

Sarah thought it was a sad poem for a angry black man to write on a tree. Sarah wondered about Philan searching for a purpose and living alone. She remembered the poem because it reminded her of her old friend. The poem reflected the harsh feelings of many mulatto slave children before their freedom.

The Democratic and the Republican political parties were active during normal elections in the area. Local candidates spoke at the center of the town. White Democratic candidates attracted large crowds of white people and easily gain strong support from the newspapers. The white Republican candidates attracted colored people, who were generally not permitted to vote, and a few white people supporting the Republican party.

The presidential election campaign of 1888 tried to keep the focus on the needs of merchants and other business groups in the white communities. Issues and concerns of farmers and laborers were ignored by the candidates. Glover Cleveland, a rich Democrat from New York, received over a hundred thousand popular votes more than Benjamin Harrison. The 1888 election resulted in Harrison, a Republican from the state of Indiana, winning the presidency in the Electoral College.

The Electoral College elected Benjamin Harrison, as the twenty-third President of the United States. Harrison won by two hundred votes in the political exercise of representation by state. Benjamin was the grandson of William Harrison, the ninth President, and a great grandson of Benjamin Harrison, a signer to the Declaration of Independence.



## **COLORED MEN IN SCARCITY**

### **(1890-1900)**

The 1888 election resulted in Republicans gaining public control of the central government. Southern Democrats became concerned with the federal government desire to insure voting rights for all citizens. Most colored people in the southern states were aroused by the Republican victory and they became more active with participation in the selection of candidates and the election of public officials.

Southern Democrats resisted attempts, by some Republican politicians, to restore local voting rights to colored people in most area of the southern states. Local white authorities used a combination of literacy test and property ownership to disqualify colored people from voting. Local white officials challenged the citizen qualifications of colored people under the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Some extremists used intimidation and violence, in situations, to enforce the domination and control of local elections in southern states.

A majority of colored people, lived in Brunswick County, without the rights of citizenship. The local authorities, as members of the white minority, denied majority rule to people of color. Community leaders, aligned with wealthy landowners and local merchants, supported the practice of white minority rule in most southern states. It was common practice to deny basic civil rights to colored citizens. Local race relations were very poor as the white community and the black community developed into separate and unequal social systems. The social and economic rise of most colored people from slavery and other forms of

white oppression started to recede in the South. People of color gained considerably in English literacy and property ownership despite the strong resentment of white farmers and white merchants. Most Negroes and other colored people were the obvious targets of immigrants seeking to improve their personal wealth and social status. The animosity among most white people toward Negroes and other colored people resulted in legal restraints against the civil and political rights of colored people. These negative attitudes, among local white people, were cynically protected by the arrogant ambition of white politicians. The drive for continuous power and control, by wealthy white families, kept most colored families living in rural poverty and resulted in the denial of their vote rights in the southern states.

Colored people in southern communities shared relatively no role in local or national politics. Their denial of basic rights as citizens, contributed directly to the withdraw from social and cultural association with white people. The black communities developed into separate societies with businesses and professions serving only Negroes and other colored people in the communities. Independent black professionals included doctors, lawyers and teachers. Southern America evolved into two separate and distinct societies. Local authorities physically separated white communities from black communities. Most of these black communities were located outside of the towns, with colored people working and living on family farms. The share-crop and crop-lien systems perpetuated continuous poverty for most colored people. The poor colored families in the black community of Ante became acquainted through the schools and the churches. Many colored people lived and worked with little contact with most white people. Colored people were invisible, as individuals, in the white societies. While most race relations were often described as amicable, there was a strong lack of respect and trust between white and colored people. The separation and isolation of colored people, from the dominant white society, created many parochial and benevolent black communities. Colored families supported other families in times of difficulties as friendly neighbors and members of the local Christian faith. Many families formed common bonds through marriages and shared farm labor.

William Gillus arrived in Brunswick County in 1830, from the Tidewater area. William moved to the southside area with his wife, Rainy. They lived on a poor family farm with their son, Henry. William, known as Billy, was the son of a strong and independent woman of color and a Negro slave. Elizabeth, born in 1832 and William, born in 1833, also lived and worked on the small family farm near the river.

Davie Gillus, a half brother, joined Billy on his family farm in 1835, with his young family. Davie was a mulatto son by the colored woman and a white lover from Tidewater. Davie and Maude, his mulatto wife, were parents of Menervia, Gerony and David. The two families lived in a farming area near the village of Ante on the southside of Brunswick County.

Henry, the oldest son of Billy and Rainy, married a girl named Charlotte in 1846. Henry and Charlotte were parents of four sons. James, Richard, Jesse and Thomas were the sons in this hard working family. The family also included Sophonia, the daughter of Henry and Charlotte.

Gerony, the daughter of Davie and Maudie, was at the age of fifteen years, when she became pregnant with her first son by a white man. William, known as Bill, was her first child in the taboo relationship. The white father became her lover and the father of her other children over a twenty years time period. Gerony gave birth to five mulatto boys and a mulatto girl. The six colored children included Cudger (1855), David (1859), James (1861), Jesse (1864), and Betsey (1867).

William, the oldest son, married Lucinda Steward in 1873 and moved to a place in Brunswick County. Cindy was nineteen years old, when she married Bill at her mother's home. Cindy was the daughter of Peggy Steward and a white man. Peggy was a mulatto woman with a white father and a native mother.

Peggy was a descendant, with her mother, of the Nottoway and Meherrin Tribes in colonial Virginia. The British united the tribes, after the Susquehannah War in 1575, and relocated them into Brunswick County during the Tuscarora War.

Bill and Cindy started a farm in Powellton area, and the young couple became the parents of eight children. James (in 1874), David (in 1875), and Mary (in 1877) were followed with the births of William, Henry, Rosa, Ida and Sidney. Bill and his family continued to live and work in the Ante area. They became active in the local church, near the Harrison farm.

Betsey, daughter of Gerony, gave birth to John, her son, in 1884. Some of the men became friends of the Harrison men due to the proximity of the families and their similar background as children of mulatto parents. The families worked together in the fields and helped with items of mutual interest.

Sarah observed the growth of the mulatto children in the black

community, which resulted from an imbalance between men and women of the same race. Native men departed seeking more freedom from the reservations and Negro men migrated away for better opportunities in the northern and western states.

Most colored women understood their impoverished fate in the southern states. They were able to survive through harsh relationships of convenience and dependence. Sarah felt most men took advantage of the innocent women by creating complete dependence and using force for sexual favors.

Sarah and Alice were sitting in the front yard, shelling peas, when two men drove a wagon pulled into the yard. There was a smell of tobacco from the wagon. They wore the clothes of farmers. Sarah recognized Jim, her son, and Bill Gillus.

**"Hello Jim, how are you doing?"**

Jim smiled and walked over to his mother followed by his friend. He was happy to see his mother and his niece.

**"Hello Mother, you remember Bill Gillus?"**

Sarah knew Bill, as the first son of Gerony Gillus. She remembered Davie and Maudie, his grandparents. She knew Bill was born about the same time as Jim.

**"Yes, I know your friend. He is the grandson of Maudie and Davie. How are your grandparents doing?"**

Bill smiled and nodded his head in respect. He knew his grandparents were still working in the fields.

**"Thanks for asking, Miss Sarah. They are doing well."**

Sarah smiled at the farmers, who were tall and slim with dark black hair. She noticed their slightly tanned skin in a light brown color. Sarah was curious about their visit.

**"Alice and I do not see many visitors. What brings you and Bill to these parts? Where is your family?"**

Jim sat on the wooden bench near Sarah, while Bill stood in a distance next to a tall tree listening.

**"Bill and I were talking to Ben about borrowing money against our crops. Ben and Rich borrowed some money with their tobacco crops. I think it is a bad idea."**

Sarah looked at Bill and recalled his grandfather with a strong sense of independence.

**"If you think it is a bad idea, why talk about it?"**

**"I do not like to borrow money for any reason, but when we need money, we borrow on the land."**

**"You never know about the crop yield. You can sell lumber to get money to pay the loan."**

Jim and Bill had never borrowed money from the merchants in town. They did not like owing anything to other people.

**"Ben said we should talk to you about borrowing."**

**"Bill and I do not like the idea of owing money to the store or the bank. We would be working for them and not for ourselves. I would not want anyone in town telling me what to do with my farm."**

Sarah thought about the two men. She knew they were not great husbands or the best fathers for their children. Sarah felt most wives could expect no more from men than support of the children. Sarah believed women generally considered men, who took care of their families, to be good men.

**"If you do not want to borrow, what is the problem?"**

• Jim watched as Bill moved to a bench near Sarah and took a seat without a word. Jim turned and smiled at Sarah.

**"Well, we do not need money to feed and put clothes on our families. Bill works his farm and grows enough to take care of his family. I rent my farm and we can grow enough to take care of our needs."**

**"The problem is we never have any money to grow. We work all year and our families help us in the field, but we never have any money in our pockets. We began to think, maybe we are doing it all wrong."**

**"Maybe, it takes money to make money. We should try to borrow money from the Bank for our farms."**

Sarah knew about Bank loans and mortgages. People tried to get her to mortgage the farm with the Bank after the war.

**"The Bank does not loan money to poor people. They like**

**to loan money to rich people. If you want to borrow money, you need property.**

Bill picked up a clay rock at his feet and threw it into the open field. Bill understood what Sarah was really saying to them about getting a loan.

**"You are saying, they will only loan money to white people, because they have the big farms."**

Sarah looked over at Jim and wondered, if Bill suspected she was a white woman. She decided to continue talking.

**"The Bank will give loans to colored people, if they have property. The money in the Bank belongs to other people. The Bank must make sure they can get it back, if they give it to someone. The Bank gives loans to white people because the white people owned property and they feel the money came from white people."**

**"The Bank will take money from colored people, but they will not loan money without property to hold against the loan. They want to protect the money."**

Bill listened as Sarah talked about white men being fair to colored people. Bill knew Sarah was wrong.

**"We know the white people are very different from colored people because of our history. White people will take care and look out for other white people."**

**"Their family is white, their church is white, their school is white. In their home, everyone is white."**

**"Colored people are different. Our homes are full of people with white, brown, black and red skin. They consider all of us to be non-white, even-thought some of us look and talk white. Some of us pass as white."**

**"Colored people are very different. As slaves we learned not to respect or trust each other. We do not trust each other, like the white people."**

Jim nodded in agreement with Bill. Jim saw a difference with being colored and asking for a farm loan.

**"Mother, the white people give a loan to a white farmer expecting and hoping he will be successful."**

**"They give a loan to a colored farmer expecting and hoping he will fail. Then they will take his farm and sell it to a white person."**

Sarah thought Jim and Bill were wrong about white people trusting each other. She knew white people did not get along as well as most colored people believed.

**"I think you are being unfair to colored people and too kind to white people. I do not think white people and colored people are treated the same. There is some difference between them. Most people think and feel a little differently about everything."**

**"Their needs and wants are the same as people."**

**"White people do not get along as well as colored people want to believe. Most white people come from different places in Europe. Their ancestors fought wars against each other in Europe."**

**"In America, they joined to fight the native people and hold black people as slaves."**

**"White people never agreed on what to do with Negro and Indian people."**

Sarah paused and smiled at Jim, then she looked at the cabin. Sarah knew they were curious about her views and feelings toward white people.

**"White people used skin color to separate from other people of color. Colored people could not use skin color because their skin colors are not the same."**

**"White people are not pure and they know it. White society tries to prevent other people of color from succeeding in their communities. White people are white by their association with other white people."**

**"It was a certain way of life they need to survive as a separate people. The strength and beauty of the black society is the mixture of people from different cultures. Most white people knew people should not be put into groups according to the way they looked."**

**"Bill, your father was a mixture of Negro and white blood. Your wife's is also a mixture of Indian and white blood."**

**Your children are colored, but they look like white children to me."**

Jim knew Bill was not proud of those past actions by his white ancestors. He felt Bill did not care for the relatives from his grandfather's family. Jim accepted being colored.

**"Mother, I am not going to get a loan. It would be too much trouble for my family. We can stay a poor and happy on our farm. They can keep their money."**

Sarah turned toward Bill as he nodded in agreement. She decided to ask about the wives. She knew most marriages were often a matter of convenience for men.

**"How does Rosa and Cindy feel about getting a loan from the bank to increase the size of the farm?"**

Jim felt confused by the question about talking with the wives. He noticed some confusion on Bill's face. Jim turned and smiled toward Sarah.

**"Mother, what do you mean by how did they feel?"**

Sarah knew the answer to her question, but she wanted to hear it from the two men.

**"Well, both of you were thinking about getting a loan to increase the size of your farm. That would mean debt for the family. Your wives would need to know."**

Jim smiled, slightly annoyed, and thought about his wife having a say in the farm. Jim felt the farm was the business of men. He considered her to be part of the home.

**"Mother, this is farm business. She has nothing to do with farm business. We do not talk about the business dealings. I plan the farming and do the trading."**

**"Rosa is too busy with taking care of the house and the children. She does not need to worry about the farm."**

Alice listened quietly to Jim, as the men stood to leave and go home. She smiled and waived to the men as they walked toward the wagon.

**"Bill and you need to talk to your wives. They can help with your thinking. They are smart women."**

Sarah sat as the men moved toward the wagon with the old mule

waiting in the yard. Sarah watched the men climbed into the wagon and waived. Sarah turned and smiled at Alice.

**"They are good men, but poor husbands. I hope you can do better, when you look for a husband."**

Alice smiled at her grandmother. Alice was not thinking or worrying about marriage. She was too busy with her chores on the farm. Alice felt there was little time for boys.

### **FAMILY IN TROUBLE**

The Atlantic and Danville Railroad extended their tracks into Brunswick County. The wood burning trains departed on a daily basis with passengers and freight going east to Norfolk and west to Danville. The trains departed in the morning and returned in the evenings. The cities of Norfolk and Danville were connected by railroads to other major cities.

Lawrenceville was an important center for some railroads with terminals and train repair shops. The local station was located near a large railroad roundhouse with a turntable for the train engines. There were separate depots for passengers and freight. The Atlantic and Danville Railroad employed two hundred people in the area.

Many of the day laborers, after completion of the tracks in Brunswick County, moved to the terminals at Hampton Roads, seeking more work near the coast. These laborers were joined by some field workers in search of steady work.

Robert Powell departed from Brunswick County in 1891 and arrived at Hampton Roads. He found some work as a laborer at the Newport News Shipyard and rented a single room at a house near the shipyard. Robert met and visited other women in the area. He returned to southside on several occasions to visit his family and children. Robert discovered his wife, Sallie, was pregnant with her sixth child.

It was apparent to Sallie, Robert was seeing other young woman in the Newport News area. His visits to southside were less frequent. Sallie was too busy with her children and the small farm to worry about Robert. Sallie received some money from her husband, but it was not enough for the family.

Sallie realized working a farm with five small children was difficult for one woman. She expected the work was going to be more difficult

with another baby. Sarah and her family tried to help, but Sallie was not able to keep a cash crop on the farm. Sarah borrowed some more money to help Sallie with her children and the farm supplies.

A primary source of poverty in southern communities were situations with single women caring for children, without the support of a man. Sarah understood these types of situations with men. When a man moved from one family to another family in a marriage separation, one or both of the families usually suffered from the lack of his support. The situations forced women to survive and support their families without the men.

Many of the poor women learned, after the war, to manage their money without the support and guidance of a man. There was a real and growing feeling of independence among women in the southern communities. The rights for women were expanded throughout the country as more women conducted their business affairs without the men. There were some political movements at the end of the century for women to gain the right to vote in national and local elections.

Sarah knew it was difficult for men to earn enough money to support an unattached family. Sarah recognized Sallie was living in the same situation as she and Phoebe did earlier on their family farm. Sallie was a woman living with five small children on a farm without a man. Sallie continued living on the farm started by Robert and herself in Powellton.

Sallie, like the family generations of women before her, was living with children and no husband at home. Sallie gave birth to boy in 1891, but she did not record the birth at the court-house. Sidney was her sixth child. Sallie knew Robert was living with another woman. Sallie heard the local gossip about the baby belonging to another man.

Sarah helped Sallie with her small children. Sarah took care of the children with help from Alice, the granddaughter, who was living with Sarah. Sallie and her children worked in their garden during the warmer months. The children attended the state funded county schools, for colored children, in the cooler months of the year. Sarah worried over her daughter's arduous struggle to support the farm and her children.

Sarah shared many of her concerns, for Sallie, with Jane during some of their talks. Jane often visited Sarah, during the evenings, with Anna, her daughter. The women discussed a variety of topics about the family and their community. Anna played with Claudia and the other grandchildren during visits to the old farm. Sarah and Jane continued to be best friends with frequent visits between them.

Sarah was sitting on a small bench in the yard during an evening visit by Jane. Sarah talked about Sallie and her sad marriage to Robert. She felt there were many problems with her children in the area. Sarah knew Sallie needed some help with the farm and her children.

**"I believe Robert is gone for good."**

**"Sallie is living without a husband and the children are growing without a father."**

**"I do not know what she is going to do with her farm."**

Jane remembered Sarah took care of six small children on the old Harrison farm, without a husband, after the war.

**"Sallie will do the same as you. She will work on the farm and take care of her children, just like you did with your children. Everything will be fine."**

Sarah looked at Jane as she sat next to her. Sarah knew better that Jane helped with the farm and the children.

**"It was different for me. I got help on the farm from you and Philan. We helped each other take care of the children. Sallie does not have anyone to help her with the children or the farm. She can get some help from her brothers, but they have their farms."**

Jane understood Sarah's concern, but she felt all things would work out for Sallie.

**"Sallie is tough. She will find a way to take care of the farm and her children. She does not need a man to keep the farm. We can help Sallie."**

Sarah believed some conditions would get better for most of her family in time. She felt the situation with Sallie on her farm would also improve for her children.

**"I know Sallie is tough, but she will need help with the farm. There is no one to work the fields."**

Jane thought about Sallie needing a young man to work in the fields. Jane knew Sallie was a young and very attractive woman. Jane felt Sallie would get another husband to work in the fields and help her with the children.

**"Sallie could marry another man. Sallie is young enough to attract a man to help her with the farm."**

Sarah did not like the idea of getting a man to work for the farm through marriage. She wanted her daughter to have a good husband and a good father for the children.

**"Sallie does not need a man. She needs a husband and a father for her children. There are not many men, who are willing to support a family with six children from another man."**

Jane knew Sarah wanted Sallie to have a good family with children and a husband. She felt Sallie would survive.

**"People can not always make things go their way."**

**"A woman can make it without man. Your grandmother and you took care of small children without a husband."**

Sarah thought about her grandmother, Phoebe, raising her four children without a husband.

**"My grandmother was married and my grandfather died leaving her with four small children. Robert simply went away leaving Sallie with six small children."**

**"You and I never had a husband. It was different."**

Jane smiled, but she did not share the same appreciation for a husband as Sarah. Jane felt marriage was never special to the local men, who were unfaithful to their wives.

