

The Robertsons of Winterpock

By Joseph S Gresham, 1968

In 1968 Joseph S Gresham published his years of research on his Robertson family. His book, titled "The Robertsons of Winterpock", tells the story of John Robertson, his wife Catherine Traylor Robertson, and many associated families that lived in the area of Winterpock in Chesterfield county Virginia. A number of years ago, a fellow researcher sent me copies of several chapters from Gresham's book. This paper shares one chapter from the book, related to John and Catherine Traylor Robertson. I have added a few of my own parenthetical notes. In 1992 Gresham's book was updated and republished by Laurie H Horner. Today (Oct 2014) both books are available for download at Laurie Horner's website, also titled The Robertsons of Winterpock. I am not a Robertson descendant. My research centers on the Markham family, from which Catherine Traylor Robertson descends. She is my first cousin, six times removed. Pam Garrett, November 2013, updated October 2014.

Chapter Five: John and Catherine Traylor Robertson

It is a matter of keen regret to me that I have so little data regarding these great, great grandparent of mine. I presume that young John [John Robertson jr] was living at the Winterpock home when his father died [1798] and also when his mother [Anne Walthall Robertson] died five years later. As shown above, his mother directed that he should execute her will. I think it is reasonable to assume that he was residing there at the time of his marriage, April 17, 1806, and we can imagine the pride he must have felt when he brought his bride, Catherine Traylor, to his ancestral home. They were married by the Reverend Thomas LaFon, Rector of the Church of Christ. Many of her forebears, as will be shown in ensuing chapters, were well known in Virginia and elsewhere as able public servants and wealthy land owners.

Catherine was born May 1, 1780, presumably at the "Isle of Pines," which her father, Captain Archer Traylor, inherited from his grandfather, Captain Thomas Neale. Nearby was another farm, "Riverside," also inherited from Captain Neale. Some years ago I went with my cousin, Verney Robertson, to visit these old home sites, but we failed to secure any helpful data. According to a map of the County, dated about 1888, these houses were then intact, but in 1962, when we were there, they had been destroyed or moved, and we could not be certain just where they once stood, nor did we discover any family burial grounds. The title to the Traylor property is now held by the Continental Can Company whose officials graciously gave us permission to explore the old sites.

Somewhere in this part of Chesterfield, George Archer, an ancestor of Captain Traylor, at one time owned 3,000 acres, known as "Moreland," but I have not been able to determine the exact location.

John and Catherine Robertson became the parents of at least five sons and one daughter: Benjamin, Francis Henry, Joseph, James Gaston, John III, and Judith Ann. Some of the descendants of Francis Henry have preserved a family record which shows that he was born at "Mt. Pleasant". Now there was a small home in the extreme southeastern corner of Chesterfield about thirty miles from the Robertson home at Winterpock, known locally as "Mt. Pleasant", but at the time of the birth of Francis Henry it was occupied by a family named Archer, who were very distant relatives of Catherine.

I doubt very seriously that Ann [Catherine] would have gone that far for the birth of her son. The Robertsons owned a farm on Sappony Creek which they called "Mt. Ida", and it could easily be possible

that they liked the name, "Mt Pleasant", and may have occasionally referred to their home on the river by that name. It well deserved such a title. That it was a popular name for a country home is shown by the fact that over in Dinwiddie County, at that time there was a residence known at "Mt. Pleasant". Moreover, during the year of the birth of Francis Henry, his father purchased 500 acres adjacent "to the land on which the said John Robertson now resides". And a few years later John Robertson, Jr., purchased from Archie Thweatt a right of way to use a road on the east side of Winterpock Creek, to shorten the distance from his home to Petersburg.

In 1821, fifteen years after her marriage, Catherine died and was buried near the ancestral home of her husband. On the monument, referred to in Chapter Two, erected by two of her sons, is found this tribute to her:

Our Mother
Catherine Robertson
Consort of
John Robertson, Jr,
Died 1821, Aged 41 Years
She Was An Affectionate Mother
And In Her The Poor Found A Friend.

