

**CHILDHOOD MEMORIES
OF
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OF
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CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

BY

NELLIE MILES PAUL

This is a most informal narrative as it was written solely for my amusement.

Modern psychiatrists say that childhood memories are the most vivid & lasting of any in life and I believe it, for mine certainly are, & in this little paper I've tried to present a few highlights of my first decade. It is not in any sense presuming to be a history of Washington, (NC) for several others have covered that subject far better than I could ever hope to do, but rather a sort of potpourri of my earliest personal impressions of the dearest spot on earth; "Home".

*"Oh bring back the days that to me were so dear,
Long, long ago, long ago."*

'Tis said that when one begins to reminisce it's a sure sign of old age, Never-the-less, regardless of the horrid implication, I'm going to look once down the vista of time & share with you in retrospect a few of the most memorable of my early childhood events which covered that period known as the "Gay Nineties", but forever inscribed in my heart as "The Happy Years". To begin with I believe its customary when writing one's memories to state where and when one was born etc., so for the benefit for those that are not Native Washingtonians, I was born right here in town - and the year is none of your business! My childhood home was on 2nd Street, situated on part of the property where the high school stood, & my only claim to distinction is that I was born right across the street from the Cecil B, DeMille house and went to school with Lindsay Warren! Our old home was a big white house next door to the Academy Yard, which was on the corner of Bridge Street. There was a green space surrounding the school house, shaded with graceful elms & covered in spring and summer with a carpet of yellow buttercups & snowy daisies. This was the scene of most of the town's festivities & of some of my happiest moments, as it was the neighborhood play-ground & where I first went to school. The memory of those joyous carefree days inspired the attached poem: "Sprig of Rosemary".

It was truly "Little Washington" in those days & more like a sleepy village than a town, Everybody knew everyone else back into the fourth generation , both white and colored, There were no paved streets, not even down-town, - tho they did have wooden sidewalks. People had to wade through dust in summer and mud in winter. On rainy days it was a favorite sport of the young bloods of the town to gather on the corners & get a thrill watching the women pick their way across the streets with their long skirts daintily & circumspectly lifted out of the slush & perhaps displaying an ankle now and then to the hopeful, pop-eyed gazers. Poor frustrated boys! They lived half a century too soon.

Like all little girls I very early began to take a great interest in feminine attire & therefore have a vivid remembrance of the styles of the day. Huge legs-o-mutton sleeves were the vogue & long, many-gored, bell shaped skirts that trailed in the dust, tho they were supposed to be protected by a so-called "dust ruffle" of gay colored taffeta sewn under the hem , & by the time the wearer had swept up the streets it didn't belie its name. It was considered very smart by the more daring among the younger set to gather the skirt up in one hand in graceful fashion to show an exciting glimpse of the hidden splendor & also lacy petti-coats & high button shoes which were supposed to be the utterly devastating to the opposite sex. As for petti-coats, no lady wore less than two - & maybe more! - & even then, frequently inquired anxiously of one another, "Can you see thru' me?" Oh shades of ye modest maids! What must ye think of your great=grand-daughters today in shorts! The female form divine of the era was most unusual, to say the least as all women with any pretension to fashion whatsoever nobly aspired to achieve particular posture known as "The Grecian Bend", which was absolutely the last word in elegance & grace. To attain this ultra-modish shape ladies assumed a stance that made 'em stick out in the front like pouter-pigeons & behind like Donald Duck in a sort of kangaroo pose which must have practically un-jointed their backs! Belts were pinned way down in a deep point in front to accentuate the dip. Hats were marvelous creations of various flora & fauna. One hat sometimes having several kinds of fruits and flowers, to say nothing of a bird or two coyly nesting in the thicket. A simple street chapeau was apt to be adorned with a huge bow fore and aft, which was not considered very smart, but rather plain. However they were beautiful to me and I gazed on them with open-mouthed awe and admiration.

As for hairdos, everyone wore bangs – including me! You see I mortified my poor mother by being born bald as an egg, so she tacked some false bangs inside my bonnet. These adorable pictures show me before and after and you will have to agree they were a big improvement. As this was before the invention of permanents, (& by-the-way, the female sex should erect a monument to the originator,) most women went around to best part of their time with a row of knobby kid-curlers across their forehead & blossomed out later on with a fringe of seductive curls that would have made a poodle-dog turn green with envy – tho’ the back remained as straight as a horse-tail. The men were all mustached and bearded,

It goes without saying that only hussies’ used powder & rouge & anyone who did so was suspect, as members of the oldest profession were called “painted ladies” and were known thereby to one and all. Therefore real ladies made a point of going around looking like ha’nts, with their virtuous noses brightly gleaming to advertise their immaculate chastity. And no greater insult could be offered to a women blessed with good color than to ask her if it were natural. Brows were also totally un-plucked & wandered in an un-inhibited manner all over the facial landscape., with their hapless owners peering suspiciously out like owls from under a thatched roof. Truly, it was a day of beauty unadorned, when vanity was considered one of the seven deadly sins, & poor little girls were zealously taught that “Pretty is as pretty does”, & “Beauty is only skin deep”, & that only the cardinal virtues mattered – together with knowing how to cook! If one happened to be so lucky as to be born pretty that was very nice & due cause for quiet rejoicing, tho one must’nt be vain, but if not that was definitely that, & there wasn’t a darned thing one could do about it! Absolutely nothing stood between them and utter despair except a few kid-curlers. However this resigned viewpoint was great for developing personality for that’s all the poor things had. I mean to tell you a lady was a Lady then, and not apt to be mistaken for anything else – which is now our highest ambition! - & her only aid to glamour beyond the legitimate kid-curlers was biting her lips to make ‘em red & popping her own jaws to induce a rosy glow. But times change: by the time I’d reached my teens a few daring pioneer souls were openly using corn-starch & chamois skins to subdue noses that shown like good deeds in a naughty world, & on festive occasions actually rubbing cheeks damped red crepe-paper after which they snuck furtively out of the house to avoid the stern maternal eye, lest they be sent ignominiously back to their room with strict orders to wash it right straight off! But as time advanced the good women of the world, who had hitherto fought a losing fight with the

professional charmers of stage & street in the field of seductiveness, began to sit-up & take notice. They finally reached the obvious conclusion that the cardinal virtues could do with a little outside assistance, & that they didn't necessarily have to look like a Zombie, to establish their respectability. Also, since the men seemed to admire the brazen sirens with artificial charms so much, why not try a little of it at home & give the hussies a little competition? And so they did with the present pleasing results. After all, they only used the same reasoning employed by John Wesley when he converted the bar-room melodies of his day into hymns, saying the the Devil had had all the pretty ones long enough! But how the poor women of the past ever managed to get husbands without benefit of rouge, powder, lipstick or permanent is one of the major mysteries of life, but they did! It just goes to show what a women can do when she tries.