**"Sarah, why do you think so highly of married men?"**

**"A husband is nothing more than a man with two or more women. He is not special or very different from other men in the area. They have other women. Marriage is nothing, but a way to control women, to most men."**

Sarah felt Jane spoke from her personal experiences with men in town. Sarah knew a married white man raped Jane, when she was a young slave girl. Sarah heard the man was a member of the Harrison family.

**"Jane, I know husbands are not perfect. I agree they are just like other men. I think marriage is good for women. Wives are not like the other women, they are respected by the men. Wives are admired as women."**

Jane smiled and thought about the open comments from her friend. Jane knew Sarah felt strongly about her sons getting married and

starting farm families. Jane realized they would never agree about men. Jane decided to talk more about their children. Jane felt Sallie would be able to keep the farm.

Sallie was pregnant during the winter of 1894, expecting her seventh child. She was living with her children on their farm. Robert continued to live in Newport News and visit his family on the southside. Sallie gave birth to a baby girl in early July, her seventh child in fifteen years.

Sallie and Robert decided, after the birth of Martha, to sell the farm started in Powellton. Sallie purchased a small twelve acre farm with her share of the sale money. The farm, located near Ante, was twelve miles east of the courthouse.

Sallie became more independent with purchase of the farm in Ante. The visits with Sarah were more frequent with talks about women and their rights. Sarah and Sallie shared family views on the roles of women as mothers, but differed on roles for wives. Sarah continued her support of marriage.

Sallie sat at the table in the middle of the room, while her mother sat on the bed. Sallie talked about the future of the family. Sallie considered the best roles of women.

**"A woman learns to sacrifice as a child. Most girls are taught to serve the men. The girls play with dolls in preparation for motherhood. Men think the only purpose for a woman is to have babies and serve their needs."**

Sarah understood Sallie's feelings about the subordinate role of women, but she did not want to agree with the role of women as serving the needs of men.

**"Women try to serve others and make things better for their family and friends. A mother serves her children and a wife serve her husband out of love for them."**

**"It is her choice and it should always be her choice."**

Sallie smiled, but she did not agree with a woman having a choice. Sallie felt the nature of men and the choices made by society determined the roles for women.

**"Mother, a woman does not have a choice. She lives under the control of men, whether it is her father, her husband or her boss. It is not fair for women."**

**"A woman must follow a man to survive or risk being at their mercy as a mother with hungry children."**

**"Women only gain power and independence by living or working with other women."**

Sarah thought about Jane, her old friend, working in town as a housekeeper to some white families. Sarah believed Jane appeared to be very independent to most people. Sarah thought her friend was not at the mercy of any man.

**"Jane is a free and independent woman. There is no man in control of her life. She is a single woman and she was never married. Jane works a job just like the most men. She gets her way on things and people know it."**

Sallie thought about Jane being an independent woman with some property and no man. Sallie also knew Jane was a former slave girl, on a Harrison farm, with babies from white men.

**"Mother, Jane is a hired housekeeper. She is a poor servant for some wealthy white families. Jane never got the opportunity to choose a job. She was trained as a child to clean houses for other people. Jane never got a choice in her life. She was born a slave."**

Sarah agreed there were only a few opportunities for her friend because of slavery. Sarah felt Phoebe operated a farm as a strong and independent woman. Sarah knew she worked the same farm, after her grandmother died. Sarah felt there were other independent women working and living in the area.

**"If a woman wants to be a doctor or a lawyer, she should be able to get the proper education. Women need to get the same schooling as the men. Girls should get the same schooling as the boys."**

**"Women should choose what they want and make sacrifices to get it. A woman, who decides to be a mother, may not be able to choose. Her role is to be a mother."**

**Men are free to do other things without their women."**

Sallie continued to listen, but she could not agree with her mother. She knew most women have few, if any, choices in life. Sallie felt the men determined a woman's place.

**"Most men want their daughters to get married. Then the**

**daughter is under the control of a husband with her rights restricted by the Law and the local government."**

**"A woman does not exist to other people outside of her marriage, because she is his property."**

Sarah thought of Sallie, separated with her children and no man. Sarah tried to understand the problem between Sallie and Robert in their marriage and the need to be separated.

**"I never found a husband, but I got a place to sleep and grow food. I got this farm from my grandparents. They made my choices and I raised my children without a man."**

**"It was not easy and it was not right for my children."**

**"A woman needs a husband and her children need a father in the home. It is the way it was meant to be. A man and a woman should share their home and their children."**

Sallie felt it was strange for her mother to suggest the children needed a father. She knew Sarah did not regard most men, who were responsible for the births of bastard children, to be fathers. Sarah believed the good men became fathers by supporting their children. Sallie recalled her mother saying there were no fathers for her children.

### **COLORS OF LOVE**

In Lawrenceville, James Russell and Virginia Morgan, his wife, established a parish school in 1888. Their school grew rapidly with colored men and women seeking an education. The state incorporated the school in 1893, as Saint Paul's Normal and Industrial School. The college prepared colored teachers for the formal education of the colored children. The school stressed industrial and agricultural training for colored men and women in the area.

James Russell was born a slave in 1857. He and his poor mother lived, as slaves, in southern Virginia. His father, a former slave from North Carolina, joined the family after the war. They raised James on a farm, where they worked until he attended Hampton Institute at Hampton Roads. He also studied at the Theological Seminary in Petersburg.

James Russell, ordained by the Episcopal Church, arrived for new duties in Lawrenceville to begin his ministry. James married Virginia Michigan Morgan from Petersburg in 1882. He and his wife lived in

the loft of a log cabin near the school site. The original home site for the private school included the Rose Creek Plantation, which consisted of a large farm in the town with some slave cabins. The cabins housed the Negro slaves before the war. The black school continued to buy and develop the land for additional buildings.

The starting of a private black college in Lawrenceville created considerable interest in formal education for colored men and women in the southside communities. Sarah and Sallie worried about the girls getting an education. Sarah felt the girls needed a formal education similar to the boys. Most of her young grandchildren attended the local county schools for colored children. Sallie encouraged her bold daughters to be strong and independent women.

Sallie continued working on her dirt farm with vegetable gardens and livestock. The farm included some cows for milk and some pigs for pork, as well as many chickens for eggs and meat. Sallie, living with her seven children, struggled with the farm chores. Sallie and her daughters worked to maintain all of the livestock, while her sons worked in the cotton and tobacco fields on the farm.

Alice, the grandchild, was a constant companion to Sarah during the evenings. The role of Alice and Sarah was similar to the relationship shared between Sarah and Phoebe. The two women discussed everything about the old farm and the history of the Harrison family in Virginia.

Alice talked about skin color between some people as she and Sarah sat in front of the cabin. Alice was resting after visiting Sallie, at the end of a long day. Alice was wanting some answers about her baby cousin, Martha, with the color of her skin being white, like Sarah and Sallie.

**"Mother, my skin is brown. Why do some people have white skin and some people have black skin?"**

Sarah felt skin color was not very important because she believed skin colors were different shades of the same color.

**"Skin color is based on living conditions for people over long periods of time."**

**"People with white and fair skin came from Europe living in cool and wet weather. People with black and dark skin came from Africa living in hot and dry weather."**

Alice thought about her cousins with brown skin like all colored

people. She thought about other people, like Martha, with white skin. Alice felt white skin meant the person was a white person with white parents.

**"Is Martha a white person or a colored person. Her skin is white like your skin and Aunt Sallie's skin."**

Sarah smiled and looked over at Alice. Sarah understood the circumstances for using race and skin color to describe a group of people. Sarah felt it was our culture.

**"In southern Europe, northern Africa and America, people with light skin mated people with dark skin resulting in people with different colored skin."**

**"Martha is a colored person. She was born in a colored family. Her brothers and her sister are colored. She is colored like her family and her parents."**

Alice understood Martha was a colored person in a family of colored people, but she felt Martha was a white person.

**"Martha has white skin like other white people because her mother is a white person. Some people say she is colored, but I say she is white."**

Sarah thought there was too much emphasis on her race as a label. Sarah knew most people could not determine, who was white and who was black, based on their appearance.

**"Babies are not only born with brown skin, but the babies can have light skin or the babies can have dark skin. The color of skin can be any shade."**

**"It should not be important to you who is white or who is black. Most people have neither black nor white skin. Our skin colors are different shades of the same color. The race of a person should not be based on how we look compared to other people."**

**"Everyone in America is colored with some mixed blood because family origins are all different."**

Alice thought about her father, John, who was born white and died black. She knew his father was a colored man.

**"John was born white, but he discovered his family was colored. He changed his last name to his father's family"**

**name. John was a colored man. He lived as a colored person. He was not a white man."**

Sarah believed Alice heard about John being her son by a colored man from other family members. Sarah did not discuss her father as being John. Sarah felt Alice was her child and another baby raised as her daughter.

**"John was my son. He was born white because we told the people in town, he was white. Ben was also white."**

Alice thought about Ben, her uncle, but never imagined a white man with his reddish brown skin.

**"People do not pick their race. Colored people are born with black or brown skin like their parents. They can not say they are not colored people."**

Sarah felt people determined most racial groups and skin colors based on their appearance and association with similar groups and families. She knew part of it was culture.

**"Your race should be more than physical appearance."**

Alice found it hard to accept your race being the choice of individuals, based on association and family history.

**"Mother, this is silly. Everyone knows your race is based on how you look to other people. Race is based on appearance. The way we look is right."**

Sarah realized Alice believed race was the skin color in the overall appearance of individuals.

**"Your individual race is also based on your culture and your heritage. If your family culture is white, then your race is white regardless of your color."**

**"People should be able to say their race as based on their family culture because other people decide your race based on your associations with others."**

**"You may be colored, but if your family and friends are white people, you will be considered and treated as a white person. It is the comparison to others."**

**"A person is tall or fat based on comparison with other people. If the other people are taller or fatter, then the person will not be considered tall or fat. It will depend**

**on who is looking and what they are comparing with the person."**

**"People should not be divided by the skin color or any other item of physical appearance."**

Alice thought of her grandmother having colored children and Sallie with colored children. They were white females at birth, but most white people considered them to be colored.

**"Mother, if most people are a mixture of races, why do so many people with light brown or pale or pink skin say they are white and not colored?"**

Sarah knew most people wanted to be accepted as white in order to have the opportunities for power and wealth.

**"Most people feel it is better to be part of a large powerful group than part of a small weak group."**

**"Most people feel being white is better because of the history with Negro slavery and white segregation against colored people. There are few advantages to being identified as a colored person."**

Alice understood why most people wanted to be considered white in America. She wondered why some people would want to be called colored instead of white.

**"You and Aunt Sallie were born as white, but decided to live as colored people. How can you be a white person living with colored people?"**

Sarah thought about her children living on land racially divided by the law. Sarah knew there was no social tolerance for the differences between white and black people.

**"Being white makes you part of the ruling class and a member of the controlling majority. White people have power over colored people, but some white people live as colored because their families are colored. The people are colored through their association with people, who have African features. My children with light skin married people with dark skin and the children have skin with different shades."**

**"The local Law says white people can not marry black people. In order to marry, the man and the woman must**

**be identified with the same race. People with light skin can marry people with dark skin, if they are both colored people."**

**"My children were raised as colored people, but they were not all born into the same race. Ben and Sallie were born as white people, but they grew up as colored children. Ben and Sallie married colored people and started black families."**

Alice thought about her father did not marry her mother, when she was pregnant. Alice knew her mother gave her up, as a baby, to Sarah.

**"If John was married to my mother, he would have been in a colored family. Why did he not marry my mother?"**

Sarah looked over at Alice. She knew Alice was becoming a young woman. Sarah recognized Alice was at the same age as her young mother when she got pregnant by John.

**"John was not ready to be a father. He did not want to marry your mother because she was not the woman for him and he was not the man for her."**

**"A woman needs to be careful in starting a family."**

Alice felt the comments, from Sarah about being careful, were unusual and surprising. Alice knew Sarah encouraged her children to marry at a very young age. Alice felt the mature woman, her unmarried grandmother, wanted some peace of mind.

**"My mother gave birth to me without a husband. Your mother and your grandmother had a baby, each without a husband. You were never married with six babies."**

**"Now, Aunt Sallie is having babies without a husband."**

Sarah quietly listened as Alice described the sad family history of single and unmarried mothers. Sarah recalled they did their best under the circumstances, which were not always the result of their actions.

**"If this world was fair and caring, a woman could have babies without a husband and raise her children without a father. The children would be fine."**

**"However, this is not a perfect world. It is unfair to women and colored people. It will be difficult for you, as a colored woman, to care for your family."**

**"A woman should wait for a husband. A baby should have a mother and a father. The only way, to make sure there will be a father, is to be married"**

**"You talked about the Harrison women living without men or husbands. We survived with our children, but we endured many hardships in our lives."**

**"We struggled each day to keep the farm, have food for our stomachs and clothes on our back."**

Alice understood her grandmother being alone on the farm and being poor with small children.

**"Mother, a woman having a husband will not always solve her problems. Aunt Sallie had a husband for ten years."**

Sarah knew a woman should be able to care for herself as an adult. Sarah felt Alice would be a good mother and a good wife for the right man.

**"Marriage does not solve all problems, it may start more problems as part of life."**

**"My grandmother had a husband and Sallie had a husband before being alone with her small children."**

**"I think their lives were better and easier with a man working and sharing the children."**

Alice listened as her unmarried grandmother talked about a woman needing a husband.

**"Mother, all of the women in your family succeeded on their farms without a husband. There were no men to be fathers for the children. The women survived without men telling them what to do and when to do it."**

Sarah smiled and thought of the women, who worked on the farms and cared for the young children. She wanted things to be better for her granddaughters. Sarah expected Alice would be first to marry among her granddaughters.

**"We were poor unmarried mothers fighting to make a fair living on our farm. It is a heavy load to work a farm and raise small children. A woman can not feel safe and secure. There is always a fear of losing everything."**

**"Our family is a history of a poor unmarried women with**

**children. I hoped it would end with me. I did not want my daughter or any of my granddaughters to start their families without a father for the children."**

Alice stood and slowly walked toward the glass window on the side of the cabin. Sarah sat quietly watching Alice move across the cabin. Alice understood and accepted the feelings of her grandmother on marriage.

Sarah expected Alice to work and think about the need to find the right man. Sarah and other women in the family kept a watchful eye on the young girls. They continued to discuss marriage and provide advice for the granddaughters.

Sarah stayed near her home and watched her grandchildren grow into young adults. The families of her children visited on several occasions during the year. Sallie's children were frequent visitors with Ben's children because they lived near the old farm. The children played in the yard and waited for a meal from their grandmother. Sarah prepared meals for most of the children during the day to encourage visits.

### **DIVIDING THE TREE**

Citizens of African decent were nine million people with many of these colored people living in the southern states on cotton farms. While most white people in the northern states were either hostile or indifferent, local colored people were constantly in trouble with the dangerous and openly malicious white authorities in the southern towns. The local officials stripped colored people of their civil rights and forced them into separate black communities seeking some protection.

Although outnumbered and out-gunned, many colored people fought against the injustice and refused to accept the unfair situation in the southern states. A few colored people tried to engage in a rebellion by avoiding some work and committing certain violent acts. Local white authorities reacted to the rebellion by jailing or lynching thousands of colored people.

Consequently, many of the colored people migrated to the northern cities in search of a better life. The migration of colored people from the southern farming communities resulted in white people gaining a population majority in the southern states. The southern states were not able or willing to grow with the large movements of colored people.

There were several, organized, attempts improve the poor racial climate. Booker Washington was a major leader and key spokesman for colored people working and living in the former slave states. Washington was born, as a slave, in 1856. The birthplace was a farm home in Virginia. Washington graduated in 1875 from Hampton Institute in Virginia. Young Washington emphasized college education, independence, self-reliance and property ownership for colored people living in most southern states. Washington started Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

Washington preferred and promoted accommodation over any confrontation with white people. While Washington encouraged racial solidarity and economic independence, he believed most white people would eventually respect their rights of colored citizens. Washington sought to gain the civil rights lost by colored people after Reconstruction.

Most colored people knew the ideal of Frederick Douglass toward white assimilation through self-assertion was destined for failure. White suppression of civil and political rights encouraged most colored people to seek compromise. The fresh ideals of Booker Washington offered compromise by trading the civil rights of colored people for economic opportunities.

Wealthy white people in the northern states welcomed any peaceful cooperation between most white and colored people in the southern states. Black leaders, such as Washington, were convinced that the survival of poor colored people depended on the political submission and social subordination of free colored citizens in the southern states. Colored people, as a group, effectively surrendered their civil rights for the promise of economic advancement in the southern states.

This compromise, with colored people, was less repugnant to white people. However, it was not accepted by everyone in the black community. Militants, among colored people, sought revenge and revolted against the white political system. The militants preferred more violent confrontation over political compromise. Intellectuals, among colored people, sought more self-respect in the black community and the social acceptance by white people toward equal rights for colored people.

Leaders in the black communities and the social movement for equal rights could not succeed in the United States, with rising America imperialism. American foreign diplomacy tried to focus on enforcing

the state sovereignty of Latin American countries and expanding the influence of the United States in the Pacific Ocean. The violent destruction of American owned property in Cuba and the militant rebellions against European authority resulted in military intervention by the government of the United States to restore peace.

The presidential election of 1896 resulted in all of the southern states and most of the western states supporting the gifted Democrat, William Jennings Bryan. Most of the northern states and a few western states supported William McKinley, a gracious and dignified Republican. This election of McKinley marked the triumph of industry over farming and business over labor in most governmental affairs.

The growing acceptance of racial injustice in the county caused Sarah to question her status and role as a white woman in a black community. Appearance was not the best indication of race or color for many people in the area. Authorities in the area determined race or color groups of local individuals by their association with groups of people. Sarah knew black people with light and fair skin, who associated among members of the white communities, were considered white people.

Sarah and Sallie started thinking more about their race and the role of white women in black communities. Sarah knew the role of a colored woman as the family matriarch for black members. Sarah was an old woman, like her memories of Phoebe as a child. Sarah sat in the cabin, looking at the children, who were playing in the yard.

**"Sallie, we are not white people and we are not colored people. Our family is black. I think we were black people for a long time. It is our way."**

Sallie listened to the surprising comments from her fair mother. Sallie rejected the racial notion, by Sarah, that they were black and her family was black. Sallie always referred to her children as being colored people with lighter or darker skin than others.

**"Mother, we are not black people. I do not have any black children. My children are colored with light skin. We are colored people with fair skin."**

**"Saying colored people are black is cruel and wrong for all people. It can be insulting to say some people are black. African people are dark enough to be black."**

Sarah turned and looked at Sallie. Sarah knew her black daughter had the appearance of a white woman. Sarah felt her mother and her

daughter were black women, with black children and a black family. Sarah continued talking to Sallie.

