxton to her sister, Lucy Lindley Braxton (d. 1862), under date 26 April 1853. Folder 13, Johnston papers, Virginia Historical Society.

23 Gwathmey, John H. *Twelve Virginia Counties*. (Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, 1937). P. 64.

24 Hening, William Waller. *The Statutes at Large*, op. cit. Vol. 4, p.93. (Richmond: 1820). Piping Tree had its beginnings in 1720, when an act was passed "for settling a new ferry on the Pamunkey, from Robert King's over the said river "

25 King William County, Virginia, *from old Newspapers & Files*. (Richmond, Virginia: The Dietz Press, 1955). P. 90. Compiled and annotated by Elizabeth Hawes Ryland.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Hening, William Waller. *The Statutes at Large*, op. cit. Vol. 6, p. 174. (Richmond: 1819). According to this source, a warehouse was "ordered to be built in King William at a place called the Piping Tree," in November 1748.

27 Land Tax Book, King William County, 1857. Archives Division, Virginia State Library.

28 Dulany, Mrs. Anne Willing Carter. *Some Recollections*, op. cit.

29 *The Beverley Family o/Virginia*, op. cit., p. 471.

30 King William County Land Books, 1814-1829. Microfilm, Archives Division, Virginia State Library.

31 Deed under date of 10 July 1861, recorded in Hanover County Deed Book 2, p. 227, between William O. Winston, special commissioner, and Thomas G. Turner. 32 *Herald Progress Commemorative Historical Edition, 1721-1971*. Section 3: "Homes, the firesides of history," p. 3, column 3. (Ashland, Virginia: Edited and Published by the *Herald*" Progress Newspaper Staff, August, 1971).