Before abandoning the subject of clothes I want to go on record as declaring those of children in that period were unbelievably hideous. Of course for little boy's were not so bad, being modeled after the Little Lord Fauntleroy influence, but the little girl's were simply awful! I know: I was one of those martyrs. And to prove it, just listen: Our standard winter outfit consisted first of a long sleeved, long legged union suit, and over this came a pair of drawers buttoned on to a waist. Please note that theses were not scanties, or step-ins, or anything frivolous, but honest-to-goodness drawers! Next came an embroidered flannel petticoat, & a Hamburg-ruffled white cambric one, both made onto waists. Then came a long-sleeved, high-necked dress & of modest length, & finally a frilly white pinafore to top it all. With this iutfit we wore long black cotton stockings & high-top shoes; & if one's father were of an economical turn of mind, they were copper-toed beauties. It may be noted in passing that it was quite a work of art to be able to pull one's stockings up over the long union=suit without a lumpy appearance, but of the latter were folded just so, it could be done – tho by the end of the week the dratted things had to be wrapped around our spindly shanks like puttees! This underwear was not taken off on any account until the first of May when we all hands emerged like snakes shedding their skins. (Shoes, stockngs were abandoned this epochal date.) And oh the delicious coolness & airiy lightness were worth it all! In addition to the above flattering ensemble, I usually wore a permanent mutton-suet-&-turpentine pinned across my feeble chest to ward off colds (as I was considered very delicate & threatened to go into decline) together with fragrant as a foedite La Valliere as a further precautionary measure against contagious diseases. It's a wonder any respectable germ would come near me.

In connection with this subject, I am reminded of the Big Event of the week – the Saturday night bath. This amounted to a sacred institution & was not to be approached lightly, but prayerfully & with due preparation. Remember there were no bathrooms & heated houses then, so first of all a roaring fire was built in the kitchen stove, and all available pots & pans filled with water from the pump on the back porch & heated. Then the big wash-tub was dragged in and filled. Next, clean cloths & towels were brought in for all concerned & hung on chairs and cloths racks to warm, so there would be no “fanning” in & out in our shirt tails – or hers. Then the first victim was summoned, peeled & scrubbed, & in due course of time departed shinning with cleanliness and as red as a turkey gobbler. The tub was then dragged out & emptied & refilled, & the next in line hauled in, protesting bitterly but to no avail. This process was repeated until all had undergone their purifying trail by water & everything returned to normal providing no one came down with pneumonia, Is it any marvel that it happened only once a week? Any oftener would have killed us,

But to resume, the thread of my narrative: no childhood recollections of mine would be complete without a description of my mother’s lovely flower-yard, As our house was built right flush with the street, there was a big back yard & most of it was taken up by a beautifully planned , old-fashioned garden, Roses, lilies & flowers of every kind & color, according to the season, grew there in profusion, the whole being laid out in symmetrical beds, intersected by narrow, violet-bordered paths, while multicolored hollyhocks & evergreens stood tall against the fence It was indeed a peaceful and pretty spot where birds sing in the elms & butterflies played tag among the blossoms, while the bees hummed a ceaseless hymn of praise. But I must confess that things were not always so idyllic, for often times after some youthful misdemeanor I was firmly escorted down these same violet bordered paths by my irate mother to a certain vine covered kiosk in the rear, only pausing in our progress long enough to pick a switch from a conveniently located peach-tree - which was planted, I’m sure. with malice afore thought. Having reached our destination, I was ushered inside with scant ceremony where my subsequent penitential wails were decently muffled in seemly seclusion. Twas in this snug retreat that I was taught many valuable lessons in manner, morals & general behavior. (The woodshed was dedicated to my brothers when papa paid them similar attention.)

This reminds me of one around which my dearest memories are woven, maybe loved a little. Next door neighbor Ruthie. Born side-by-side, with only a few months difference in age, we were inseparable companions for many years, sharing each other's joys & sorrows, until our friendship was terminated by her departure to a Fairer Land.

Of course we had our little differences of opinion which often culminated in fighting & hair pulling, but they were soon forgotten. However it was due to these periodical explosions that I owed most of my personally conducted tours of the garden, from which I usually returned much improved in disposition – tho I used to wish with unchristian fervor that Ruthie had to join me in my sad pilgrimages, but her mother believed in a hair brush energetically applied in the privacy of the boudoir, while mine belonged to the peach-tree school. And I don't know but what she had something there, as that shameful march to the "House-of-Doom" made a lasting impression on my mind. (And elsewhere)

The benighted parents of that day never heard of child psychology & took to heart the Biblical warning of, "Spare the rod and spoil the child.", & also the injunction with "Train up a child with the way he should go, etc." and they didn't do it with sweet and gentle reasoning either! Consequently, as there were lots of children in our neighborhood, there was such a fusillade of pops that it sounded like the folks were always applauding. Ah, sweet memories!

The long summer days were all too short, for children really played then & didn't just miserably while away the mornings in boredom until time for a picture show to open. We played – dolls, paper dolls, keep house, dress-up-lady, hop-scotch, jump rope, hide-&-seek, & dozens of other games, in doors & out and it's the memory of that care-free play time that is so precious to me. But be it distinctly understood, we didn't play on Sunday. No indeed! Sundays were really Sundays then, & no foolin". Church was in the morning, & Sunday-school was in the afternoon and everybody went to both unless sick unto death - & how I enjoyed the Sundays I was sick! They were worth the inevitable dose of calomel & castor oil which followed. Children were not allowed to visit or play noisy games or do anything whatsoever to break Sabbath calm except read a good book, preferably Bible stories, tho educational books, or those of uplifting nature were tolerated.