**"I do not know how long we have been a black family, but it was before I was born. We started to change our race when my great grandfather freed his Negro slave and my grandfather hired a colored man to work on their farm."**

**"Some people claimed the colored man was a lover for my grandmother. Whether, the colored man was or was not my mother's father is not important to me. He lived and worked with my grandmother after her husband died."**

**"Our family became black when they stopped looking at skin color and started looking at the person. They began to accept people of color into their family."**

Sallie listened, as Sarah questioned the sexual behavior of their ancestry. Sallie knew most white and colored people respected Phoebe as a strong independent white woman.

**"Mother, you know grandmother would not have a colored lover before or after her husband died. My grandmother would not have a lover after her husband died."**

Sarah smiled and remembered her grandmother was not very fond of the men. Sarah recalled Phoebe having these feelings after the colored man moved away from the farm.

**"My grandmother hired Bob to help her before my mother was pregnant with me. Bob lived with the whole family, including my unmarried mother. Some people say he was my father. I know he was part of my family."**

Sallie remembered her brother, John, changing his family name from Harrison to Malone, the family name for his colored father. Sallie wondered if his father was related to the man living with Sarah's mother. Sallie felt Sarah could, unknowingly have been a lover with a half brother, the son of her father.

**"Mother, was Bob related to John's father and your first lover? Do you think Bob was your father? What a mess it would be for everyone in the family. How does a woman or a man know the truth about their family."**

Sarah thought of being related to the Malone family with a brother and a sister. Sarah felt there was no relationship between her family and Bob Malone.

**"I know Bob helped to raise me as a little girl, but he was never my father. He would have said something to me, if I was his daughter or a relative. We were more like good family friends, and not really related."**

Sallie felt relieved by the comments from Sarah. Sallie realized the possible problem with family members not knowing they are related because of family secrets.

**"Do you think a child should know her blood relatives and those were really responsible for her birth?"**

**"When should the child be told about their families?"**

**"When did you tell my brothers about their fathers?"**

Sarah thought about poor Sidney and the rumors about his father. She wondered about the men in Sallie's life.

**"I waited until your brothers were old enough to know and understand. I was wrong to wait. It was unfair to your brothers. John was hurt. It was too late for Ben, his choices were made on who and when to marry."**

**"I guess it was too late for you and Robert."**

Sallie looked at her children. Sallie was uncomfortable with her mother's comments. Sallie decided to ask her mother about past relations in order to change the subject.

**"Philan was a young man, who lived with us, when I was a child. I thought Philan was your age. Did Philan become your lover? He was an available young man."**

Sarah remembered Philan and Jane were lovers for a brief period. Sarah never knew what happened between them.

**"Philan Williams lived with me for ten years and we were good friends, but we were not lovers. He was family to me and my children. I know some people felt he was my man, but they were wrong."**

Sallie wanted to talk more about the family being black, because she did not understand her mother.

**"Mother, if we were not related to those colored men in your past, why do you say we are black?"**

Sarah noticed the focus of their conversation changed to their race relations instead of her family relations.

**"Black and white are not colors. Black and white do not relate to our ancestors. Black and white are labels for our family and our culture as a group of people."**

**"Those men were black. They lived and worked with several generations of women on this farm. The women were considered white because of the family history, but they were black by their association with black people."**

**"If part of our family was black, then all of us were black, regardless of how we looked to others. I did raise black children because we were black. All of my lovers were black. They were black and I was black by my association with them."**

**"Black and white are labels for people to identify and separate other people. The labels determine where they exist in the social order of things."**

Sallie realized her mother considered black and white to be labels for describing other people, such as being rich and poor or thin and fat. Sallie believed there were people, who did easily fit into labels of rich and poor in the area.

**"You mean black people are poor and always will be poor, while white people may be poor, but they can do better?"**

Sarah realized Sallie was starting to understand some of the differences between black people and white people.

**"It is not about being rich and poor. It is about where you belong in the order of things according to others."**

**"If there were no black people, there would be no white people. If there were no white people, there would be no black people. They were created for each other in order to divide and separate people into groups."**

**"The white men, who were leaders, divided the country between black and white in order to control people."**

Sallie smiled at her mother. Sallie did not accept her argument of black people being created for and by white people.

**"Mother, black people are called black because they have dark brown skin. We are called white because our skin is pale white. What you say may be true, but it starts with the way we look compared to other people."**

Sarah decided not to argue the point with Sallie. Sarah knew her race was more than the skin color of black and white people. Sarah believed race descriptions were labels for the social and cultural order among people.

**"There is balance in nature with no dominate force among the animals and plants. Each has a role in the struggle to survive. Life is a turbulent balance."**

**"Native tribes, living in early America, understood the harmony in nature before being invaded by outside white influences. Negro tribes from Africa understood the harmony in nature before being enslaved by the outside white influences. These outside European influences ignored the harmony in nature."**

**"As European people discovered the existence of people with color, they found differences in their beliefs and values. A feeling of false superiority lead to a desire to control these other people. The minor differences became important. White was described as good, clean and pure. Black was described as bad, dirty and wrong."**

Sallie was confused by her mother's comments. Black was not a mixed color. Brown was a mixed color for people.

**"My children were born with brown skin. They are not black. They are colored like Bob with his blood. We are mixed as brown people in blood. We are not black."**

Sarah looked at the children playing in the swings under the trees. Sarah noticed little Martha looked different from her other grandchildren with her pale skin.

**"Blood is a liquid flowing through our bodies and the blood of a baby is a blend from the father and the mother. The blood changes with each generation."**

**"When a white person is mixed with a black person, the baby is born with colored skin. The color of the skin may be brown, but the baby is black."**

**"Black was a mixture of all colors in people. Black is simply the alternative to white for most people."**

Sallie looked at Martha and turned toward Sarah. Sallie felt her mother was talking about Martha being pale with very light skin color. Sallie wanted to make a statement.

**"If there is no black blood in the child, the child must be white. Do you agree with race being by blood?"**

Sarah thought about Sallie and Ben having white parents, but living as part of a black family. She felt the blood was not the question for the racial identity of an individual.

**"Blood is not a mix. You can not separate the black and white blood. If the child has white parents, the child should be white at birth. However, if the mother says the child is black, then the child is black."**

**"Are you talking about me and my black children?"**

Sallie ignored the question and thought about her colored children. Sallie wanted to describe her situation.

**"Mother, if a white woman decides to marry a colored man and gives birth to his children, she becomes a colored woman. If a white man gets the same woman pregnant, the child is white in a black family."**

Sarah was curious about the example given by Sallie of a white woman with a white lover and a black lover. Sarah felt her daughter was talking about their family relationship.

**"Salt and pepper can be mixed. Over time the mixture can also be separated between the white salt and the black pepper. Even if the salt and pepper mix becomes wet, it can be dried and be separated."**

Sallie decided to confront her mother with the sad truth about Martha, her daughter. Sallie knew Martha was white and not colored, like her other children, because of the father.

**"Mother, I believe I am a white woman. I think Martha is a white girl, because Bob is not her father."**

**"I guess you noticed Martha does not look like my other children. Martha is a white girl with pale skin."**

Sarah did not know, but she suspected Robert was not the father of Martha. However, she thought the father was black.

**"When you married Robert and carried his six babies, you became a black woman. Your children were born black in a black family. We registered each birth with Robert as the father. They were black children."**

**"When Robert moved away, the births of Sidney and young Martha were not registered. After Sidney died, it did not matter. Who was the man responsible for Martha?"**

Sallie recalled her young neighbor and friend, who lived near her farm and helped with the farm work. The two farmers became good friends when Bob started living with other women.

**"Ben Ellis is her father. Bob knows Martha is not his daughter. She is not a Powell. She is an Ellis."**

Sarah realized the bold confession, from Sallie, was not a surprise. Sarah heard the Ellis family were colored people from another county in the eastern part of the state.

**"I thought Ben Ellis was a mulatto man. I was told his father was a white man and his mother was a Negro woman on his farm. Why do you think he is a white man?"**

Sallie thought of Martha, as a colored child in a family of colored children. She knew Ben was a white man.

**"After Ben's white mother died, his white father married the colored housekeeper. So Ben's father told people he was a mulatto man with a colored wife, his housekeeper."**

**"Ben and I became friends after Bob moved to Tidewater."**

Sarah felt the birth of Martha surely ended the marriage to Robert. The marriage ended for their small children.

**"I thought Ben was younger than you. He was very young when Martha was born. Did he want to be a father?"**

Sallie accepted Ben as a man and her friend man. Sallie knew there were five years difference in their ages, but they were two adults living independently as small farmers.

**"Ben was twenty seven and I was thirty two. We were two young people working our farms and looking for a friend. We knew what we were doing. It just happened because I needed someone to love."**

Sarah understood the baby situation, but she worried and thought about the future for her grandchildren. Sarah wanted the small children to have a father at home. Sarah felt they would be affected by the uncertainty in the relationship with another man. Yet Sarah knew Sallie would survive.

Sarah felt things were not getting better for most women in her family. Sallie stood and walked toward the cabin door without another word. It was getting late and Sallie decided to drive back to her farm with the children. Sallie knew Bob was going to stay in Newport News.

### **SIMPLE MARRIAGES**

Benjamin Ellis worked at the local saw mill. He was the son of a farmer from Surry County. He and Sallie Powell were neighbors, who became good friends after Bob started working in Newport News. Ben was a tall slim man with fair skin. He started visiting Sallie and her children, when he was twenty seven and she was thirty two. Ben became infatuated with her warmth and charm. Their friendship grew into an affair. The relationship resulted in the birth of Martha Francis.

Ben was the first son of Michael and Martha Ellis. They were white farmers in Surry County. Mike Ellis was active in the local affairs of native people after the Civil War. He married his colored house-keeper, as a mulatto man, after the death of his first wife. There were common marriages between white men and women of color. The white men continued to use native and colored women, as wives, by claiming to be mulatto men, with mixed black and white parents.

Sallie Powell and Ben Ellis acquired a marriage license, in December of 1897 at the local Courthouse. They married on the next day at the Ben's house. The wedding was a first for the groom and the second for the bride, who claimed she was a widow. Sallie continued, after the wedding, to live with her children on the small farm. She changed Martha's name as the daughter of Ben and Sallie Ellis.

Sallie and Ben continued to be good friends, both living apart on their separate farms and visiting on short occasions to talk and help with the farm. The only indication of their marriage was the license filed at the courthouse. It was one simple, but friendly, marriage for mutual convenience without the traditional relationship of husband and wife.

Sarah approved of the marriage, although she hoped for a stronger bond between Sallie and Ben for the benefit of their children. Sarah soon decided to focus most of her attentions on Alice, the oldest granddaughter. Alice was twenty years old and unmarried. There were several young men in the area, who were interested in the young Harrison woman.

Sarah felt Alice needed encouragement to get married and start a family. Sarah knew Sallie was not the best choice to give advice on marriage. The rush marriages of her sons were already discouraging Alice from looking for a husband. Sarah decided to talk to her friend, Jane, about giving some advice to Alice on marriage and selecting a good husband. Jane felt both of her daughters married good men.

*Jane agreed to discuss marriage with Alice, if Sarah was willing to help her with their talk. Jane did not want to be responsible for pushing anyone into marriage. Sarah and Jane agreed to talk to Alice on the next occasion, when they would be together for a private discussion.*

A week later, Sarah and Jane were talking to Alice about getting married. The three women were sitting in the yard as a warm evening breeze blew through the trees. The women were talking about children growing up and getting married to have more children. Sarah talked about her granddaughters getting married to strong and honest men.

**"Gertrude will probably get married as soon as she finds the right man. Sallie was married before her eighteenth birthday. Sallie could not wait to marry Robert and start a family. She just wanted her Robert."**

Alice smiled at her grandmother knowing Sarah wanted her daughter to marry Robert or any good man. Alice knew she was not ready to give her life to a good man like the other women at her age. Alice felt young and she wanted to be free.

**"A woman should never marry in a rush. She needs to know the kind of man she is getting for a husband."**

**"Do you think a woman should marry a man who does not love her. She would never be happy."**

Sarah knew Jane would tend to agree with the comments by her granddaughter. Sarah felt a young woman, like Alice, was foolish to wait for the right man.

**"A woman can not wait for the right man. She needs to marry the best man, she can get, when she is able to have and raise children. She needs a good husband to be the father for her children. There is no right man."**

Alice was familiar with these words of advice from Sarah because she had heard these comments on many occasions.

**"Mother, what about love and romance. A man and a woman should love each other before they agree to a marriage and a family. Do you agree, Jane?"**

Jane smiled at Alice and nodded in agreement. Jane felt love was very important for most married couple, but she knew it was different between men and women.

**"A woman needs the love of a man, but she can only give love to him. Love must come from his heart."**

**"Love is not something you put into your bed at night and fold into a chest in the morning. Love is alive in your heart and your soul. It can grow into a beautiful relationship or die suddenly."**

**"Love grows slowly in men. They are attracted to women because of their needs. Almost any woman will serve their purpose. The feelings can grow into admiration for the female and respect for the woman as a person."**

Alice understood the comments on the basic nature of men and marriages. Alice wondered about the personal experiences of Jane with men. Alice was curious about Jane knowing about married men. Alice knew Jane was never married.

**"As the marriage grows, the man will learn to love the woman, as the mother of his children."**

Sarah recalled Alice growing, as an orphan, into a young single woman. Sarah knew Alice was the beautiful, unmarried, daughter of her son. Sarah, at the same age, was taking care of four babies. Sarah thought about Phoebe, her grandmother.

**"My grandmother married too late in life. She married her cousin, who was an older man. He died after five years of marriage. She was pregnant with my mother at the time of his death. She raised her four children without a man and she kept the farm for me."**

Alice thought about Sarah and Jane being two mothers who never got married with so many children.

**"Do you think a woman would be happier with any man?"**

Sarah looked at Jane, who was quietly listening to Alice and her grandmother talk about marriage in the family.

**"I raised six children without a man. A husband may not be necessary to raise children, but the children need a father and a woman needs a husband."**

**"After mother and father died, my grandmother raised me from a baby. She survived the death of her children and lived to see the birth of my children."**

Alice understood Sarah's feelings toward men and getting married for the children. Alice believed Sarah and Jane were two happily, unmarried, women. Alice knew Sarah wanted women to marry and start families for their husbands.

**"Your grandmother needed to find another husband."**

Sarah remembered the death of John, the unmarried father of her granddaughter, Alice. Sarah remembered her two uncles dying, when she was a child.

**"Life is a struggle for everyone. Everybody needs help to survive. We were fortunate to get help from Philan and Jane. It would have been better for the children to have had a father, but I did not want a husband."**

**"Sometimes, fate delivers a crushing blow to our efforts and we are taken down. We become aware of our survival and realize the struggle continues."**

**"Our life is not one of comfort. It is a battle and we need all of the help we can get from others. There is only temporary shelter from our troubles. We all need some help in life. We need to share life."**

Alice thought about the difficult life for women. Alice knew Sarah lived an impoverished life, similar to other women in the family, such as Sallie and Phoebe. Alice knew most of the unmarried women raised their children and kept their farm for their children. Alice concluded that the women survived.

**"Times are hard for everyone. Times were hard for you and Jane. Times may be hard for me. I am not worried about marriage. Whether I get married, or not, it will not change the hard times for women."**

Jane knew Alice was right. There would be hard times in the future for everyone. It was their way of life.

**"We are fortunate to have families to help us with our**

**problems. I hope my grandchildren will have families with strong values. I know they will have some of the same troubles as our families. Everyone will need to work and help each other to survive in the hard times."**

**"A woman must fight for a better life. The fight will be long and hard, but it is the work of women. I know a woman needs the love of her family. This is important."**

Alice appreciated the importance of family, but she knew marriage was not necessary for a family. Alice knew Jane was an unmarried grandmother, who wanted marriage for other women in her family. Alice felt Jane was not fair in her views.

**"Marriage is important, but it is not necessary for me."**

Sarah looked toward the empty fields. She slowly turned toward her young granddaughter of nineteen years. Sarah knew the young men would soon be calling on Alice. Sarah believed an early marriage would be best for her granddaughter.

**"Alice, look at my sons and my grandsons. I can see the differences, a father at home, makes in the children and the family. I can see the difference in the women with husbands at home. Women can raise children, but it takes a father and a mother to make a strong family."**

**"A woman is incomplete without children. There is a need for children in every woman. She can only be happy with children. A woman needs the love of her children and the support of her husband. Children need a father for security and stability as a strong family."**

Alice stood and walked away from the other women. Sarah watched as Alice walked down the path toward Ben's farm cabin near the road to Ante. Jane stood and moved toward the front of the old cabin. Sarah wondered about the future for Alice, her oldest grandchild. Sarah sat watching Jane move about in the yard. Jane noticed the wild flowers at her feet.

Young Alice soon married Walter Banks, in March of 1899, at the Rising Star Church. Walt was a twenty seven years old farm worker and six years older than Alice. Walt was the son of Wyatt and Francis Banks, who were farmers. Alice recorded and listed James and Rosa on the marriage license, as parents for the record. Alice and her husband decided to live on the farm with Sarah, until they were able to get a farm.



## **BLACK WOMEN AT WEDDINGS**

**(1900-1910)**

Political and economic power, during the late nineteenth century, was highly concentrated and very personal with a few people sharing it. Most people believed the men, who applied their skills in search of wealth and power, succeeded because of their personal ability. Local authorities encouraged open competition in business, but numerous inconsistencies in most social policies and many contradictions in values resulted in the wealthy families gaining and maintaining control over the lives of people in most American communities.

It became difficult for black and white families to stay isolated and independent as poor people clustered into cities and towns to pursue jobs. Political power and social control grew more impersonal as relationships between small groups of families dominated the region. Some ambitious white families easily sacrificed the civil rights of most colored people for continued wealth and power. The wealth created problems with other families in the white communities as they sought wealth and stronger social positions.

The United States became a colonial power at the turn of the century with their acquisitions of Spanish possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific. The war against Spain and its foreign colonies spent over two hundred fifty million dollars and cost the lives of five thousand American soldiers. These deaths, among the military forces, came primarily from common diseases due to improper food, poor sanitation and inadequate medical care in the tropical possessions of Spain.

The Peace Treaty in Paris granted political independence to Cuba and ceded other Spanish territories, away from Spain, to the United States. Puerto Rico and Guam became two island possessions of the United States. The United States received control among the Philippines Islands. The war against Spain marked the beginning of American expansion in the world to increase prestige, expand commerce and frustrate the rival nations in Europe and Asia.

William McKinley, who won the 1900 presidential election against Bryan, was assassinated. Theodore Roosevelt, a famous hero from the Spanish War, became President. Roosevelt sought more government control of business and protection of natural resources. Roosevelt was very popular, as the President, with his zestful style as an outdoors-man.

Imperialism, by the United States, was a major political issue in America. The local people of color, which inhabited the island possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific, were not given United States citizenship. The local island people were colonial subjects with no elected representation, in the democratic government of the United States. The local island people shared the same fate as black people living as limited citizens in the southern states of America. Brunswick County was a very poor and isolated rural area in southern Virginia after the turn of the century. The main social order for people living in the rural area was based on racial and ethnic characteristics. The local elite consisted of a few wealthy white families, sharing common interests and similar goals in the various communities.