Catherine, daughter of the Traylor, Markham, Neale, Wood, and Archer families of Chesterfield, and of the Matthews and Bellomont families in New York, had a rich heritage indeed, and she, in turn, must have made a significant contribution to the moral fiber of her children, imparting to them, no doubt, the highest ideals and the most worthwhile ambitions. And they, so far as I have been able to study their family and business concerns, were undoubtedly a credit to her. I like the generous praise implied in the tribute to her that, beyond the circle of her loved ones, "In Her The Poor Found A Friend".

John Robertson, Jr

In my extensive study of the Robertson family, over a period of several years, I failed to find a single line or reference that was critical of John Robertson, Jr . . . It does not appear that John inherited the home near Winterpock, so he must have purchased the equity of his brothers and sisters. He is known to have made several purchases of land adjacent to the acreage originally owned by his father.

On September 22, 1827, he was married to Matilda Vaughan, and they were living at the home place, I presume, when they sold it to John R. Walke for \$7,030. The deed recorded February 11, 1833, Deed Book 29, pages 103-104, contains a most interesting agreement. John evidently had a commendable pride regarding the graves of his forebears, as shown by the fact that he and Matilda reserved "To themselves and to their heirs forever the graveyard in which their family is buried and also the graveyard in which the slaves of his and his ancestors are buried, together with the enclosures that may be around the same, together with a suitable quantity of land, say one-fourth of an acre". I repeat: "To their heirs forever". So, until Gabriel blows his horn to announce the final judgment, the Robertsons and their accredited descendants have a legal right to visit that quarter of an acre.

-end of chapter five

[Additional note - In Chapter Two of Greshem's book, he describes a visit he made to the Robertson homesite and graveyard about 1962. An excerpt is included here to help the reader understand the location.]

The Robertson graveyard is located near Walke Quarter, a hunting lodge on the Appomattox River near Winterpock, about twenty-five miles west of Petersburg. My cousin, Verney Robertson, of Matoaca, discovered the burial square and the basement site of the old home place while hunting in that area some years ago. The property remained in the Robertson family until 1832, when it was purchased by John R. Walke, and we know that the house was still standing at the time of the War Between the States. However, on the map of the county published about 1888, it is not shown as a residence, so it may have been destroyed by fire prior to that time. The contour of the basement excavation would seem to indicate that it was a large country home . . . Of special interest to my cousin and me was the large burial square enclosed by a homemade wall of huge river rocks, laid without the benefit of cement, but balanced so perfectly that it has weathered the storms and the pressure of large tree roots for over a century and a half, and high enough to prevent cattle from tramping over the graves. And it was especially gratifying to us to find that the large central stone had been erected by our respective great grandfathers, Benjamin and James Gaston Robertson, in memory of their mother, Catherine Traylor Robertson . . . We followed River Road out of Matoaca and turned to the left at Phillips Store, then we turned south about a hundred yards from the intersection. Soon we came to a narrow sawmill road, which led us in a southwesterly direction to Walke Quarter, situated on a hill that towered above the river. The graveyard is in a wooded section not far from the road on the left, just before we came to Walke Quarter. To reach the home site, we retraced our steps from the lodge about half a mile, and then followed an old trail for perhaps a half of a mile, toward the west, until we came to the old well and between the well and the river we found the basement excavation of the old home, on a high bank, overlooking a wide bend in the Appomattox River . . . There are nine graves within the rock wall and nine graves lying parallel to each other to the right of the rock wall.

[Additional note - A stone monument was erected in 1992 outside the rock wall which has the following inscription: This family cemetery restored May 1992 in memory of JOHN ROBERTSON 1743—1798; Lt. Continental Army; through the benevolence of WILLIAM ROBERTSON LIPSCOMB; Capt. U.S. Navy Retired.]

Do you want to know more?

[Link for John Robertson](#)

[Link for Catherine Traylor](#)

[Robertsons of Winterpock Website of Laurie Horner](#)

The Robertsons of Winterpock (Chapter 5), by Joseph S Gresham, 1968; presented here by Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2014.