We had one called "Heroes of the Dark Continent", about Africa, & Ruthie had one about Mexico, both filled with the most harrowing pictures and tho they may have induced night-mares, we were supposed to have been benefitted from there perusal. We also had a book about martyrs which was not simulating. I frequently evaded the blue laws about reading matter by retiring to the afore mentioned vine-wreathed retreat in the back yard where one could find various fascinating newspapers thoughtfully provided for the convenience of patrons, over which I pored – proving that where there is a will there is a way. As for music, no one was allowed to sing wordly songs either, only hymns and maybe the more sedate pieces such as "Annie Laurie" & "Loves Old Sweet Song", but it was understood they must be of a semi-classical & mournful nature and sung with proper decorum. But my favorite Sabbath pastime was to sit on the front steps & watch the courting couples sauntering by in their Sunday clothes, simply lost in admiration & I dreaming of the time when I'd have a beau of my own.

Sometimes however we'd go for a walk, as that was permissible- & I do mean WALK.! Both my parents were great walkers & their idea of a pleasant little Sunday afternoon stroll was half-way to Bath and back. I & my poor brothers would protest bitterly but without avail & we had to go, willy-nilly. So right after Sunday-school we'd set out, mama and popa stepping off briskly & we young's bringing up the rear. And we walked!. Once I hit upon a happy thought: I'd run myself most to death & get way ahead, then sit down in blissful ease until the procession caught up with me and disappeared in the distance, then I'd repeat the process and spurt up the road again like the rabbit in the fable. Finally after we'd trekked about a 100 miles, more or less, we'd arrive home, laden with nuts, berries, persimmons, wild flowers, autumn leaves, or what have you according to the season, parents in fine fettle, & youngn's with tongues hanging out and tails a-dragging. That's why I'm still averse to walking any farther then from the rocking chair to the table. Now days people are always wildly rushing hither & yon, & home seems to be just a jumping off place But in those days there was very little to do but stay home or visit the neighbors once in a while. Families were much closer together as they were thrown upon each other for companionship. Nights after supper we'd sit on the front porch in summer, or by a cheery open fire in winter, & the grown folks would talk or read aloud, & the children would listen & enjoy it. Many an interesting tale of the past I heard, & many things I learned, but best of all were the ghost tales. People didn't have any crazy ideas about "complexes" by giving the little

darlings “fixations” & what not, & they were utterly uninhibited in their recitals - & were they fun!

Speaking of ghost tales, this is a true story of a rather unusual thing that happened to my mother & a very dear friend of hers named Mrs. Gordon who had an apartment in our house at the time. As I have said my childhood home was on Second Street & directly opposite the Rodman property which faced on Main Street, but extended clear thru to Second Street as it still does today. On this back lot there was an old carriage-house with double doors which opened on Second Street & diagonally in front of our house. This terribly cold night one of the West end mills caught fire & mama & Mrs. Gordon wrapped up in shawls & went out on the front porch to see what was to be seen, their husbands having already departed to join the volunteer fire company to which they & every other able-bodied man belonged. Suddenly, as the shivering women were standing there watching the conflagration at the end of the street & the rapidly approaching fire brigade coming from the other direction, the doors of the Rodman’s garage – house slowly opened & out came a woman dressed all in white, plainly visible in the bright moonlight, who started walking in a leisurely manner across the street towards them, looking neither to the left nor the right despite all the excitement going on around her. Mrs. Gordon exclaimed “Look Mary – who in the world is that”? Moma replied, “I don’t know, but she is going to catch her death in that rig and get run over besides!” – as the firemen were less than a block away. But, on she came, never quickening her pace in the slightest degree, or even glancing at the milee almost upon her, straight towards the porch as she intending joining the amazed women, while the whole fire-company with clanging bells & galloping horses swept by, accompanied by all the boys & dogs in town, yelling and barking - narrowly missing the indifferent stroller who was apparently unseen. As she reached the sidewalk Mrs. Jordan, who was a trifle profane, exclaimed, “My Lord, Mary, the damned thing’s coming right on in – and yanked mama inside & slammed the door. Great was their speculation as to who or what it was, and upon comparing notes as to her costume, mama thought she had on some kind of a long, white “wrapper” tho Mrs. Gordon said “ Wrapper nothing - twas a shroud!” But they both were convinced that it was something supernatural, as no mortal woman could have maintained such superlative calm in such a situation and they always regretted that they hadn’t stayed to see what would have happened. When the men returned they were told about it & asked if they had seen her to, as they could hardly have failed to do so, but they said they had not, However, they were of the

opinion that it was some poor homeless or drunken creature who had taken refuge there for the night & was awakened by the mill-whistles & general racket. But they failed to explain satisfactorily why she was so lightly clad on such a bitter night, or why she didn't remain in hiding instead of marching out brazenly in the face of the entire male population & and why they had not seen her right there in front of "em! And besides, their wives triumphantly reminded them, they happened to know that the carriage-house was always locked! Next day Mrs. Gordon went to see Mrs. Rodman and related the whole incident, jokingly accusing her of being a sleep-walker and parading around town nights in her night gown, which amused Mrs. Rodman very much, & tho' she seemed extremely interested, she was unable to explain the apparition,

It's perfectly true that I was always scared spitless & afraid to go to bed after those sessions, but I went just the same, & I never had any permanent ill-effects that that I know of. Another after – supper amusement was playing games., especially parchesi & checkers. Dominoes were a great favorite too. As there were no movies the town depended on an occasional road- or home-talent show, or circus, for it's amusement, & great was the excitement when the latter came to town! The country people began coming into town before day & little boys sat up all night to meet it. Never shall I forget the circus and the panic that prevailed when the lion escaped! As there were no phones, riders on horse-back galloped up & down the streets shouting, "The lion's loose!" while frantic mothers dashed madly around collecting their off-spring & shutting 'em up behind locked doors. The fugitive king of beasts was later discovered in a negro's back yard peacefully eating chickens, which was quite an anti-climax, to say the least, for everyone had expected him to devour a child or two,