The black communities consisted of small farms with poor housing for field workers. Most families were large with six to ten children. The small children learned to be supportive and cooperative from other family members. Many of the large families tended to cluster in one area and work in the fields with family and friends.

The black communities, in the cities, consisted of small living areas for servants and laborers. The communities also included some colored professionals, who were educated by the small black colleges serving the local area. There were some colored lawyers or doctors in the black communities. Most of the white universities, in the southern states, barred native and colored children. The public supported universities were segregated by skin color and race. Some small black colleges provided formal education for teachers, nurses and farmers.

Sarah, like other independent farmers, continued to live and work in the area, while many young adults migrated to the cities and towns. The neighbors in the area tended to keep a distance and observe her

black and white visitors. Sarah was busy with family activities. Sarah worked in the back fields and spent most of her money with merchants in Ante. Southern rural life for Sarah and her family, was simple, isolated and independent. They were farmers living in poverty.

Alice Banks gave birth, in April of 1900, to a baby girl of African ancestry. Nora, a black baby, was the first child for Walter and Alice Banks. Little Nora was the first great-grandchild of Sarah Harrison. Sarah was a great grandmother, a month before her sixty-first birthday. The Banks continued to live, with Sarah, on her small farm. Walter worked in the fields growing cotton and tobacco for the farm market. Sarah was starting to show the signs of an aging woman. Alice took care of Nora and Sarah with the help of her cousins.

Some census workers from the national government visited the Banks family on the Harrison farm during the summer month in 1900. They recorded the names of each family member. The census reported Walter as a farmer and the head of the family household. They listed Alice as his wife and the housekeeper with Nora as their daughter. The workers listed Sarah as the mother-in-law and noted a granddaughter, Phyllis, as a niece and member of the household.

The census workers originally noted Sarah was the mother of six children with five living. Sarah changed the count to seven children, in order to include Alice. They listed Alice and Walter as being black, while listing Sarah as mulatto for the census records. The census workers determined skin color and race classifications based on appearances and association in the family. There were no questions on racial identity.

Alice looked at Sarah, after the census workers departed from the farm. She wondered about the census records. Alice heard her grandmother was a white woman with colored children and white parents. She did not accept Sarah being mulatto in the census records as noted by the workers.

**"Mother, I always thought you and Aunt Sallie were white women with colored children."**

Sarah thought of her children and life as a white mother to people of color. She recalled some conversations with her children about being black as her race identity.

**"We were born innocent as babies. I grew up as a white farm girl. We had white and colored friends. My family lived and worked with colored people. We became colored when we started raising colored children. I became a black woman, when my community became black."**

**"Black is not about skin color, hair style or family history. It is about status and the social order in a culture controlled by other people. It is about your place in the order of things according to other people with power. It is about being different and living different from the other people."**

Alice could see the pale white skin, the long blond hair and the blue eyes. Her old grandmother may have lived like a colored woman, but she looked like a white woman.

**"Mother, race is not a choice. It is what you are based on your parents. If either one of your parents were colored, then you must be colored."**

Sarah smiled at her young granddaughter. She knew Alice was smart with a clear head about many things in life. Sarah decided to challenge Alice with a few simple questions on the problems of being different from other people.

**"What is your race, if you do not know your parents?"**

**"If you look white, act white and think white, are you white regardless of your parents and their race?"**

**"If you look black and think black, are you also black regardless of how you act?"**

**"Are you black, if your parents are white?"**

Alice did not understand the questions on skin color and race. She believed the Negroes and other colored people were different from white people. Alice realized, she only knew a few white people, other than Sallie and her grandmother. She knew white and colored people saw things in different ways.

**"Mother, colored people live differently from most white people in the area. We see things differently."**

Sarah wondered if Alice could see any difference between black children and white children in the same family.

**"Is race based on the way you look, the way you act or the way you think? What is the white race?"**

**"You can not always rely on how a person looks to know they are different. What are those differences between black people and white people?"**

Alice thought about the white farmers and their families in the area.

Alice felt most of the white people in the area were not friendly with people of color. Alice believed there were different social values and different beliefs among most groups in the area. She did not understand white people.

**"White families are cold and cruel. Most of the members are not as friendly to other people in the area."**

Sarah believed there were no real differences between or in the groups of people with common beliefs and interest over their community. Sarah felt each individual was different as a human being, but all people should be treated the same.

**"There is no real difference between people. They are different individuals with different experiences and, maybe, different attitudes about some things."**

Alice listened to Sarah talking about white people being the same as colored people. Alice knew her white grandmother was talking about individuals being the same as other people, who seek to fulfill their human needs and desires.

**"Mother, white people do not treat colored people in the same manner as they treat other white people. Colored people treat white people as well, or better, than most other colored people."**

Sarah wondered, if local white people felt they received the same courteous treatment, by black people, as other black people. Sarah thought about the behavior of her children.

**"As people, there are no differences. We want something better for ourselves, our friends and our families. We want the same things as other people. We live and work for a better life just like other people."**

**"As groups of people, there are no differences, but we may act differently to strangers. As individuals, we are very different from each other and other people."**

**"Your uncles are brothers. They are my sons. I raised each of them from a baby, but they are not brothers by blood. There is no common blood between them. Two were born into different white families and two were born into different black families as babies."**

Alice recalled local colored and white people saying her grandmother raised the mulatto children of other people. The local

gossip said other families gave the babies to Sarah.

**"Mother, is it true about you taking babies into your home during slavery? All of the children were said to be orphans. Do any of your children have your blood?"**

Sarah looked at Alice and wondered about her family with different blood. She knew Alice was her grandchild by blood, but Sarah could not choose between her children. Sarah noted family was more than just blood relations and history.

**"Among my six children, three were born as white babies and three were born as black babies. I raised all of them as colored children. I saw no difference between them as babies or as children. They were all the same to me. If they came from different families, it made no difference to me. They were just children."**

**"I was the mother to all six of my children, but I gave birth to only three of the six children."**

Alice sat in the old chair and looked at her grandmother in the rocking chair. Alice wondered about the color or race of her father and his four brothers. She wanted to know, who was born as a white baby, and who was a colored baby.

**"Was my father born white? I know Aunt Sallie was born white and Uncle Sam was born colored because of their skin color. She has light skin and he has dark skin."**

Sarah felt Alice was correct about Sallie and Sam having light and dark skin. Sarah knew Alice was not sure about the other children. Sarah decided not to answer the question.

**"What difference would it make to you. They are your relatives. They are colored people with children in a black family. We are the same black family."**

Alice thought about the family being black. She did not understand her grandmother saying the family was black or her describing colored people as black people. Alice thought she was a colored person, like other mixed people with some white blood. She felt they were colored with white relatives.

**"We are not black, we are colored people. Our blood is mixed from Negro families and white families."**

Sarah gazed out, through the window, into the open field near the

cabin. Sarah remembered Phoebe, her grandmother, as a white woman with her Harrison ancestors from England.

**"My family were white people. We became colored people as we mixed with Negro slaves and native people."**

**"When white leaders divided the world between them and us. We were not part of them. We were the opposite."**

**"We were non-white. It was not our skin color. It was our position with white people. We were black people."**

Alice wondered which three of her six children were born to Sarah as her real children. Alice did not want to ask any more questions.

**"John died as a colored man. He was a mulatto with a white mother and a colored father. It is not really important what other thought about his race and color."**

Alice walked over to little Nora and picked her from the cabin floor. Nora was dirty from playing on the floor. Nora smiled as Alice brushed and cleaned her dress. Alice carried her daughter out of the door into the yard.

Sarah sat in her chair as she watched through the window of the cabin. The sun began to set beyond the pine trees and the hills in the western area. There was some concern of the future for her six children and their families. White people and their officials forcefully separated black people, in the area, from the local resources and opportunities for economic growth and development. Leaders, for the business community, coerced the black communities into continuous poverty.

Sallie expanded her farm, in 1902, by buying twenty more acres adjacent to her farm. Sallie increased her acreage for more tobacco and cotton crops. The small farm succeeded with the help of her friends and relatives. The children attended local county schools for colored children. Sallie wanted her two daughters, Gertrude and Martha, to live independent lives with or without husbands. Sallie concluded both girls needed as much schooling as her five sons.

#### **BUSINESS OF SHARING**

The development of separate, private, black colleges for colored people contributed to some class divisions within the black community. The colored people, seeking more social and political integration with white people, focused on a liberal education and a professional

occupation. While other colored people, accepting social and economic segregation as a normal condition, focused on industrial training and farm management as an occupation. Formal education was a fundamental part of many black families and their communities.

Farming was the primary source of income for most people of color in the southern states. The farms were family homes with livestock, like cows and hogs, held in small pastures by fences. There were chickens in the yard and other animals in the forest. The colored farmers grew cotton and tobacco cash crops for local markets. The farmers grew various vegetables like greens, corn, peas and potatoes from the gardens. There were also melons and tomatos growing in the gardens. Most of the area farms maintained apple, cherry and pear trees in the orchards near the farms.

Livestock and crop farming was a difficult and demanding occupation for most people in the southern states. Commodity markets, for farm products, were normally out of control with prices fluctuating widely between crop seasons. Many smaller farmers were discouraged by market conditions and surrendered their farming independence. These men and women moved to the cities and towns in search of work and a steady income. Many of the families, with long histories, stayed with their land.

Most family members joined in the fields at the planting and harvesting seasons. Men and women divided the exhausting work among the field workers. Most men performed the plowing with a mule, while the women planted seeds in the field. The hand picking of cotton and pulling tobacco leaves were duties of the women with some help from the children. Some men used the mule to slide the yield, from the fields, to the barns.

There were wild blackberries and blueberries, in the old forest, for making pies and other desserts. Farmers were able to supplement their food supply from the natural resources in the area. Skills learned from local native people enable the farmers to improve their food supply and living standards.

Many of the farmers enjoyed the challenge of hunting and fishing in the vast natural area near their farms. The local forest was full with birds and other small animals, providing food for the family and some sport for the men. The deer was the most prized target for the hunters. Hunting continued as a sport for men and fishing stayed a common preoccupation for many of the women on the farms. It was also a source of food for the family as well as relaxation for the women.

Walter and Alice were doing most of the crop work on the family farm, as Sarah grew older and weaker. Sarah would sit in the yard at sunset and talk to the young couple. Jane and her children visited almost every week. Sallie and her small children would often visit to see Sarah and Alice. The women discussed many different subjects, but their conversations on the family always included a brief discussion of history.

Sarah was talking to Walter during the evening, as Alice moved in and out of the cabin. Sarah knew Alice was pregnant with a baby. Sarah was talking about being black, as a state of mind for other people. Sarah concluded the people in non-white communities were actually black people.

**"Walter, we were born without any knowledge of our race or skin colors. I was a white girl on my grandmother's farm living with people of color."**

**"I became a woman with colored children. My children and my family were colored people. They were not white people. If they say we are either white or black, the non-white people would be black people."**

**"Sallie says she is a white woman with colored children by a black man. I think she is a black woman."**

**"I see myself as a black woman. All of us are black."**

Walter smiled at Sarah and looked toward Alice. He felt none of the women looked like black women because of the fair skin and blue eyes. Walter thought they may be mulatto women to some people, but all the women were white with pale skin.

**"Mother, you can say it, but you can not make it into the truth. People have a color in their skin and in their blood. It can not be changed by words."**

Sarah listened to the comments on race by Walter. Sarah felt Walter was a smart man, but he was wrong about her race.

**"Whether we like it or not, we are black people. We became black people by our family association with other black people. It does not matter what we look like to people in the white community. It is about where we belong as people to the white community."**

Walter knew the race of a person was set at birth, fixed just like the other physical features. Walter believed color in the race or skin of a person derived from family.

**"I know a white person, when I see one. I know most colored people, when I see them. I can see it in their face and their skin. I can see it in their eyes."**

**"Mother, I know what you are saying about being black, but you are not a black woman. You are a white woman and Aunt Sallie is a white woman just like you."**

Sarah knew Walter was being honest with his bad feelings about white people. Sarah started speaking softly.

**"You can tell it in their eyes only if they know it."**

**"If I was born with black skin in a white world and everyone told me I was white. Why would I think I was black? I would know I was different, but I would have been different if I was born white."**

**"What would make me into a black person, if everyone said I was a white person and there were no other black people? I would have no common point for comparison."**

**"If people treated me differently because I was black and I knew it, then I might think of myself as being black. If people treated me differently because I am short and I did not know it. How would I know it if there were no other short people?"**

**"If I was treated the same, I would be the same."**

Walter was uncomfortable with Sarah speaking in the soft voice of an old woman. Walter wondered, why she was doing it and who she was talking about. Walter decided to ask.

**"Who are you talking about? I know Sallie is a white woman. I may not be sure about her little girl, but she is a white woman just like you. I know it."**

Sarah sat in her rocking chair and smiled at Walter, who sat across from Alice. Sarah watched as Walter cleaned dirty shoes at the doorway of the cabin. Sarah raised her voice.

**"You say you know she is a white woman because you can see it in her face and her skin. You can see it in her eyes. Well, I am her mother. I carried Sallie for nine months. I delivered her to his world. I nursed and raised her, from a baby, into a strong woman."**

**"I have watched my daughter for forty years. I looked for signs of her race and her ways. I could not find anything to tell me of her race or skin color."**

**"I do not know her race and I do not know my race."**

**"But you know. Walter, how could anyone know, if the mother does not know. I knew her father, but I did not know my father. My mother knew my father, but she did know her father. They could have been black, red or brown. We said they were white, but we did not know."**

**"How could we know without fathers or grandfathers?"**

Walter listened, quietly, as Sarah spoke softly in a low voice. He knew Alice could barely hear her words on the race relations in their poor family. Walter appreciated the basic feelings in Sarah and he understood possible uncertainty with the race or skin color of some family members.

**"Cousin Sarah, you knew your daughter's father. Most people say he was a white man from the northern states."**

Sarah turned away from Walter and looked over toward her granddaughter. Alice was holding her little girl. Sarah got her tobacco cup and slowly turned back toward Walter.

**"He said he was a Quaker from Pennsylvania. I thought he was white, but he could have been something else. I did not think about his race. I thought about him being a kind person and a good person. I did not care if he was black or white. Charles was, probably, a white man."**

Walter smiled, because he knew Sarah was white. He felt his wife, Alice, was a colored girl with a mulatto father and a colored mother. Walter heard Sarah was the mother of John, the mulatto father of Alice.

**"In the eyes of most white people, we are black just like the Negro slaves from Africa. They do not see any difference between people of color because of hate."**

**"I see a difference in people of color, because we are not the same as people. We are all different people."**

Alice realized each person was different. She knew most colored people were similar to most white people with similar needs, but individuals were different. Alice felt the groups shared different experiences and attitudes.

**"We may be the same people, but our past experiences are very different. Colored people and native people have suffered because of white people and their land greed."**

Sarah looked at Alice and thought about their many white ancestors. Sarah knew Alice was a descendant of white people from England. Sarah recalled the generations of quiet women, who preceded her into the family. Sarah knew the children in her family were unaware of their English ancestors.

**"We are a black family because we would not accept the rules of being white. We mixed with black and we became black. It was easy and natural. My mother and her mother never claimed to be black, they lived as white women with white children. They died as white women."**

**"I was born white, lived colored and became black. The difference between black and white is not skin color."**

**"It is my attitude and culture. You can be black with white skin or you can be white with black skin."**

Walter smiled at Alice smiled and decided they would not argue the old white lady. He stood and moved toward the door of the cabin. Walter looked over at Sarah.

**"We need to finish our chores and get ready for bed."**

Alice and Walter walked out of the cabin to finish their farm chores. It was late for them and there would be time in the morning for more family talk. Sarah sat in her chair and reached for her tobacco can. Sarah knew the young couple did not understand her feelings about being black or white.

Alice and Walter shared most of the field work with some help from other relatives. They also shared some of the farm chores in the home. Sarah used most of her time in the cabin to work and play with the children. Sarah believed the young families of her children were strong and successful with most of the women gaining more control and power.

Robert Powell married to a widowed colored woman in 1903 at the courthouse in the Newport News area. Ella, his second wife, was a laundry worker from Georgia. Robert continued to work at the ship yard as a labourer. Ella worked at a laundry in Newport News. They rented a house in the black section of the town. Ella was forty one years old with no children.

Robert returned to the southside area and introduced his new wife, Ella, to the Powell family and his children. Sarah heard Robert and Ella were visiting in the area. Robert went to see many of his friends in the area. Sarah was one of the old friends visited by Robert Powell.

Sarah was sitting in front of the old cabin, when Robert walked into the open front yard. She watched as Robert moved towards the cabin. Sarah noticed Robert was the same tall man with dark skin and black eyes. She smiled as he stopped with a wide smile. Sarah looked at Robert and noticed he appeared to be older and darker. Sarah pointed to the wooden bench in the yard and smiled at her former son-in-law.

**"Hello Robert, how have you been doing? I heard you got married to a woman from Georgia. What is her name?"**

Robert walked over and sat on the bench. Robert was not certain of what to say to Sarah. Robert recalled it was more than ten years since he visited his former mother-in-law, the woman called Mother. Robert knew Sarah was the mother of his first wife and grandmother to their children.

**"How are you doing? Yes, I married again and her name is Ella. We are doing fine in Newport News."**

**"We are living and working hard. I see the farm is looking good. How have you been doing?"**

Sarah recognized his facial features in the faces of her grandchildren. Sarah wondered if Robert liked working in the city for a big company.

**"I am doing well for an old woman. I can see you have not changed very much. How do you like working at the shipyard and living in a big city?"**

Robert smiled and recalled her feelings about living and working in a big city. Robert also liked the independence of farming and living on your land. Robert knew farming results were very unpredictable with the weather.

**"I like the steady pay of a regular job. I like being able to have my days and not owing money to the store keeper or the seed man. I think it is a better way to live than working in the fields on a farm."**

Sarah understood his feelings about farming, but she did not like

to see the men leaving their farms. Sarah felt most of the men should stay and work their land as farmers.

**"When you work in the city, you lose a little of your freedom and some of your pride. On a farm you can see the deeds of your work. You plant the seeds and watch the crop grow. Then you harvest the crop and sell it for cash. If you are lucky, the cash can be used to buy more land to grow more crops."**

**"Sallie and the children are working on her farm. She gets some help with the children doing most of the chores. The boys are working in the fields. All of the children are learning to read and write. They may also move to the city for a regular job and more money."**

Robert knew the children were learning to read and write at school. He expected some of the children would attend the college in Lawrenceville for more education. Robert knew his former wife was doing well, raising their children.

**"Sallie has done well with her farm. The children are growing fast. I do not know if they will be able to stay on the farm. The work is very hard and the white people are not being fair to colored people."**

Sarah remembered her talks with Robert when he was young and ambitious. She knew Robert was born as a slave with both black and native blood. Sarah felt he had also done well.