The town had very few diversions & the greatest dissipation was an occasional dance or church "sociable" or lawn party. The two former were always held in the old armory over the market where either dancing or "Shoo-by-too" was enjoyed by all, depending on the occasion; as for the latter, I wonder how many of you remember those lawn-parties of long ago? They were the big events of the summer & were usually held on the aforementioned Academy yard where I had a ring-side seat whether I got to go or not, Multicolored Japanese lanterns were strung under the trees turning the old familiar playground into a veritable fairyland, with white – covered tables, each adorned with a vase of flowers, placed here and there where the ladies sold delicious home-made ice cream, & cake to make money for the

church. In a day when drug stores were merely drug stores and nothing more, these festivals were sure-fire money makers as all the yung men men were supposed to take their girls & treat 'em, & the husbands could do no less. Weddings were also, then as now, prime social events & talked about before and after, Right here allow me to read the account of one wherein I took a more or less prominent part.

Funerals were also not lacking in excitement. As a dignified, frock-coated negro man went from house-to-house & knocked upon the doors with proper decorum; when it was opene he silently for perusal a hand-written announcement fastened by a sprig of tube-roses to a wide black satin ribbon upon a silver tray, You were supposed to read it in equal silence, & nod in solemn understanding, whereupon the funeral bearer took his stately departure. This, to me, was the very acme of excitement, as it was not only a rare event, but a mysterious one. I always, after such a somber & impressive visitation, repaired to the back porch where I sang doleful hymns for hours, being properly subdued by such close association with the ambassador of Death.

Another twice-daily occurrence which ranked high in thrills was the leisurely progress thru town morning and afternoon of Mr, Fleming's herd of cattle being driven to & from pasture. Every child on the line of the march would holler "The cows are coming!" & run up on the nearest porch to watch them in fretful anticipation, because sometimes the big bull would chase people & we were always hopefully expectant.

But I must not forget the truly "Big Event" that we children dated things from: Once a year the church had a S.S. picnic at Public Landing, everyone being conveyed thither on a slow moving barge, lustily singing "Good bye, my Love, Good bye". As my mother was afraid that I'd fall or get pushed off this un-railed boat, I very rarely went unless some kind soul would take me in a horse & buggy, but it was a treat when I did. Oh, the good things to eat, & the lemonade made in a tub! And oh, the merry games we played "Old String Beans & Barley Grow" & "Little Sally Waters" to happy exhaustion. I know the young folks don't have nearly so good a time today, It was most as wonderful as the Tenth of May which was by far the most out-standing day of the year – except Christmas, This even out-ranked the Fourth-of-July,

As the Civil War was not so awfully far in the past at this time, many of the old soldiers were still living & took part in the Tenth of May celebration which was also followed by a big dinner in their honor. However, the festive day was somewhat overshadowed for me as I always had to “speak a piece” at the memorial service in the old opera house. Being a member of the “Children of the Confederacy”, it was my sad lot to present the crosses of honor to the veterans with an appropriate speech, which I considered a doubtful honor. This dreaded but important ordeal simply prostrated me in terror for days in advance, inducing such pallor & lack of appetite that my worried mother generously doused me with sulphur and molasses, or “Groves Chill Tonic”, in the belief that I was coming down with something. However by the time the fatal day arrived I was in such a state of catalepsy that I was feeling no pain & managed to get through my oration in a more or less commendable, tho glassy eyed fashion, with mama giving Groves Chill Tonic all the credit. Everybody then marched out to the cemetery to decorate the old soldier’s graves and usually there was a cloudburst that half drowned us all, causing our red sashes to run all over our white dresses. So for me the Tenth of May was distinctly not an unadulterated pleasure. I still have night-mares about it and wake up feverishly muttering, “Here veterans, we give a cross to you, not a cross that is hard to bear. But a cross for your bravery, tried and true, a badge you are proud to wear.”

One of the most memorable events of my childhood, however, was when “Short’s Mill” blew up. I well remember, it was early in the morning, before breakfast, & we were just getting up, for my family were early risers, when suddenly there was a deafening explosion that shook the whole house, broke windows & caused plates to fall.. The sound was awful – like I imagine a bomb blast would be, & for a moment there was stunned silence. Then my father explained, “Its one of the mills”! By that time everyone was running outdoors & the excitement was intense. Presently, a man came running down the street crying, “Shorts Mill has blown up!” And sure enough, it had, killing Mr. Short & 13 men. The mill stood where Eureka Mill is now, but such was the force of the explosion that a piece of of the boiler was blown clear thru the roof of our house & we didn’t discover it until the roof leaked in the next rain. It was a terrible catastrophe & shocked the whole community, as Mr. Short was one of our leading citizens.

And while I am on exciting events, let me tell you about the earthquake. This happened one night right after supper, and Auntie, who

lived with us, had just gone to her room. Suddenly, she came running downstairs exclaiming, "Come quick! There's someone in my closet. The door keeps opening and closing!" Well, my father grabbed his gun & ran upstairs, but there was no one there. About that time things started falling off shelves & rattling around while tremors ran thru the house, & my mother cried, "Its an earthquake!" And so it was, but not exactly here, It was only the effects of a really severe one elsewhere. The next morning I went out in the back yard & was horribly fascinated to find great cracks several inches wide across the garden paths, which momma assured me were bottomless, but while I had an irresistible desire to jump over them. I was only restrained from doing so by the threat of a spanking.

It was about this time that I first became acquainted with grief. It was this way: I had a beloved rag doll named Luce which had been my inseparable companion as far back as I could remember. Now as one may suppose, Luce not being washable, was filthy beyond description, but unspeakably dear to my young heart. Although, I had several nicer dolls, one a big wax beauty with go-to-sleep eyes and yellow curls sent me from New York, non could compete with Luce, my Love. One night as we were all sitting around the fire momma happening to glance in my direction where I sat beside her in my little rocking chair cuddling my treasure, was suddenly overcome with disgust at the disreputable object of my affections & irritated at such perverse devotion, yanked the doll from my loving arms & threw it in the fire! Alas, there are not words in the English language to describe the extent of my horror, grief and rage! Jumping up screaming, "Poor Luce! Poor Luce! She is burning up!" I rushed towards the fireplace to rescue my darling from the flames & had to forcibly be restrained. Then, fighting, kicking and yelling I was borne away to bed, refusing all consolation. In vain did the whole family gather around my stricken form & promise various & sundry delightful compensations, but I steadfastly refused to be consoled, & was as "Rachel" weeping for her children. You see, I was a faithful soul & nothing could take the place of my Beloved whom I mourned without hope. It is a wonder that I did not name one of my daughters "Luce" in her memory.

Another unforgettable experience was when the night-blooming cereus bloomed. My mother, who was a great flower-lover, had ordered one of the rare species of the cactus family which was not supposed to bloom but once in 100 years, - and then lasted only one night. So as nobody in town had ever seen one there was great excitement when it was due to open. On

the appointed night friends began to arrive right after supper & kept on coming until the house was full. I was allowed to sit up, too, & was breathless with anticipation. Finally as we watched it the petals slowly unfolded until the flower was wide open in all its beauty, looking like a huge water-lilly & filling the air with fragrance. After duly admiring it, guests were served some cookies & wine & then departed full of wonder. Needless to say that I was up bright & early the next morning to see if it was dead & it was. For some time I went around blown up with importance over our spectacular plant, but it's a well known fact that pride goes before a fall, & and mine was soon flattened. The cause of my deflation was this – Ruthie's folks got a Magic Lantern! Now this early forerunner of the movies caused quite a sensation in the neighborhood as our night-blooming cereus, & everybody promptly forsook us for the Phillips, where Ruthie proudly ushered them into the Parlor where her father showed beautiful pictures on a sheet tacked up on the wall. I was green with envy, & Ruthie was insufferable! But nothing lasts, & I regret to say that I rejoiced greatly when the fickle public soon tired of the novelty & Ruthie's brief hour of glory was over, same as mine.

One of the greatest thrills of those days was when the man came to town with his dancing bear or performing monkey. All children immediately ran home for pennies & thereafter followed the attraction around until everyone's money gave out, where-upon the ungrateful owner would unceremoniously chase us off with a flood of very mean sounding Italian. Perhaps he did not want to be accused of being a Pied-Piper. We were also nearly as thrilled when we saw an Italian band. This consisted of several dark, swarthy individuals carrying mysteriously swathed instruments, (one of which was a harp,) who had come to play for a dance. They had a foreign atmosphere & were unspeakably interesting. We followed them around too, but they were much more polite. Various street vendors were also a feature of the town, chief of which were the darkies who went around with a bread-tray filled with tripe or chitterlings and covered with a snowy fringed towel. Also country women with their splint baskets holding fresh eggs, shelled peas, pots of butter, & even little bunches of nicely chewed snuff brushes for the snuff dippers! Some-times they'd also have some sweet gum, also pre-chewed, neatly pressed between two sweet gum half's. As commercial chewing gum was not yet on the market this item was very popular providing the women had nice white teeth. Such a little thing as germs hadn't yet troubled the public consciousness. Another interesting character was the lamp-lighter, for whom we always eagerly watched, especially on

cold and rainy days when there was nothing else to do of a more interesting nature. He also came around mornings & put the lamps out. But the nicest thing of all was a trip to Miss Mollie Vines. This estimable lady had a little store on the corner of Market and Second Streets, & sold the most delicious home-made pickles, candies, cake and ice-cream, & a visit to her little shop was a treat indeed. It was a mecca for courting couples & any child with a nickel. Ice-cream customers were seated in little booths formed by yellow homespun curtains strung on wire. On Saturday nights in the summer time (as you know winter Saturday eves were sacred to the Bath!) my father used to take the whole family for ice-cream which in our drug-store-less live rivaled a trip to paradise. But to repeat, the best of all was the circus! First the weeks of delightful anticipation from the first glimpse of the lurid posters, thru the frightful uncertainty as to whether one was really going to get to go or not, then, at last the great day itself when one arose before dawn & could hardly wait for the parade. And the circus proper. Me oh my! And what a tragedy if it rained! How I loved it with its unforgettable sights, sounds & smells. I'm afraid tho' that I wouldn't have been the faithful patron that I was if it hadn't been for "Doddy". "Doddy" or Dr. Arthur, was a beloved family connection who lived near by & was the editor of "The Washington Gazette". Naturally he had lots of passes & having no children of his own. & being a great child lover, he always took the entire neighborhood to the circus. Fearing to loose any of us in the crowd, he always made us hold on to each other's coat-tails, the first one holding his & woe be unto the one who let go! I can hear now, God rest his soul, hollering, "Tail up, Tail up"! like they do to the elephants, & in this quaint fashion we proceeded to the circus ground. Anyone venturing to object to this unusual form of progress just got sent home, pronto, & were never included in the party again, so it was understood that we'd better be undignified than left out.

I wonder if anyone remembers the old steamer, Hatteras, that used to ply between Washington and Greenville?. It took nearly all day to make the trip, leaving early in the morning. One of my pleasantest memories is going to Greenville with Auntie. We'd take a generous shoe-box lunch eat it sitting on the deck & my, how good it was! Sandwiches & fried chicken.& deviled eggs & pickles with, maybe, a slice of chocolate cake & a banana for dessert. Cleopatra floating down the Nile on her royal barge never felt half so elegant! For months in advance I'd saved up my pennies for this tour & was accordingly quite flush. And by the way, a penny was not to be despised in those halcyon days, for there were innumerable things it would buy - now

it is no good for anything but tax! For instance, one could get an immense sour pickle fished up by hand from a wooden keg and wrapped in a piece of newspaper; or five little chocolate “nigger” babies; or a long strip of ribbon cocoanut candy; or a licorice plug of tobacco; or a marshmallow banana of vivid hue; or an all day sucker; or an apple to name a few items. As for a nickel, there was practically no limit to what it could procure! A Mr. Dale used to run a little store near by which was the mecca of the neighborhood, for this emporium of delight we children betook ourselves there with our pennies. The man’s patience must have exceeded Job’s for he never hurried us while we spent long & thoughtful periods making our choice from his fascinating stock – mine usually being one of the little fluted tin pans filled with imitation ice-cream & a minature spoon or a pickle.