**"Yes, some white people are being unfair to some colored people in the area. Things are better for most colored farmers and their families in the area"**

Robert knew Sarah was a white woman and he believed most of the children were colored people. Robert felt Sarah could not see the differences in the two groups of people.

**"Mother, white people and colored people are not the same people. We are very different as people."**

Sarah knew the differences between most white people and most colored people were small and minor. Sarah felt most of the considerable differences were between individuals. Sarah knew white people with common interest and similar objectives worked in groups for support and power. Sarah realized these groups shared common characteristics, such as race or color.

**"I still believe we are different as individuals and we are the same as people. We are the same people."**

**"Life can be difficult for poor white people just as it is difficult for colored people. I know some of the white people can be cruel to colored people."**

**"Is it better for colored people in the city?"**

Robert remembered hearing, as a young Negro slave, about the brutality of slaveowners and cruelty by most white people during the two centuries of slavery. Robert felt the colored people received unfair treatment by white people on farms and in cities. Robert believed a few white people worked against colored people because of their bias and personal prejudices.

**"Mother, I know you do not see the differences between colored people and white people, but I do. I have seen how colored men are treated on the job and in the fields by their white bosses. The white man must own and have everything under his control. They share power only with their kind. We are very different as people."**

Sarah remembered the anger in Robert as a young man from her past. Sarah knew Robert was older, but his rage against white oppression remained as part of his life.

**"White people are different as individuals just like you and I are different. Just like colored people are also different. We are all different in the way we look and how we act with other people."**

**"Our differences are very small in comparison to other creatures. We share the same feelings, desires and needs. We are the same on the inside and the same on the outside with only minor differences."**

Robert knew there was significant mistrust and animosity between white people and black people.

**"Mother, your eyes deceived you. Colored people would never treat white people as bad as white people treated colored people. Colored people could never think or feel like most white people. We are very different."**

Sarah considered the hard feelings with Robert and other colored people toward white people. She noted these feelings did not prevent Robert from marrying Sallie, after the county clerk claimed she was a

white girl. Sarah wondered if Robert believed his former wife was a white woman.

**"You look at me and you can see a difference between me and Sallie, but we are the same. There can not be any closer relationship than mother and daughter. The bond is very strong. I understand Sallie and she understands me. I know her children and they know me. There is no needs for words. We can read each other's eyes."**

**"Robert, you saw a clear difference between Sallie and me because you wanted us to be different. So you look for our differences. Those differences were very real to you, but they were not important to me."**

**"We were both women to you. One was younger than you and the other was older than you. One had children and the other did not have children. We were women who shared many of the same feelings and beliefs."**

**"You want all white people to be different from colored people; so you look for differences. You find some of the differences because individuals are different."**

**"There are some colored people who think, act and feel the same way as most white people. There are also some white people who think, act and feel the same way as most colored people. I know it. I have seen it."**

**"Sallie and you have a daughter named Gertrude. She is my granddaughter and she is a woman of color just like your mother. I am called white like those other white people. I see myself in Gertrude, your daughter. She has many of my ways. We see many things in the same light. I am a part of Gertrude, but she is not white."**

**"We are just simple people like everybody else. It does not manner what color we share on our skin. We are very much alike in our ways. Some people may not treat us the same because they see our differences."**

Robert thought of Gertrude living and working for Sallie on the family farm. Robert knew Gertrude was smart with good sense for a poor colored farm girl.

**"Sallie was a good mother to the children. Gertrude is going to be a fine woman. She will make a good wife."**

Sarah did not want Robert to think of Gertrude as a girl looking to be a good wife for a man.

**"Gertrude will not need any man to be right. Gertrude can read and write just like you. She should go to college to be a teacher or a nurse. Then she can get married and be the wife of some educated man."**

Robert wanted Gertrude to go to college for an education to be a school teacher. He felt she needed to leave the farm and go to the city to understand her opportunities.

**"If Gertrude is going to become a teacher, she should leave the farm and go to a city, like Newport News."**

**"I will talk to Sallie on getting Gertrude to stay with me in Newport News for a few months."**

Sarah decided not to argue with Robert, during his visit in ten years. Sarah felt a short trip to the city would be good for Gertrude. Sarah knew it was too late to change his harsh feelings toward white men.

**"A trip would be good for Gertrude, as a young woman, going to college. You should talk to Sallie."**

Sarah smiled and said good-bye to Robert. She liked the idea of Gertrude going to Newport News and deeply appreciated the interest taken by Robert in Gertrude's education. Robert surprised some family members with Gertrude going with him to the city. Gertrude was going to stay in the city with her father and his new wife. Robert visited other members in the family before he and Ella returned to Newport News.

Gertrude visited Robert in Newport News and attended the local school for colored children in the city. Gertrude also attended Virginia State College in Petersburg to get a public teaching certificate. State College was a small black, state supported, school for colored children.

## **WOMEN AND DESCENDANTS**

The social and economic conditions of black families, at the beginning of the century, were generally inferior to most poor white families. Local authorities repeatedly denied the civil rights to black people. They discouraged or restricted black people from voting, which resulted in poor treatment by local politicians and the authorities. Most local courts did not protect the rights of colored people, as citizens.

The local governments, in the southern states, continued to maintain and enforce segregated communities. The leaders, in the white communities, restricted the movements of colored people in the region. Individuals, violating the segregation laws, received harsh punishment from local white officials in the area. Consequently, many of these colored families moved from the racial injustice and the political suppression.

Black families moved to the northern cities seeking more and better opportunities for women and men. However, most of the black people continued to live and work on small farms in most southern states despite white oppression.

Harrison women struggled through difficult and hazardous events. The women worked on tobacco and cotton farms without their men. Many of the women survived their husbands and the death of their children. The women shared a special strength to survive and persevere under difficult circumstances.

Anne of Winchester survived a long sea voyage to America from England with Bur, her husband. Elizabeth married Joseph and survived on the colonial frontier. Joseph was a grandson of Bur and Anne. Mary married Daniel, son of Joseph and Beth in southern Virginia. Mary survived the harsh conditions on the southside. They lived on a farm in Brunswick County with three sons and a daughter. Phoebe married Richard, her third cousin, with the consent of her father.

Phoebe survived the deaths of her children, two sons and two daughters. Phoebe was survived by one grandchild, Sarah, who was the only survivor in a line of white women living and working on the southside of Virginia. Sarah lived and worked on both sides of the color line. Sarah realized and accepted her Harrison family as people of color.

Gertrude, the daughter of Sallie and Robert, was working as a teacher in the local school for colored children. Sarah was proud of her granddaughters and their education. Martha, her sister, was attending school and becoming restless on the family farm. Martha was the daughter of Sallie and Ben. She and Gertrude were living on the farm with Sallie and visiting their grandmother, Sarah, on a weekly basis.

Sarah enjoyed seeing and talking to her grandchildren as they grew into young adults. She was interested in the women and the local gossip about other families. Sarah also wanted to know more about county politics. Most people in the white community accepted Sarah as a poor colored woman with colored children and grandchildren.

Sarah concluded she was a member of a black family in a black community. Accordingly, most of her family knew Sarah as a black woman.

Sarah was visited by Sallie and her daughters, Gertrude and Martha, on a warm day. The women sat under a large shade tree near the cabin. They were joined by Alice, while Martha went to see the other children. The women listened, as Sarah talked about Phoebe and their experiences on the farm.

Sallie smiled at Sarah and looked over at Alice standing near a table. Sallie and Gertrude were sitting on a bench.

**"Mother, how are you doing? You are looking good."**

Sarah smiled at Sallie and Gertrude, as the women sat on the bench. Sarah thought about being a great grandmother, and living with her granddaughter, like Phoebe.

**"I am getting old like Phoebe. I can remember her as she grew old. She was eighty years old when she died at the end of the War between the States."**

**"Things were generally friendly between the whites and the Negroes. We worked together in the fields and we lived together. In time we came to understand the ways of each other as the same people."**

**"There was no difference between people. Babies were born the same. People lived and died the same. We acted the same or treated each other the same. People were not put into groups and labeled like food based on the color of their skin and how they looked."**

**"We were different as individuals, but we were the same people. We were poor farmers living on small farms."**

Sallie did not agree with her mother about white people, in the past, having good feelings toward colored people. She felt there were bad feelings among most white people and most colored people in the area.

**"Mother, the government, the church, the school and the people were separated by skin color during the days of slavery. People were white on one side and other people were colored. If a person was not pure white, then the person was colored. There were only two sides during slavery for skin color, like night and day."**

Gertrude listened to her mother and decided to say a few words on race and skin color. Gertrude knew there were other native people living in the area with red skin.

**"There were native people living in the area. They were neither white nor colored, with their red skin."**

Sarah understood the point by Gertrude, but she knew the native people in the area were considered and treated as poor colored people. Most white people believed the native people were colored because of race mixing with Negro slaves.

**"There are no real natives living in these parts. There were some native people living on reservations in the western part of the county. Most native men moved away from these parts. Some native women stayed and mated with slaves and other colored men. Your father and his people have some native blood."**

Sallie did not like Sarah's comment about Robert and his family having native blood. She considered the Powell family to be colored people with no native blood. Sallie felt their children were mulatto with white and colored parents.

**"Mother, Bob was born as a slave with a Negro slave mother named Juanita. Milton Powell, his father was a free born mulatto man with a white father and a mulatto mother. Bob is a colored man with no native blood."**

Sarah smiled and turned toward Sallie and Gertrude. She decided to challenge her daughter's comments. Sarah knew the history of the Powell family from her prior associations with other colored family. Sarah felt her daughter was wrong.

**"Milton Powell was not a mulatto! He was the son of a mulatto man. His grandfather was a white man and his grandmother was a free colored woman on his father's side of the family. On his mother side, his grandfather was a Negro man and his grandmother was a native woman."**

**"You can ask Robert or his brothers. They all know the truth. People say they are colored, but they are mixed with the blood from all of the different races."**

**"Sallie believes, if a person is not pure white, then the person is colored because of skin color. I say people are either, white or black, because of the people living and working with them."**

**"The Powell family are black people, just like you and me. We are all mixed with different blood."**

**"White people do not have white skin, like the color of salt, and black people do not have black skin, like the color of pepper."**

**"Black people and white people are just social groups, who may share similar skin colors or skin shades."**

Sallie listened to her mother and decided to argue about skin colors being the basis for their different races.

**"Mother, Bob can not be confused for a white person."**

Sarah ignored the comment by her daughter. Sarah wanted to make a point with her granddaughters. Sarah continued the discussion about race being more than skin color.

**"You can be black with a light skin complexion and you can be white with a dark skin complexion. We are not divided by the color of our skin. We are divided by our culture and personal association."**

**"It is not the color of our skin, which made us into black people in this county. We were divided by my association with Negro slaves and other people of color and their different cultures."**

**"The differences between people are cultural and social, rather than the physical differences. There have been fewer physical differences and more cultural differences between white and black people over time."**

Gertrude thought her mother and her father were both from the same culture, but their parents were from mixed cultures.

**"Mother, I can see your point. My brothers and I are the same with the same two parents. My mother and her brothers are the same, even with the same mother and different fathers. How different were the fathers?"**

Sarah noted that Gertrude did not mention Martha, her sister, as being the same as her brothers. Sarah decided to make one more point on the skin color and the race of a person.

**"The fathers of my children were all different black men. I raised six mulatto babies from six different black men."**

**These black men were very different as individuals; but as men, they were all the same."**

Sallie decided her mother had said enough about the men, and it was apparent to Sallie, her mother was appearing to be very submissive as a young unmarried woman. Sallie felt this admission, by her mother, was not the right impression for an unmarried woman, like Gertrude, her daughter. Sallie decided to send Gertrude to get Martha and the other children.

**"Gertrude, you need to see Martha and the other children. We should get ready to go home. I will join you in a few minutes."**

Sarah knew Sallie was going to complain about the babies with six different black men. She knew Sallie saw herself as a white woman with mulatto children. Sarah felt the men were black, even if Sallie wanted to believe they were colored and white from different families."

**"Gertrude is a young, attractive, woman. Are any of the young men visiting your farm on a regular basis."**

Sallie looked at Sarah, with stern face, as if she was a child, caught doing something wrong.

**"Mother, you know the problem, six different black men?"**

Sarah smiled and wondered which part bothered Sallie the most, six different men or all black men.

**"Black is the truth. They were six different men and their skin colors ranged from a very light complexion to a very dark complexion. The children and I were part of the black community and a black culture. We were black and they were black as part of our black family."**

Sallie did not appreciate the little teasing by her bold mother. Sallie disapproved of her mother's love story of six different men. Sallie felt the story was not true.

**"Mother, you should not appear to be proud of the men in your past. A woman with six different lovers and not one marriage in fifty years is not something to say to a young woman looking for a husband. Gertrude need to get a husband and start a family before she is too old."**

Sarah recalled the stories over the years concerning her brown

babies. Sarah smiled at her, sad and unhappy, daughter with two marriages and the seven children.

**"Sallie, what I told Gertrude was true. I never knew the whole story and the complete truth about me."**

Sallie did not understand the comments of uncertainty by her mother. She heard the stories about the brown babies.

**"Mother, when I decided to marry Bob, you said my father appeared to be white and now, you told Gertrude all the men were black. What is the truth about you and those brown babies you raised on this farm?"**

**"Mother, there were stories about you and those brown babies taken from other families. Who were those people with the brown babies."**

Sarah smiled and thought about Sallie hearing the stories about her six brown babies in the black community. Sarah was aware of Sallie believing she was the only child by blood and her five brothers were the babies from other families. Sarah was a woman with over sixty years, but she was not sure about the day and year of her birth. It was never important to her as a mother and as a friend to other people.

**"Sallie, I raised seven babies on this farm. Six were my children and one was my grandchild. I gave birth to three and three were given to me. It did not matter to me, which child came out of me and which came from other women. They were all given to me by GOD."**

**"It did not matter if their skin colors were black, brown, red or white. They were innocent babies."**

Sallie watched the children playing in the open yard, at a distance, with Alice and Gertrude. Sallie noticed that her daughter, Martha, appeared to be a white girl among the small colored children. Sallie turned to her mother.

**"Mother, you gave birth to three children. Which, among us, are your natural children? Which of my brothers?"**

Sarah did not like the idea of dividing her children due to their natural parents. They were all her children.

**"All of my sons are your brothers. There is no family difference between them and you, but the blood is not the same. Some share a common blood with me. Those, who do not share my blood, know it."**

**"John was my first born. Jim and Ben were given to my grandmother to raise with John. Sam was my second born and my third born was you. Rich was given to me."**

**"Jim was born as a slave, from a cousin, before freedom was given to the slaves. The family did not want Jim to grow up as a slave, so they gave him to Phoebe."**

**"Ben was born to a cousin and given to Phoebe by the church. They wanted to find a new home for him. The minister pursued Phoebe to keep him in the family."**

**"Rich was also born to a cousin, who was not married, during the war. She was a white girl and the baby was brown. There was too much hate and anger among the men for the girl to keep the baby. I took the baby during the night and bought it home as my child."**

Sallie quietly listened to Sarah and wondered about skin colors among the babies. Sallie smiled at her mother.

**"Mother, Jim and Rich were brown babies, while Ben was a white baby. John and Sam were brown babies, while I was a white baby. Why did you say we were all brown babies with black fathers? Some of us were white children!"**

Sarah looked out toward the children playing in the yard and wondered if they could hear her discussion with Sallie.

**"John was considered to be a white male, because my grandmother did not know the father. Phoebe assumed he was a white boy, because I was a young white girl."**

Sallie remembered her brother, John, changed his name to his father's last name. Sallie knew John took the family sir name of Malone to claim his colored relatives."

**"Mother, John changed his last name and, like his father before him, he got some girl pregnant with his baby."**

Sarah thought about John being dead and young Alice being a mother. Sarah smiled and continued her story about her six mulatto children and their black fathers.

**"Jim was born as a mulatto male with a his slave mother, and no father named. However, the family knew the name of the white man responsible for his birth."**

**"Ben was born as a white male in the family with a white father and a white mother. When they gave him to us, I was raising two mulatto boys. I decided Ben would also be a mulatto boy. There would be no difference."**

**"Sam was born as a mulatto male with a black father. He was my second born. It was not safe to name a black man as the father. I was the mother to four mulatto sons, living with Phoebe on the farm."**

**"Then Charles came to the farm and we became friends before the war. The war divided us before I gave birth to you, as my third and last baby. You were born a white female because I thought he was a white man."**

**"During the war I worked as a midwife, because many of the midwives were away working as nurses in hospitals for soldiers. I helped some of the women with the birth of their babies. Rich was born with brown skin to a young white girl during the war. The girl did not want the brown baby, so I took it as my baby."**

Sallie was surprised by her mother's comments about each son being white or mulatto from different families. She felt her brothers came from different cultures, but they were also members of the same family. Sallie knew her mother felt they were part of the same culture.

**"Mother, I gave birth to my seven children and they were all difficult births for me. Why did you stop having babies. You were still a young attractive woman."**

Sarah smiled and thought about her lovers and some of the men in her life. Sarah did not share Jane's appetite for men nor her daughter's need to dominate the men.

**"After Charles, there was a lack of suitable men. The war either killed or ruined most of the men in the area and my sons were too old to accept any man as a father."**

Sallie was curious about Uncle Philan living on the farm with her mother and the children for ten years.

**"There were other men. How about Uncle Philan?"**

Sarah remembered Philan as a friend, who helped with the farm and her small children. Sarah felt Philan and Jane were lovers, but the relationship did not work for them:

**"Philan was like another member of the family. He was a good friend to me and Jane. I think he and Jane were lovers for a short time, when he first started working on the farm. Then they seemed to grow apart."**

Sallie understood the answer from Sarah. It was time to say good-bye and go home. Sallie stood up from the table she had been sharing with her mother. Sallie called for Gertrude and Martha to say good-bye to Alice. Sallie smiled and moved towards the children. Sallie said good-bye to Alice and Sarah with her children. Sallie and her daughters walked slowly toward the narrow path to the road. They went home to start another day on the farm.

### **DEATH OF MOTHER**

Sarah Jane Harrison died at the age of sixty-five years, on a Wednesday, March twenty-ninth, at home in Ante. She was survived by her one daughter, her four sons, twenty-two grand children, two great granddaughters and the daughters-in-laws, at the time of her death. Sarah was also survived by Jane, a good, long-time, friend, with two daughters and one son.

A pit was dug next to the grave of John Malone. A large rock marked the grave, for the first born, in a tree clearing near the old cabin. A wagon path, next to cemetery, provided the only access between the tall pine trees for the family to bring the deceased body of Sarah Jane Harrison. The open pit would be the final resting place for the woman called Mother, by family and friends. The grave was located near the centre of the land, given by Sarah, for the family cemetery.

There were a dozen chairs, at the grave opening, waiting for the family of the deceased. There were several women and men standing with numerous children at the grave site. There were other people, quietly gathered, as the family wagon came up the long narrow dirt path in the forest.