And now we come to a sad event, but truthfulness compels me to include it as it made a great impression on my mind – as well as points South. The deplorable episode took place on a Christmas Eve when I was four years old. It was morning & my mother was very busy in the kitchen like all other housewives on that day. Auntie was equally busy upstairs, while I was in the sitting room happily snuggled in the lap of another aunt who had arrived the day before from New York to spend Christmas with us. All was well, & everything was just lovely as she petted and played with me before a big open fire. Presently she pretended to bite me, never dreaming that I was scared nearly-to-death & suddenly longing to escape. After a while the fire burned low & she left me to get more wood. Seeing my chance, quick as a flash I darted out of the room & under the house where I hid behind a big pillar. Returning and finding me gone, she naturally assumed I was in the kitchen, but when mama soon came in & asked where I was, she eplied, “why I thought she was with you!” Mama said, “No, she must be upstairs with Auntie,” but upon asking found I wasn’t there. They searched the whole house & yard, & I can well remember just how mama looked peeping under the house. They called & called me, but I didn’t answer a word. A circuit of the neighborhood was made, but no Nellie. Mama was frantic by that time & convinced that I had been kidnapped. As there were no phones then, a boy was sent running to get my father from his shop & he came galloping home accompanied by his workman. Further searches failed to find me & and it had begun to snow. All the neighborhood women gathered to console my prostrated, weeping mother, while the men turned out to hunt for me. Meantime I squatted under the house & listened to all the hullabaloo. However, I was getting mighty cold & hungry, & as night fell I began to get scared, so I decided to come out. Walking calmly in upon

the agitated assembly, I inquired, "Is supper ready?" Where upon my mother jumped up & grabbed me & said "Honey where have you been?" And I answered, "under the house", & she said "what, all day?" and I meekly replied, "yes'm" By that time I sensed that something was decidedly wrong as she didn't look near so loving. Then she said, "Didn't you hear me calling you?" & I said "Uh huh, and she asked, well, why didn't you answer me?" & I allowed I didn't know. It was right then she yanked me over her knee I went to work in an earnest manner on my unprotected rear. Then auntie grabbed me & tried to improve on mama's technique. Meanwhile mama was assuring me above the racket, for I was no longer silent, that since I had been so bad that Santa Claus was not going to come to see me that night- whereupon I really pulled out all the stops! About that time Cousin Fannie Cordon arrived having heard I was missing, & announced to my great relief that yes, he was coming to see me too, at her house! My Aunt Hen who had caused all the ruckus, put in & declared that if anybody gave that child another lick she was going home on the next train! So that was that. But no one thought to inquire why I went under the house in the first place. And Santa Claus did come to see me after all.

This all reminds me of another equally sad occasion when I was again the chief actor, or victim! It seems that some other child had informed me that if you chewed a cork stopper it was just like chewing gum. I immediately put the suggestion into effect that first time I got hold of a stopper. Mama seeing me meditatively chewing the cud like a billy-goat investigated and made me spit out the cork, at the same time giving me a gentle talking-to on the probable fatal results of swallowing same. Some time later I found another cork & repeated the experiment with the same finale; mama caught me. This time her little talk wasn't quite so gentle. But I seemed to have a one-track mind as I was bent on scientific research, or sump'n at any rate. Not long afterwards mama was making ice-cream using a bottle of vanilla extract in the process, with me an interested spectator. Removing the cork from the bottle & remembering our little difference of opinion on the subject she furtively dropped it thru a knot-hole in the back porch floor. But I saw her- & thereby hangs a tale. Seeing she was completely engrossed in turning the freezer handle, I slipped out doors & under the porch. (I seem to have had a perfect penchant for under the house for years later when my first beau came calling I was so overcome with embarrassment that I hastily retreated to my usual refuge, & no amount of whooping & hollering brought me forth. So if I am ever inexplicably missing, I would suggest that you look there in the first place.) But I resume:

After diligently hunting I at last found the stopper which I immediately popped in my mouth. But something went wrong that time, for true to mamma's prediction, I swallowed it! Hearing a peculiar gurgling noise she turned around & saw me crawling out, blue in the face & eyes popping. Guessing at once what had happened, she rushed out, snatched me up & poked her finger down my throat, then taking me by the heels, shook me violently. Out came the stopper with a gush of blood & not waiting to even wipe my face, she sat down on the back steps & proceeded to give me a good old-fashioned spanking on the place made & provided for such motherly attentions in a thorough-going manner that Solomon himself would have approved. Nor did she waste any breath on any tender admonitions about what would happen to mama's precious little girl if she chewed a cork stopper again. But she didn't have to - I knew! And to this day I am not especially fond of vanilla ice-cream, - neither can I look at a cork stopper without a reminiscent twinge in the rear.

And speaking of aversions, right here would be a good place to insert the account of another of my youthful phobias & what caused it. One of our neighbors was expecting a "Blessed Event" & noticing that she seemed strangely protuberant in one particular spot, I commented to my mother, "My goodness, Miss So-in-so certainly is getting fat!" As Mama's generation didn't believe in imparting the facts of life to their little ones, she casually remarked, "Yes, the poor thing must have swallowed a watermelon seed!" Well, I was horrified beyond words, for I distinctly remembered swallowing one myself recently, & for weeks thereafter I examined myself anxiously as I awaited the awful result with fear & trembling. Needless to say, it definitely ended my watermelon eating for some time to come, as I felt that I'd had a narrow escape & there was no sense in tempting fate any further.

And now for the memory of a much happier Christmas. It was the following one if I am not mistaken & it was a white Christmas. It had begun to snow heavily late in the afternoon & I was simply petrified with the fear that poor Santa wouldn't be able to make it, due to teasing adult suggestions. In the morning I nearly wept with relief when I found he had & what's more, had brought me a doll which looked suspiciously like one I'd long admired in Mrs. Scott Frizzles store! The river had frozen over too & my father who had spent his boyhood on Long Island & was an expert skater removed the

the wheels from my old baby carriage from which I had long-since graduated & substituting runners made a make-shift sleigh in which I, together with Ruthie and my new dolly were then taken for a sleigh-ride on the river, as he skated & pushed us up & down until we all hands nearly froze. This delightful & unforgettable experience made a great impression on my mind & I still recall it with a thrill of pleasure. I was never to see the river freeze over again like that until I had a five year old daughter of my own. But history did not repeat itself in this case as there was no Yankee-bred daddy to take her sleighing. But he did the next best thing: he bought a little red sled & pulled her all the way down-town and back.