Some of the women and men dressed in black slowly walked behind the wagon and moved into the chairs without saying any words between them. A bearded black man, at the front of the wagon, drove the mule past the grave opening. The new wooden coffin was lying at the back of the wagon. The six men in black pulled the coffin from the wagon and placed it on three ropes over the open grave. The grave in the rich sandy soil showed hard red clay at the bottom of the pit.

The four sons, of the deceased woman, stood on the front row of chairs. Jim, Ben, Sam and Rich were at one end of the row. Sallie and Alice, a granddaughter, sat at the other end of the front row. The wives of the sons were directly behind their husbands. Rosa, Mary and Hester were joined by Jane, a friend, who sat with her daughters. Bob Powell and Ben Ellis stood with most of other men near the family.

He slowly walked over to the coffin and slowly looked at the people standing near the grave. He was a tall brown skin man, who was dressed in the black garments of a holy man. He looked into the pit and turned to the people standing next to the family. He smiled at the children and looked over at the family sitting by the coffin. He touched the coffin lying in front of him. He looked into the clear sky and turned to the sad family. He knew many of the people did not know him. He thought about the woman in the coffin.

**"The family has asked me to say a few words about our beloved Miss Sarah Jane Harrison, but I do not know how to say just a few words about this woman. I need to say more about this woman. I must say more than a few words about a woman called, Mother."**

**"Many years ago I met this woman called Mother. I knew her name was Sarah, but everybody called her by another name. I knew some people called her by other names."**

He stopped and looked around at the people in the family cemetery, as if he was waiting for someone to talk.

**"Some of those names were good and some were not so good, but the good people called the woman by the best name for a woman. They called her, Mother."**

**"I know why she was called Mother by her children and her grandchildren. She raised six children and one grandchild. They called her, Mother."**

**"Being an older man with years of learning from the good book, I know a mother is a good person. The LORD had a virgin mother. We know a mother is a female who gives life to a baby, but I decided a mother was more than a baby maker. Females bear babies, but mothers raise the little babies into small children."**

**"I know Sarah raised seven babies into small children over the last fifty years. Then she raised those small children, with love and care, into young adults. Sarah was a family**

maker, a people builder. She was a Mother."

"Some of you are asking; what is he talking about. Some may say, we know Sarah was a good mother. I say she was a great mother! She was so great, we called her by the best name. We called her, Mother."

"I wondered why some of her many friends and neighbors also called her by the name, Mother. It was more than a title. I asked myself a question. What is a mother?"

"When people put seeds in the ground or place a plant in the dirt, we do not say they are farmers. We say they are field workers and some educated people might say they are planters. But we do not call or see them as farmers. One planting season does not make a farmer."

"You become a farmer by planting, growing and harvesting your crops. The farmer must take care of the land to help the crop grow and develop. The test of the farmer is the yield. A good farmer has a good yield."

"The test of a parent is the children. Taking babies and making them into boys and girls. Then, making these wonderful children into good, honest and responsible men and women. The children are the yield."

"Look at the children of Sarah Jane Harrison. We see the yield of her good work and we know she was a great mother. We know Mother was a good woman."

He looked toward the young men, standing in the cool air of late March, with their eyes searching the ground. He felt there was more to say about the deceased woman, but he needed to speak to the family.

"I know Mother is in a big house, our Father's house, looking down on us. I know she is there because she was a good person. She did the right things in her life."

"Yes, I said she did the right things. Some people may ask, how can a woman with six babies, and no husband, be a good person? How can that be the right thing?"

"Some people might say, Sarah needed to be married with a father for her six children. Some may say she needed a man to take care of her farm and her children."

He looked at Sallie and Alice, then he turned toward the four sons. He smiled at Jim and Ben as they gazed at the pit and the wooden coffin. He smiled at Sam and Rich, sitting on the left of Sallie and Alice.

**"I know this world can be a cruel place. We do not have control over our lives. Sometimes the LORD gives us a difficult job, unlike any other job. Mother was given a special job and a difficult farm. She was not meant to be a farmer, but she did the right things."**

**"Today is a sad day for the family. It is a sad day for me, but it is a happy day for the LORD. Sarah has done her job and it is time for the truth. Some of us do not want to hear the truth, because the truth can be hard."**

**"Today, we need to hear the truth about Sarah. I will start with the big truth about love. There is no sin in love, real love. There are all kinds of love. There is a woman's love and the love of a mother, a sister and a daughter. There is a man's love. There is the love of a father, a brother and a son. All love is good."**

**"In the good book, GOD is defined as love. We must read the Bible with our eyes and our heart. There is no sin in love. This is the truth. Mother was a woman with love in her heart for her children, her family, her friends and her people. There is no sin in love."**

**"I will say another truth. Lust is a sin. Our lust for money is a sin. Our lust for power is a sin. Our lust for the flesh is a sin. Lust is a sin, but there is no sin in love. Sin is the difference between our lust and our love. Mother was a woman of love."**

He walked around the new coffin and looked at the people waiting for his services to end. He knew people were getting emotional, as they honoured and closed the life of Mother. He spoke slower as he turned to the family.

**"Mother was a woman of love. We can see her love in the faces of those who followed her in life, her children and the children of her children. She raised her babies with love. There was no sin in her love."**

**"I want to talk about another house before we go to our separate ways. We need to talk about the old log cabin, where Mother lived all of her life. The home was made with**

love and care. It is the home, where Mother was born. Mother raised seven children in her home, and she died in that old log cabin."

"This other house was not the old log cabin. It was the house of her life. It was a house with many doors and a few rooms. There was space for everyone. There were many visitors. We visited the house over the years."

"There was a cold room for childhood and a warm room for sisterhood. At the center, there was a beautiful room for motherhood. There was room for the young and the old. There was room for whites and blacks. There was a room for the strong and the weak. It was a good house."

"We visited her house as a family and as friends. Some of the visits were too long, but most of the visits were too short. We came and shared our troubles."

"I know Sarah is staying at the big house. A lot of us will never see the Big House. There are many rooms in the big house, but it is hard to get a room. I know the woman, we called Mother, has a room. We need to get our room by doing the right things. Today, we say good-bye to Sarah Jane Harrison, the woman called Mother."

"We know Mother, our Sarah Jane Harrison, made it to the place, we all want to share. Sarah is in the Big House."

"Mother has departed from us, may GOD keep her through eternity. May she rest in eternal peace, Amen."

The old man, dressed in the clothes of a holy man, moved to the side of the coffin. He watched as the undertaker held one of the ropes for dropping the coffin into the open pit of the grave. Many of the people moved closer to the coffin and stood in a circle around the grave. A few men and some women had tears in their eyes.

The old undertaker walked to the coffin, as the preacher moved at the back of the family. The men lowered the coffin into the ground. The undertaker picked up a hand full of mud and drew it over the coffin sitting at the bottom of the six feet deep open pit in the ground.

He looked at the family, sitting in the chairs, and held the rope in his hand. He turned to the people, gather in a circle, standing over the grave.

**"We brought nothing into the world, and we carry nothing out. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto GOD who gave it, Amen."**

**"Ladies and gentlemen, the family wishes to thank you for your condolences and your blessings. This concludes our services for Sarah Jane Harrison. Good day."**

The family and the friends of the deceased stood up from the chairs and started talking among themselves. Meals were being served at the old cabin by the daughters-in-law and the older granddaughters. Sallie stood and waited to talk to the preacher, as he greeted her brothers as an old friend.

Philan Williams, the old holy man, waived at Sallie, who was waiting to speak to him. Philan smiled and slowly walked toward the small woman dressed in black.

**"Hello Sallie, it is so good to see you after all these years. I was looking forward to seeing you and your children. Jim and Ben told me about your children."**

**"How are you doing? Where are the children?"**

Sallie smiled at Philan, the righteous preacher, who was an old family friend. Sallie felt Philan was the best man to provide the final words about her mother. Sallie looked over at her two former husbands, who were standing near the family and the children from her two marriages.

**"Hello Uncle Philan, thanks for coming to the services and saying some words for Mother. I know she would have appreciated your words in her honor. We wanted you to say something. I felt you would be the right person."**

Philan understood and appreciated Sallie's deep feelings for her mother. Philan continued to believe she was the only natural child of the late Sarah Jane Harrison. Philan looked over at the people standing and noticed Robert, her first and former husband, standing with the children.

Sallie turned toward Robert and noticed her four sons in the same area. She felt the men looked like one happy family standing together. Sallie knew her sons were tall and strong with many features of their father.

**"I see you recognized Bob. The four young men are my sons from our ten years of marriage. We also have a**

**daughter. I also have a daughter from my marriage to another man, Ben Ellis, my second husband. Let me introduce my sons to you. They will be happy to meet you, after hearing Ben and Sam talk about you."**

Philan nodded in agreement and walked, with Sallie, over to the young men. They were greeted by Bob and he introduced his four sons to Philan. Sallie introduced most of the other grandchildren. Most of the colored people departed for their homes, while others joined the family moving toward the cabin through a narrow foot path. Gradually, people went away from the site, as the workers shovelled and piled mud into the pit with the coffin of Sarah Jane Harrison.

Several days after the burial, a stone marker was placed at the head of the new grave with these words carved into the stone:

**Sarah Jane Harrison  
Died March 29, 1905  
Age 65 Years  
Honored, Beloved and Wept  
Here Mother Lies.**

The old farm was divided, after the death of Sarah Jane, among her five living children and Alice, the orphan daughter of John, her deceased son. Jim and Rosa received thirty-five acres of the farm. Ben and Mary received forty-two acres for their share of the farm. Sam and Hester received forty acres of the farm. Rich received thirty-five acres as his share of the property, while Sallie received forty acres for her share of the estate. Alice, the grandchild, got ten acres.

Jim sold his thirty-five acres to Sam and Hester, giving them a total of seventy-five acres. Rich also sold his share of thirty-five acres to Ben and Mary, with them obtaining one hundred two acres, including the twenty-five acres from Sarah in 1980. Sallie sold her thirty-two acre farm. Sallie built a new house near the old cabin on her share of land.

The town of Lawrenceville, in Brunswick County, grew and prospered with new buildings and more businesses to serve the surrounding rural communities. There were unpaved streets at the center of town, with wooden sidewalks, which provided the consciousness of growing progress in the area.

The local government in Brunswick County and the private railroads created residential communities and new enterprises to support several hundred employees in Lawrenceville. A few people of color found menial jobs in town, but most Negro and other colored people worked on farms throughout the county.

### COLORED WEDDINGS

Most citizens, with African ancestry, were struggling at the beginning of the twentieth century to gain the social and economic acceptance of other Americans. Colored people, from the black communities in the northern states, were treated by most white people, with indifference. The colored people, in the black communities of the southern states, were constantly confronted by hostile white people. The civilian authorities were successful in denying many of the basic civil rights for colored people. Economic opportunities, outside of the black community, were prevented or denied for most colored people.

White communities, in the southern states, honored white veterans of the confederate rebellion for area patriotism and bravery. Southern white people were openly hostile, claiming people of color were responsible for most social and economic problems in the region. The emancipation of farm slaves, the defeat of southern succession and the destruction of southern gentry created angry resentment toward colored people.

Many white people seeking a social and economic order of racial dominance resulted to vigilante justice. Lynching and burning of colored people by angry mobs of local white people were familiar events in many southern towns. The authorities supported local white people with denying social and economic opportunities to all colored people. The civil and political rights of colored people were legally restricted by the state and local laws from governments dominated by white people.

Colored people struggled against the many harsh economic realities of their existence in the southern states. Colored field workers on white farms earned less than ten dollars per month, while their white counterparts earned more than twenty dollars per month. Local white governments spent six dollars per year for each white child on public education compared to roughly two dollars per year spent for each colored child.

Most white people, in the southern states, misunderstood the jubilant feelings of the colored citizens over the end of slavery at the end of the war. The impoverished situation in many of the southern white communities created more animosity toward colored citizens.

Colored families, in isolated black communities, usually joined together for their mutual protection against the local white authorities and angry white mobs. The cooperation with planting and harvesting,

among the colored families, provided opportunities for young people to meet and share many popular stories. The many common experiences of the young people and the sharing of the farming activities often resulted in young marriages between friends. These marriages were important in forming farming alliances between families and neighbours.

Marriage ceremonies were usually performed in the middle of the week by local ministers. State licenses to marry were obtained by the couple from the county clerk. The ceremonies were generally held at the home of the bride with a family or local minister conducting the wedding services.

David Wade Gillus, the son of the Bill and Cindy Gillus, and Gertrude Vanlue Powell, the daughter of Sallie and Robert Powell, were married in 1906. David and Gertrude were, both, considered children from racially mixed marriages, which were normally illegal in Virginia. David was the son of a mulatto man and a native woman. Gertrude was the mulatto daughter of a colored man and a white woman from the Harrison family.

David married Gertrude on a Wednesday, December 19th, in 1906. They married in a small family ceremony at the home of the bride's mother, Sallie. David Gillus was a farmer at the age of thirty-one years and Gertrude was a teacher at the age of twenty-three years. The new family moved into a log cabin on Drybread Road in Greenville County.

David and Gertrude began their marriage, with only fifty cents, on a small family farm. A daughter, Juanita, was born in November 1907. David and Gertrude raised a family of nine black children, over the next forty years. The nine children produced twenty-four grandchildren from twenty-four marriages spread over forty years. Most of the family settled in major cities on the east and west coast.

Young Martha married William Flythe, a young colored man of twenty-three years. Martha was married on a Wednesday, in April of 1911, by Minister Bower. He presided over the small ceremony at his home. Martha was sixteen years of age at the time of her marriage to Flythe. Martha was also the daughter of Ben and Sallie Ellis. Martha probably did not discuss her two parents at the wedding. Robert, her brother, signed as a witness to her age as twenty-one years.

Sallie Harrison Powell Ellis married Ned Merrith, in the following year, on another Wednesday, Christmas Day. Merrith was her third and last husband. Sallie said she was divorced and used her married name of Sarah Ellis. Sallie was a white woman of fifty years at the time of

the wedding. Merrith was a colored man of fifty-five years and widowed. The marriage, like the previous two for Sallie, would not continue. Sallie eventually separated, as she sent Ned Merrith on his way.

At the beginning of a new year in 1913, all of the women following Sarah Jane Harrison were married. However, tragedy continued to strike at the women. In August, Martha lost her first born, Evelenda, who was only eighteen months old. The loss of her daughter was followed by the loss of William, her husband, in August 1915. Young Martha was another twenty-one year widow with young babies, just like Phoebe and Sarah Jane in the previous century. Martha was the young widowed mother of two small girls, her baby daughters.

It was the repeating cycle, started over a hundred years earlier with Phoebe. The cycle of poor single women fighting to survive with small children. The women, like Sarah Jane, continued to struggle with farming. Sallie lived for ninety-six years, outliving three husbands and acquiring most of the property of the old Harrison farm. The land would eventually be divided among her children and reacquired by her daughters from her four sons and their families.

Gertrude lived for ninety-nine years, outliving her only husband, David, by thirty years. She and her sister, Martha, would reacquire the family farm from their brothers. The two sisters would divide the land among their children. The farm of their Harrison ancestors would stay in the family with the last section being owned by the daughters of Martha Ellis.

Juanita, great granddaughter of Sarah Jane, lived to the age of eighty-four years. Juanita, like her women ancestors, survived and outlived her three husbands. Juanita worked for many years as a farmer, housekeeper, landlord and taxi driver in Greenville County. Juanita was a woman of great strength, but died childless in a home for the aged.

Equality of abilities and privileges, in the eyes of the majority, was an unattainable goal for minorities. Never was the answer, in one word, from the authoritative. Equality of rights and opportunities, in the eyes of the majority, was an admirable objective for minorities. Success was progress in the search and failure was the status quo in America.

**VINCIT QUI PATITUR....**

**The women, who endured, conquered.**

## **HARRISON FAMILY CRONOLOGY**

### **(1600-1900)**

**The following events were supported by documents and other records from the Brunswick County Courthouse, the Virginia State Archive and the National Archive:**

- 1637 Bur Harrison born (Dec) in Westminster, England. Son of Cuthbert Harrison from Winchester, England. Baptized at St Margaretts Parish Church on Jan 3rd.
- 1665 Thomas born (Sep) to Bur and Anne Harrison in England.
- 1670 Bur and Anne Harrison emigrated to America and settled in Virginia with their son, Thomas.

#### **FIRST GENERATION**

- 1697 Bur Harrison, local justice and farmer from Winchester, died. Survived by Anne and their sons.
  - Thomas, son
  - Bur Cuthbert, son
  - Willian, son
- 1699 Bur Cuthbert, son of Bur and Anne, assigned as an emissary to the Piscataway [Nottoway] Indians by the House of Burgesses. Reported the sad plight of the [Nottoway] Indians under the Treaty of 1675.
- 1700 Bur Cuthbert married the widow of Ed Smith. Sold 600 acres to James Bland (Dec 8).

- 1724 Bur Cuthbert, son of Bur and Anne, died. Survived by a son (Thomas) and a daughter (Sybil).
- 1726 Thomas, son of Bur and Anne, died. Survived by his children.  
     William, son  
     Bur, son  
     Thomas, son  
     Cuthbert, son  
     Elizabeth, daughter  
     Frances, daughter  
     Ann, daughter
- 1727 William, son of Bur and Anne, died. Survived by his sons (Harmon and James).
- 1730 Anne, wife of Bur Harrison from Winchester, died.
- 1746 Thomas, son of Bur Cuthbert, died. Survived by his children.  
     Henry, son  
     Joseph, son  
     James, son  
     Gabriel, son
- 1762 James, son of William, died (Mar). Survived by daughters (Rebecca and Dolly).

### THIRD GENERATION

- 1763 Joseph, son of Thomas, died (Mar). Survived by his wife (Elizabeth) and their children.  
     Nancy, daughter  
     William, son  
     Daniel, son  
     Benjamin, son  
     Simmons, son  
     Patty, daughter
- 1772 Thomas, son of Thomas, died. Survived by his three sons and one daughter.  
     William, son  
     Thomas, son  
     Bur, son  
     Susannah, daughter
- 1779 Gabriel, son of Thomas, died. Survived by his wife (Sally) and their children.

- Nathaniel, son  
Jane, daughter  
James, son
- 1780 Richard, son of Daniel, fighting the British forces at Kaskaskia and Vincennes (Ohio Frontier) as a private in the Illinois Regiment of the Virginia Continental Army.
- 1781 Harmon, son of William, died. Survived by wife (Sally) and their son (Harmon).
- 1784 Richard and John, sons of Daniel, receives land grants of 100 acres each for compensation as privates in Virginia Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.
- 1785 William, son of Joseph, died. Survived by his children.  
Ann, daughter  
Martha, daughter  
Henry, son  
William, son
- 1786 Henry, son of Thomas, died (Apr). Survived by his children.  
Mary, daughter  
John, son  
Peter, son
- 1787 Daniel and Mary moved from Rockingham County to their farm in Brunswick County. The farm included 14 cows, 2 mules and one Negro slave.
- 1788 Daniel Harrison buys adjacent fifty acres from his neighbor, Drew Gowing, for fifty pounds.
- 1789 Benjamin, son of Joseph, died (Dec). Survived by his children.  
Thomas, son  
Rita, daughter  
Hannar, daughter  
Benjamin, son  
Elizabeth, daughter  
Rebecca, daughter  
Tabitha, daughter  
Nancy, daughter  
Theophilus, son  
James, son
- 1790 Daniel Harrison buys another 100 acres adjacent to his farm from Henry Jamess. The form consists of 200 acres.