As my mother was a great believer in the proverbial saying that "Manners make the man" - & also make the woman - she purchased for me at a very early age a ponderous volume of etiquette by the most authority of the day so that I might become thoroughly conversant with every form of correct behavior from a christening to an inaugural ball. One was also instructed how to address visiting royalty if & when one were ever in their exalted company & the fine points of protocol in seating arrangements were not neglected. Needless to say, I poured over it industrially as I grew older, especially those chapters devoted to courtships & how-to reply to a proposal of marriage, having romantic visions of the future. I also learned how to give a well regulated dinner of 12 courses which I figured it was very important for me to know. And I sincerely hoped to avoid any of the following disgusting habits lest I be booted out of society forthwith.

The bicycle had just come in & was so popular that it had a whole chapter on the proper etiquette of cycling. The one on horseback riding left me cold as I was always afraid of the critters after one ran over me, but now the bicycle was something else; I was already looking forward with the keenest anticipation to the day when I too had a wheel & would sally forth attended by a gallant cavalier tho I might not be attired in the proper cloths. You see, the bicycle introduced the Bloomer Girl to a shocked generation & tho I yearned & aspired to own a ride on one of the new-fangled contraptions, no well brought up child such as my poor mother had labored to make me would want to wear this daring costume which consisted of a very full pair of black knee-length bloomers worn with a candy-strip shirt waist with a high collar & big balloon sleeves, the whole thing topped with a stiff mannish sailor hat, & was the last word in sportiness. Looking back, I see that it may have been slightly ridiculous, but never immodest, for the wearer was completely covered from stem to stern. But nevertheless, it

caused much lifting of conservative eyebrows as people were aghast at the very idea of a “Shameless Female” appearing in public in Pants! And short ones at that, with her-er-limbs exposed to the public gaze nearly to the the knee! It didn’t make a speck of difference that she wore long black stockings & high laced boots, legs were legs! So, I wouldn’t have dreamed of wearing anything so shocking – not with mama around! If these wild women should be accompanied with an escort, his clothes were also rigidly prescribed for the occasion, being knickers, white shirt & gaily striped Blazer with long-brimmed caps to match & to behold this up-to-date pair sedately pedaling down the street was a sight to remember. So you can imagine how anxious I was to be completely familiar with the proper following rules.

You may have gathered from the foregoing that the bathing suit would have been a real eye opener: Well it would have had it not been practically unknown around these parts, for nobody ever went in bathing & the river was not patronized except for a few men & boys who, I was led to understand, went in the “altogether”. And it must have been that way everywhere, for my book of etiquette was woefully & totally silent on the subject. There were rules & regulars for boating, but not bathing. Our lovely river was valued for its scenic charms. On those memorable Sunday school picnics some daring souls might have gone in wading well screened behind the bushes, but anything else was unheard of. So that was one place when my oracle of correctness let me down. However it was just as well, for none of the other uplifting information aver did me any good as I never attended an inaugural ball, or met visiting royalty, or gave a well regulated dinner as described with guests seated according to rank, And as for my proposal of marriage it was most informal, to say the least! Oh what a waste of studied elegance.

I don’t want to close without some reference to the most outstanding historical event of the first decade was the Spanish-American War. I remember the fiercely mustached young men dressed in uniforms of a new color called khaki, which was neither the beloved grey or the hated blue, & wearing wide brimmed, upturned “Rough Rider” hats, marching down the street to the gay strains of “There’ll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight”, & everybody wearing a button inscribed with the slogan “Remember the Maine”. Then later on I heard a lot of talk about a place named San Juan Hill, & a man named Teddy Roosevelt who took it, & I wondered to myself how on earth anyone could take a hill! All the young folks were singing a very melancholy song called “The Volley Was Fired at

Sunrise” & was all about a poor soldier boy who was shot because his pardon came too late; very harrowing indeed. And another of a more cheerful nature entitled “Sweet Marie”, & another tear jerker called “Goodbye Dolly Gray” – all of which I yodeled lustily. But where I really shone was when I rendered “Little Annie Rooney”. Believe me the world lost a great prima-donna when my mother dampened my budding vocal efforts. Such volume, such feeling! All lost to the waiting world for lack of a little maternal encouragement. But such is life.

I also recall the great excitement & general whoop-de-duo of my first Presidential election year, when I first became conscious of political animosity, & it was very pronounced then & being taken downtown to see somebody or other burned in effigy & being scared to death. I remember, too, people yelling & singing “Just as I Suspected, Cleveland’s Elected, Climbing up the Golden Stairs”. It was all very exciting & seems awfully long ago & far away.

But all in all, I’m glad I came along when I did & knew the town as it used to be in the days of its youth, when life was sweeter & more leisurely than it is today. I have seen the horse & buggy era go out and the automobile and airplane come in; I’ve seen the change from kerosene lamps to electricity; & one of my first recollections is being held up to talk over the first telephone in town. I’ve witnessed the marvelous evolution of the movies from the magic-lantern to talking pictures to television, as well as the development of the phonograph & radio. But none of those last named inventions can give me any more pleasure than I used to get peering through the stereoscope. That & looking at the family album, being one of the few Sabbath amusements that met with stern parent approval. In case none of you have ever seen one (i.e. the stereoscope); I have brought it along for your edification.