- 1790 James, son of Thomas, died.  
       Carter, son  
       James, son  
       Benjamin, son
- 1808 Daniel, son of Joseph, died (Oct). Survived by his wife (Mary) and their children.  
       John, son  
       Richard, son  
       Nancy, daughter  
       Samual, son
- 1808 Richard received Daniel's 200 acre farm and married Phoebe, his cousin, with the consent of her father, Harmon Harrison, (Dec 12).

#### FIFTH GENERATION

- 1809 Elizabeth born to Richard and Phoebe Harrison.
- 1810 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (US)  
       Harrison Family  
       [Richard] White male (age 21 to 45) Head, Farmer  
       [Phoebe] White female (age 21 to 45) Keeps house  
       [Elizabeth] White female (age under 10) Daughter  
       Colored male (born free) Field Worker
- 1811 Richard born to Richard and Phoebe.
- 1813 Benjamin born to Richard and Phoebe.
- 1813 Richard, farmer and son of Daniel, died. Survived by Phoebe, his wife, and their children.
- 1813 Sally Harrison (mother of Phoebe) appointed as guardian for the children by the County Court.
- 1814 Biacca Jane born to Phoebe, the widow. Phoebe was the mother of four children.
- 1814 William, son of William Harrison, died. Survived by two daughters (Cathy and Nancy).
- 1818 William Gillas born with a free mulatto mother and a white father. Parents were not identified.
- 1820 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (US)  
       Harrison Family

- [Phoebe] White female (age 26 to 45) Head, Farmer
- [Elizabeth] White female (age 10 to 26) Daughter
- [Biacca] White female (age under 10) Daughter
- [Richard] White male (age 10 to 16) Son
- [Benjamin] White male (age under 10) Son
- 1822 Milton Powell born with a native mother and a mulatto father. Parents were not identified.
- 1830 Census Brunswick County in Virginia (US)  
Harrison Family
  - [Phoebe] White female (age 40 to 50) Head, Farmer
  - [Richard] White male (age 15 to 20) Son, Farm Worker
  - [Biacca] White female (age 16 to 20) Daughter
  - [Benjamin] White male (age 15 to 20) Son, Farm Worker
- 1836 Rich, son of Richard and Phoebe, borrowed money from William Butler against the farm crops.
- 1836 Phoebe awarded 63 acres (one seventh), from the estate of Thomas Harrison, by the County Court.

#### SEVENTH GENERATION

- 1839 Sarah Jane born (May) to Biacca Jane. Father identified as John Hawkins (deceased white male).
- 1840 Census Brunswick County in Virginia (US) Harrison Family
  - [Phoebe] White female (age 50 to 60) Head of family
  - [Benjamin] White male (age 20 to 30) Son, Farmer
  - [Sylvia] White female (age 20 to 40) Daughter-in-Law
  - [Biacca] White female (age 20 to 40) Daughter
  - White female (age under 10) Grand-daughter
  - [Sarah] White female (age under 10) Grand-daughter
  - [Bob Malone] Colored male (age 24 to 36) Field Worker
  - Two males working in Agriculture.
- 1841 Biacca, daughter of Phoebe, died. Survived by her infant baby daughter, Sarah Jane.
- 1841 Overseer of the Poor ordered by the Court to pay \$ 20 per year to Phoebe Harrison for the care of Sarah Jane, infant (age 2), daughter of Biacca Harrison (deceased) and John Hawkins (deceased).

- 1843 Tax Commissioner ordered by the Court to settle the estate of Biacca Harrison. County filed a claim for care of Sarah Jane against the estate of John Hawkins.
- 1844 Benjamin and Sylvia Harrison agreed to final divorce settlement. Custody of child awarded to the mother.
- 1847 Richard Henry, son of Phoebe Harrison, borrowed money from George Willas against the farm crop.
- 1850 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (US) Harrison Family  
 Phoebe Harrison White female (66 yrs) Head of Family  
 Richard Harrison White male (38 yrs) Son, Farmer  
 Sarah Harrison White female (12 yrs) Grand-daughter  
 Julia Malone Mulatto female ( 5 yrs)
- 1852 Richard Henry Harrison died. Survived by Phoebe, his mother, and Sarah Jane, his niece.
- 1854 James Harrison (mulatto male) born in May. Mother was Jane (unmarried Negro slave). Father (white) was not identified. Reported by James Harrison (owner).
- 1854 Robert Henry (colored male) born (Aug) with Juanita, his Negro slave mother. Reported by Martha Powell (slave owner). Milton Powell claimed as the mulatto father.
- 1854 John Henry Harrison (white male) born Oct 8th. Mother was Sarah Jane Harrison (white). Father (white) was not identified. Reported by Phoebe Harrison (grandmother).
- 1857 Benjamin Harrison (white male) born March 2nd. Harrieth, the white mother, was not married. Reported by Smith Harrison. Baby given to church for adoption.
- 1858 Mary Harrison (colored female) born in July. Mother was Jane (unmarried Negro slave). Father (Negro) was not identified. Birth was not recorded at the Courthouse.
- 1859 Samual Harrison (mulatto male) born in October. Sarah, his white mother, was not married. Father (Negro) was not identified. Reported by Sarah Jane Harrison.
- 1860 Ned Harrison (colored male) born in December. Mother was Jane, an unmarried Negro slave. Father (Negro) was not identified. Birth was not recorded.

1860 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (August)  
Harrison Family

Phoebe Harrison White female (76 yrs) Head, Farmer  
Sarah J. Harrison White female (21 yrs) Works on farm  
James Harrison Mulatto male ( 6 yrs)  
John Harrison White male ( 6 yrs)

Benjamin Harrison White male ( 3 yrs)

Samual Harrison Mulatto male ( 1 yr)

Value of Real Estate \$ 300

1860 Ned Harrison (colored male) born in December. Mother was Jane, an unmarried Negro slave. Father (Negro) was not identified. Reported by Sarah Jane Harrison.

1861 Sarah Elizabeth (white female) born in October. Sarah, her white mother, was not married. Father (white) was not identified. Reported by Sarah Jane Harrison.

1865 Richard (mulatto male) born. Mother (white) was not identified. Father (Negro) was not identified.

1865 Phoebe, grandmother of Sarah Harrison, died leaving her property (76 acres) to Sarah. Sarah borrows money from a local merchant, Pearson.

1866 Sarah hired Philan Williams to manage the farm and teach her sons about operating a farm.

1866 William Kelly files claim with Sarah for the Harrison's estate and farm (Apr 23).

1867 Sarah Harrison received advances on supplies and seeds against the land from William Mitchell.

1868 Sarah Harrison received the farm (220 acres) from her grandfather's estate as the last surviving heir.

1870 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (June)  
Harrison Household

Sarah Harrison White female (30 yrs) House Keeper

James Harrison White male (16 yrs)

Benjamin Harrison White male (14 yrs)

Samual Harrison White male (12 yrs)

Sallie Harrison White female (10 yrs)

Richard Harrison White male ( 8 yrs)

John Malone Black male (15 yrs) Field Worker

Philan Williams Black male (35 yrs) Field Worker  
 All of household can not read or write.  
 Value of the Real Estate \$ 800

1870 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (June)  
 Powell Household

Milton Powell Black male (50 yrs) Born free  
 Juanita Powell Black female (45 yrs) Born slave  
 Robert Powell Black male (15 yrs) Labour  
 George Powell Black male (13 yrs) Labour  
 Eptist Powell Black male (10 yrs) Child

1870 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (June)  
 Harrison Family

Jane Harrison Black female (30 yrs) House Keeper  
 Mary Harrison Black female (12 yrs)  
 Ned Harrison Black male (10 yrs)

1872 Sarah Harrison received advances on supplies and seeds against the farm crops from William Mitchell.

1873 William Gillus (mulatto) married Lucinda (Cindy) Steward (mulatto) on Mar 27. Steward was part native.

1873 Sarah Harrison borrows money from Grandseur Williams secured by her land.

✓ 1875 David Wade Gillus (colored male) born (Nov 30). Mother was Cindy Gillus (mulatto). Father was William Gillus (mulatto), farmer. Parents were married.

1876 Sarah Harrison, white female, owned 302 acres with a total value of \$ 604 including \$ 100 for the house.

1877 James Harrison (colored male) born. Mother was Rosa Harrison (colored). Father was James Harrison (mulatto). Parents were married.

1877 Alice Harrison (colored female) born. Father was John [Harrison] Malone (mulatto). Mother (colored) was not identified. Baby given to Sarah Harrison.

1879 William Hency Harrison (mulatto male) born. Mother was Mary Harrison (mulatto). Father was Ben Harrison (mulatto). Parents were married.

1879 Mathew Lee Harrison (colored male) born. Mother was Rosa Harrison (colored). Father was Janes Harrison (mulatto). Parents were married.

- 1880 Sallie (Sarah) Harrison, daughter of Sarah Jane, married Robert (Bob) Powell in February.
- 1880 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (US) (Jun)  
Harrison Family  
Sarah Harrison White female (43 yrs) Keeps house  
Samual Harrison Mulatto male (20 yrs) Works on farm  
Richard Harrison Mulatto male (15 yrs) Works on farm  
Alice Harrison Mulatto female (3 yrs) Child
- 1880 Census Brunswick County in Virginia (US) (Jun)  
Harrison Family  
James Harrison Mulatto male (26 yrs) Farm worker  
Rosa Harrison Colored female (19 yrs) Keeps house  
James Harrison Colored male (3 yrs)  
Matthew Harrison Colored male (1 yr)
- 1880 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (US) (Jun)  
Harrison Family  
Benjamim Harrison White male (23 yrs) Farmer  
Mary Harrison Mulatto female (20 yrs)  
William Harrison Mulatto male (1 yr)
- 1880 Census Brunswick County in Virginia (US) (Jun)  
Powell Family  
Milton Powell Mulatto male (58 yrs) Farmer  
Robert Powell Colored male (24 yrs) Farm Worker  
Sallie Powell White female (18 yrs)
- 1880 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (US) (Jun)  
Powell Household  
Rev. Guy Powell Colored male (30 yrs) Preacher  
Mary Ann Powell Colored female (32 yrs)  
George Powell Colored male (22 yrs)
- ✓ 1880 Census Brunswick County In Virginia (US) (Jun)  
Gillus Household  
William Gillus Mulatto male (27 yrs) Farmer  
Lucinda Gillus Mulatto female (25 yrs) Keeps house  
James H. Gillus Colored male (7 yrs)  
David W. Gillus Colored male (5 yrs)  
Mary E. Gillus Colored female (2 yrs)  
Jesse Gillus Colored male (16 yrs) Farm Worker
- 1880 Sarah Harrison gave 25 acres to Ben, her son, with 277 acres (valued at \$ 554) remaining as the Harrison farm.

**NINTH GENERATION**

- ✓ 1881 Willie Charles Powell (mulatto) born in January. Sallie, his white mother, and Robert Powell, his colored father, were married.
- 1882 John Harrison (colored) born. Rosa, his colored mother, and James Harrison, his mulatto father, were married.
- 1883 Samual Harrison (a mulatto man) married Hester Steward (a colored woman) in February.
- ✓ 1883 Gertrude Vanlue Powell (mulatto) born in May. Sallie, her white mother, and Robert Powell, her colored father, were married.
- 1883 Robert Powell filed a claim (December) for a farm on public land in the Rawlins District as a former slave and the family head under the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Reconstruction Act of 1870. He reported his annual source of income from the farm as follows:

Cotton Crop	\$ 30.00
Corn Crop	50.00
Hogs - 3	25.00
Cotton seeds	7.50
Total Value	<u>112.50</u>

- 1884 Anna Harrison (colored female) born. Mother was Jane Harrison (colored). She was not married. Father was not identified.
- 1885 Survey and partial distribution of property resulted in 203 acres valued at \$ 357 including a house.
- ✓ 1885 Robert Lamar Powell (mulatto) was born in June. Sallie, his white mother, and Robert Powell, his colored father, were married.
- 1887 Sarah Harrison advanced \$ 60 on supplies against land by Furnene Brothers (Apr). Due Nov 1887.
- ✓ 1887 James Dolson Powell (mulatto) was born in August. Sallie, his white mother, and Robert Powell, his colored father, were married.
- 1888 Green & Burton advanced supplies and materials to the farmers against their annual crop with payment due in November:
  - Richard Harrison (age 23 yrs) up to \$ 55.00
  - Benjamin Harrison (age 31 yrs) up to \$ 60.00
  - Robert Powell (age 34 yrs) up to \$ 55.00

- 1889 Alfred Dennis Powell (mulatto) born in July. Sallie, his white mother, and Robert Powell, his colored father, were married.
- 1889 Sarah Harrison borrowed a \$ 50 from William Mitchel with the value of her land as collateral. Benjamin Harrison borrowed up to \$ 80 in supplies from Green & Burton.
- 1890 Sarah Jane Harrison borrowed \$ 150 from William Mitchel against the value of her land.
- ✓1891 Sidney Powell (mulatto) born. Sallie Powell, his white mother, and Robert Powell, his colored father, were married, but separated.
- ✓1894 Martha Francis Powell (mulatto) born in July. Sallie Powell, her white mother, and Ben Ellis, her white father from Surry County, were not married.
- 1895 Sallie Powell purchased a 12 acre farm for \$ 36 and moved with her children to Ante, near Sarah Jane. Sallie Powell was separated from Robert Powell.
- ✓1897 Sallie (Sarah) Powell (a white woman) and Ben Ellis (a white man) were married in December as mulatto people with one mulatto daughter, Martha.
- 1899 Alice Harrison, the mulatto daughter of John Malone and granddaughter of Sarah Jane married Walter Banks, a colored man in March.
- 1900 Census Brunswick County in Virginia (US)  
Banks Household
- |                  |                |          |               |
|------------------|----------------|----------|---------------|
| Walter Banks     | Black male     | (28 yrs) | Head, Farmer  |
| Alice Banks      | Black female   | (20 yrs) | Wife          |
| Nora Banks       | Black female   | (3 mos)  | Daughter      |
| Sarah Harrison   | Mulatto female | (60 yrs) | Mother-in-Law |
| Phyllis Harrison | Black female   | (9 yrs)  | Niece         |
- 1902 Sallie Ellis borrowed money on her land and expanded her farm to 20 acres. Sallie separated from Ben Ellis.
- 1905 Sarah Jane Harrison died in March. The Harrison estate consisted of a 202 acre farm valued at \$ 657 including a log cabin valued at \$ 51. Survived by her children.
- Janes, son
  - Benjamin, son
  - Samual, son
  - Richard, son

Sallie, daughter  
 Alice, granddaughter

1906 Gertrude Vanlue Powell, a mulatto woman, and David Wade Gillus, a colored man, were married in December.

1907 Juanita Elizabeth Gillus, a colored female, born in November. Gertrude, her mother, and David Gillus, her father, were married.

1909 The estate of Sarah Jane Harrison was settled.

James and Rosa Harrison	35 acres
Ben and Mary Harrison	42 acres
Sam and Hester Harrison	40 acres
Richard Harrison (unmarried)	35 acres
Sallie Ellis (separated)	40 acres
Alice Banks (granddaughter)	10 acres

Total land in the Estate	<u>202 acres</u>
--------------------------	------------------

1910 Census City of Newport News, Virginia (US)

Powell Household

Robert Powell Mulatto male (54 yrs) Head, Laborer

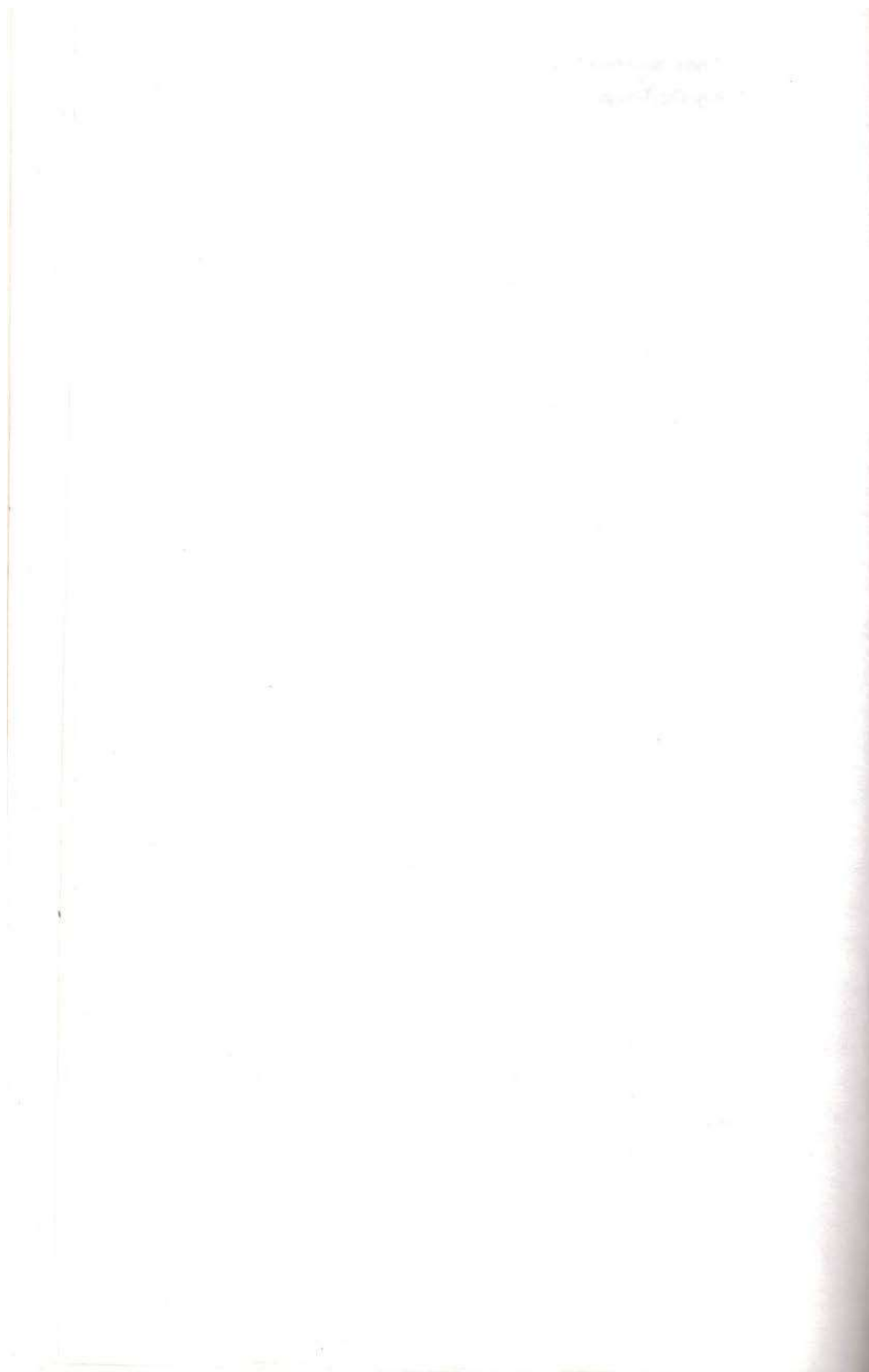
Ella Powell Mulatto female (48 yrs) Wife

Married seven years, no children.

**Bur Harrison of Winchester  
English Descendants in America**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bur	Thomas	Williams	Williams	Susannah Margaret			
			Bur George, Sybil Mary Thomas Bur Cuthbert Jane Seth Ann Elizabeth William Thomas Bur Susannah				
		Thomas					
		Cuthbert Elizabeth Frances Ann Thomas	Henry	John Mary Peter Nancy William Daniel			
	Bur		Joseph		John Richard	Elizabeth Richard Benjamin Blacca	Sarah Jane
					Nancy Samual		
			James	Benjamin Simmon Patty Carter James Benjamin Nathaniel Jane James			
			Gabriel				
	William	Sybil Harmon	Harmon	William Phoebe Lucinda			
		James	Rebecca Dolly				

\*Married on December 12, 1808

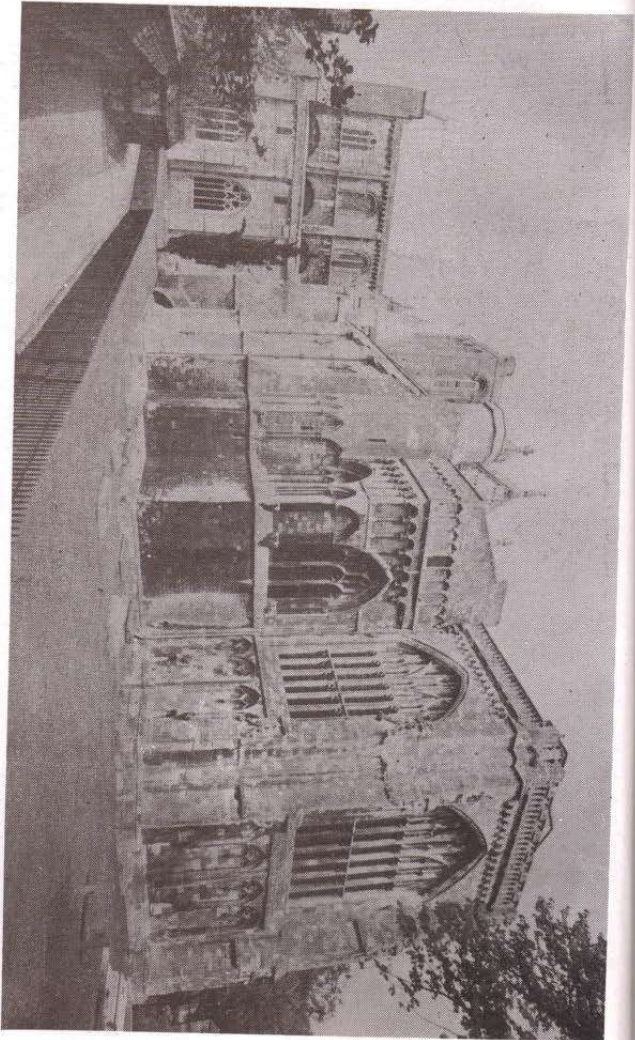




SARAH JANE HARRISON

1839 - 1905

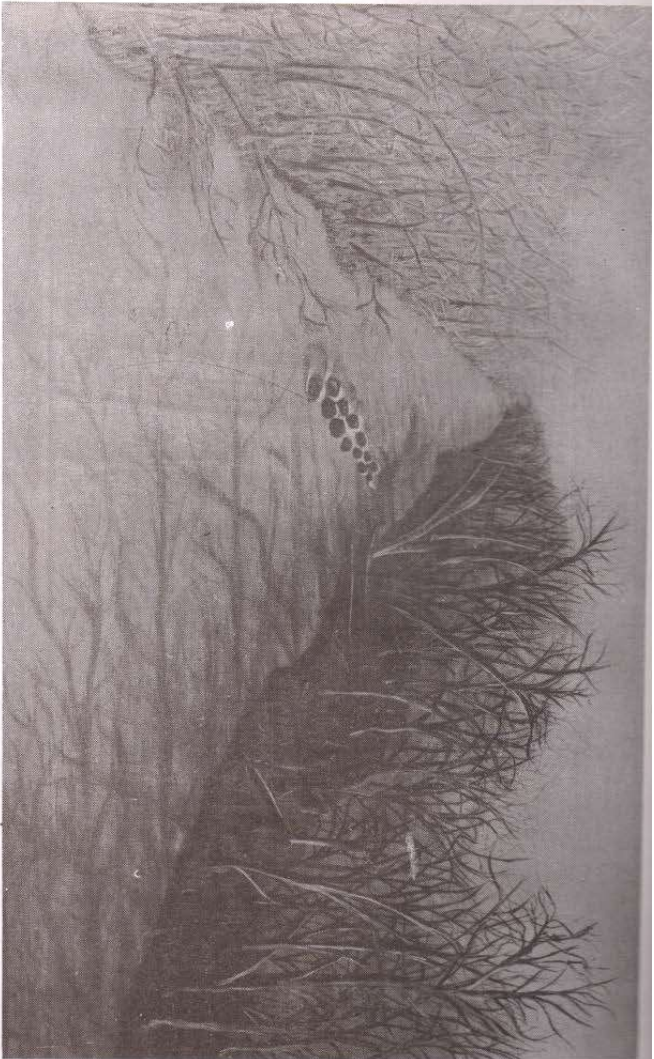
*SARAH JANE, THE STORY OF MOTHER*



## WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

WINCHESTER, HAMSHIRE, ENGLAND

SARAH JANE, THE STORY OF MOTHER



MEHERRIN RIVER

BRUNSWICK COUNTY, VIRGINIA

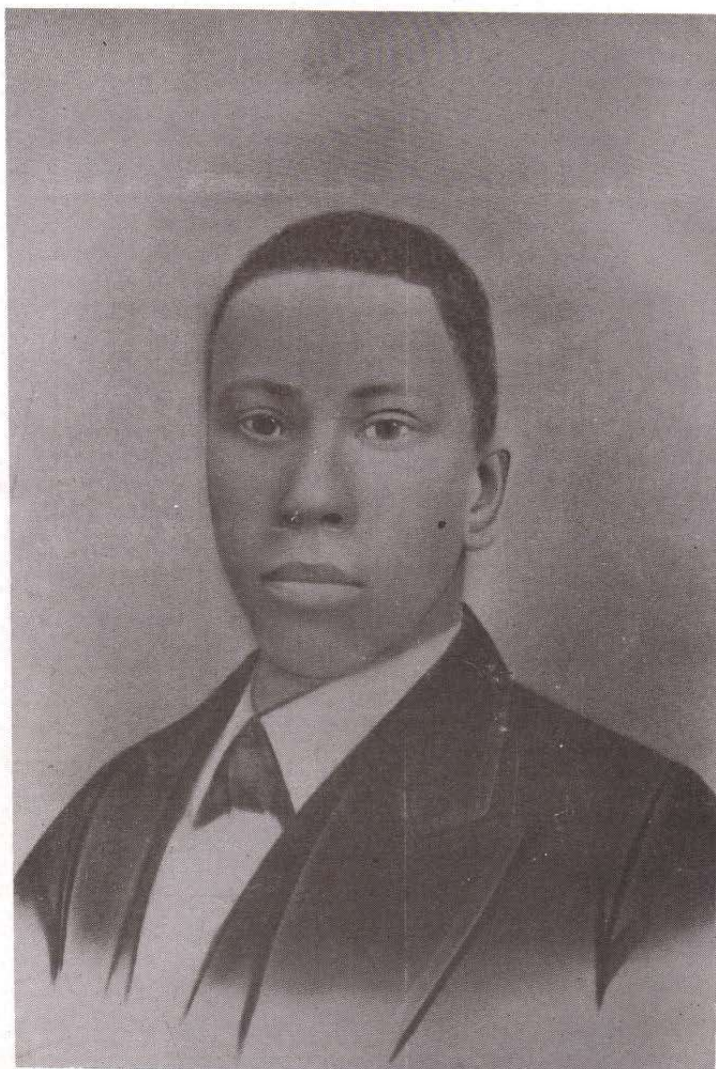
SARAH JANE, THE STORY OF MOTHER



SARAH ELIZABETH HARRISON

1861 - 1956

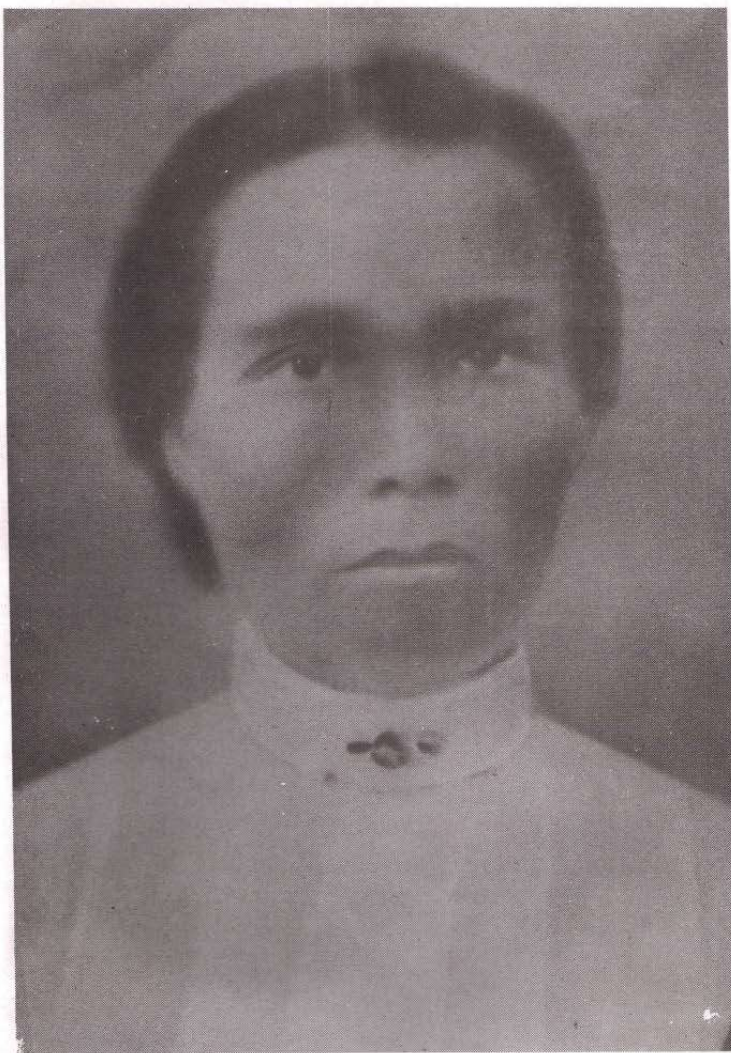
*SARAH JANE, THE STORY OF MOTHER*



ROBERT HENRY POWELL

1854 - 1918

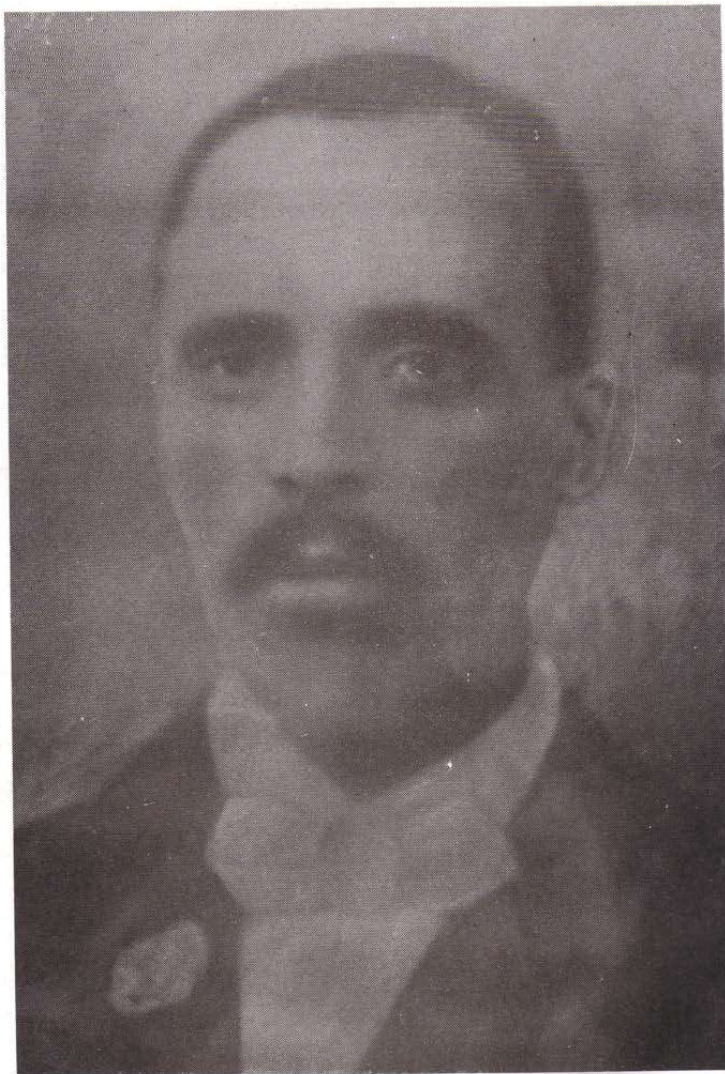
*SARAH JANE, THE STORY OF MOTHER*



GERTRUDE VANLUE POWELL

1883 - 1982

*SARAH JANE, THE STORY OF MOTHER*



DAVID WADE GILLUS

1875 - 1952

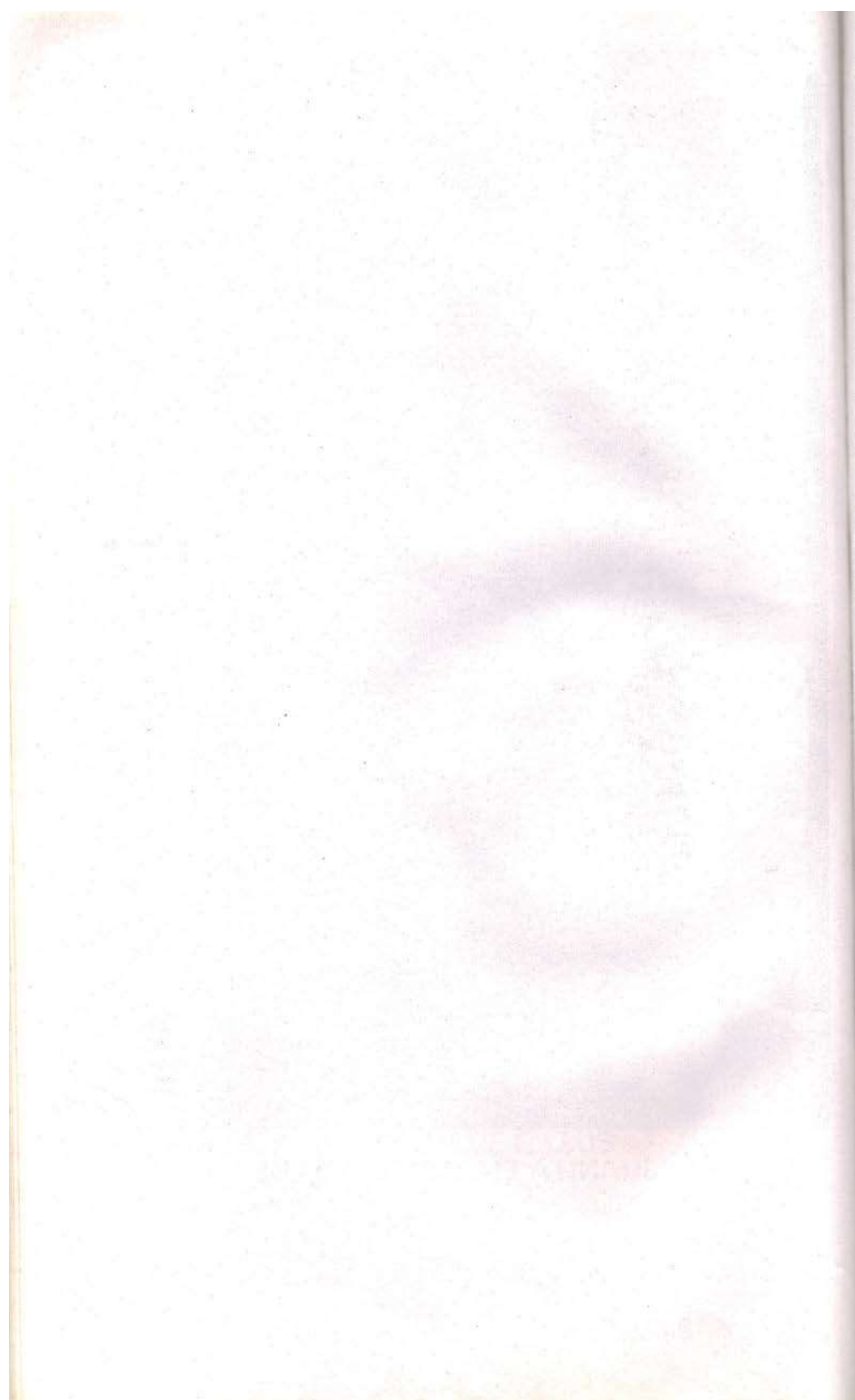
*SARAH JANE, THE STORY OF MOTHER*



JUANITA ELIZABETH GILLUS

1907 - 1994

*SARAH JANE, THE STORY OF MOTHER*



#### The Author

LARRY ANTHONY GILLUS is presently **Manager, Business Relationships** in **Gilbarco Inc.**, Manufacturing, Greensboro, North Carolina. His varied managerial experience stretches from top U.S. firms like **Burlington Industries, Coopers and Lybrand** from maintaining profitable businesses, to social service community oriented activities of **United Child Development Services, Inc.** (1990-1997), **Community Theatre of Greensboro, Inc.** (1990-1996). The author is a **Master In Business Administration** (1978) from **Harvard University** and is working towards a **Doctor of Business Administration** degree by 2000 AD from **Berne University**, Wolfeboro, New Hampshire. As a member of **North Caroline Association of Certified Public Accountants**, Greensboro **Chapter of the National Hampton Alumni Association** Virginia, **Harvard Business School Association** of Charlotte (NC) and **American Institute of Certified Public Accountants** (AICPA) New York the author's experience and contribution into U.S. Corporate life is immensely endowed with a concern for a prosperous healthy and sustainable american society.

Jacket Designed by - Bharati Mirchandani.