But all things must end, even my long-winded reminiscences’. I could go on indefinitely; but I’ll take pity on you and stop. These are just a few highlights of a long vanished childhood that I’d fain re-live in spite of all the switching’s & “pops”. For good far outweighed the bad, & I guess I deserved ‘em. Anyway, I wouldn’t change any of it if I had the power, & remember it all with tender longing that makes me say with the poet:

*“Happy days gone by,
Happy moments fled,
Ne’er to come again,
Naught but memory in their stead-
Happy words & thoughts,
Numbered with the sleeping,
Only come again in dreams,
That with the morning sun is dead.”*

THE PROMISED ATTACHMENT:

SPRIG OF ROSEMARY

Old school-mates of mine, oft to me comes a dream
Of a day in the far away Past,
When we were all children and followed the gleam
Of a light that was too bright to last ---
And I wonder if you ever dream this dream, too,
That helps Time’s advances retard,
And if you remember the halcyon days
When we played on the “Cademy yard?”

Oh, do you remember how care-free we strayed
O’er a carpet of buttercups spread
Beneath the old elm-trees emerald shade,
With no thought for the dark days ahead?
And sometimes in May like bacchantes gay
We’d dance on the daisy-strewn grass
With garlands of snowy blooms woven with gold
On the forehead of each little lass.

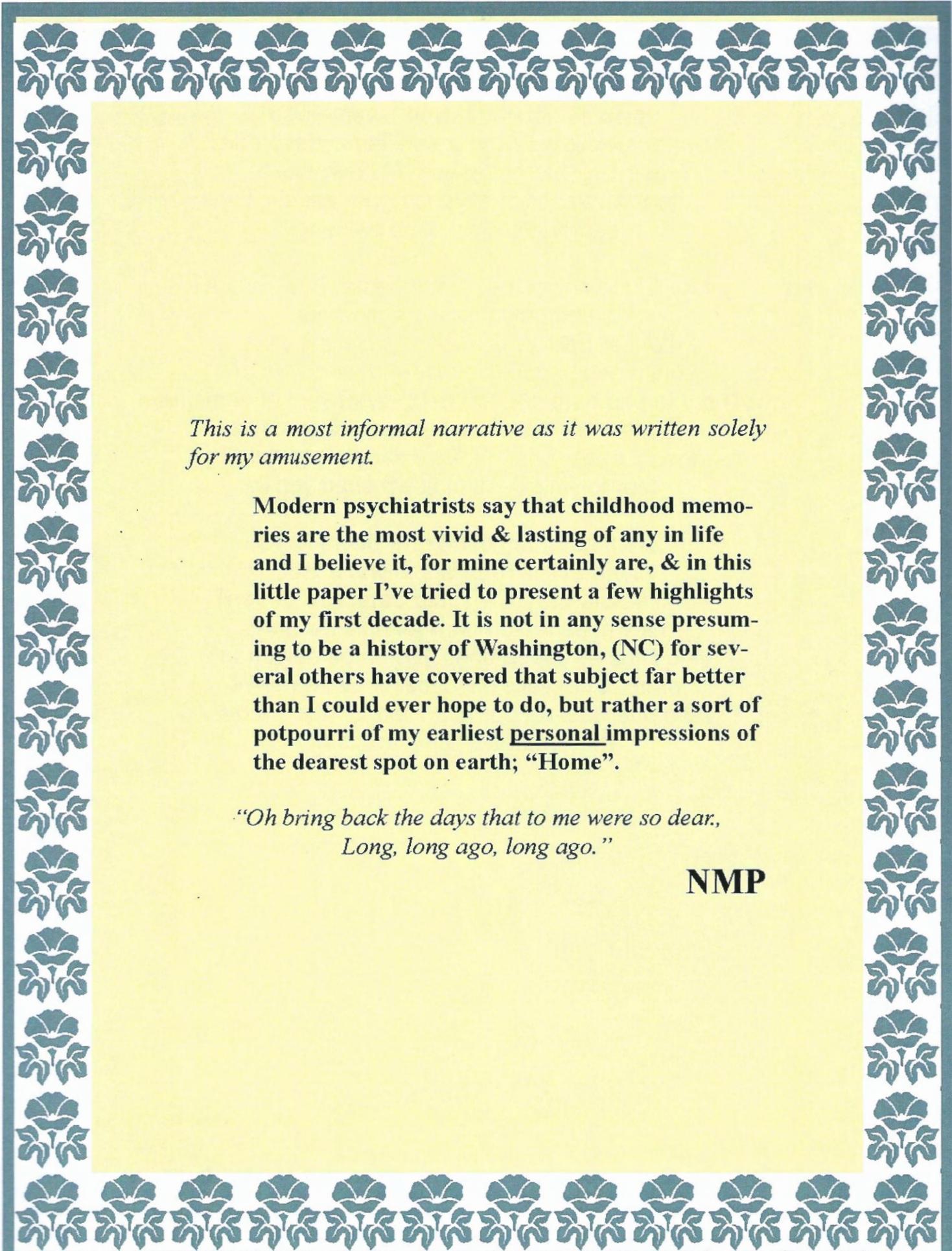
And do you remember the “Cademy pump?
A fountain of youth without a peer!

Eldorado itself, had it ever been found,
Could never have sparkled as clear;
And every small head, brown, yellow and red
Would bend to the clear rushing stream,
That is a rough chalice of cocoanut shell
Reflected each golden sun-beam.

I'm sure you remember, dear friends of my youth,
Our teachers so gentle and kind,
Who started us on the long road to Truth
As they patiently trained each young mind?
Many moons they have been gone to the Land of the Dawn
Where the sun never sets in the west –
Full many a year while the swift seasons roll
They have dwelt in the Valley of rest.

Of all those who once gathered there,
Just a few in the town still remain:
They've scattered afar – e'en to Paradise fair –
And we sigh for their presence in vain;
But maybe some day once again we shall play,
When we've finished life's lesson so hard,
And the school bell has rung for eternal recess
On a heavenly 'Cademy yard.

Nellie Miles Paul



This is a most informal narrative as it was written solely for my amusement.

Modern psychiatrists say that childhood memories are the most vivid & lasting of any in life and I believe it, for mine certainly are, & in this little paper I've tried to present a few highlights of my first decade. It is not in any sense presuming to be a history of Washington, (NC) for several others have covered that subject far better than I could ever hope to do, but rather a sort of potpourri of my earliest personal impressions of the dearest spot on earth; "Home".

*"Oh bring back the days that to me were so dear,
Long, long ago, long ago."*

NMP