

Ross, Anne Grahame

REMINISCENCES OF ROSE HILL.

Rose Hill was the country seat of Major John Grahame, who came from Calvert County in the year, 1767. He was the son of Charles Grahame, who was a Scotchman of the Grahames of the duke of Montrose, and his mother was a daughter of the "Laird of Muncie." Major Grahame built Rose Hill, and whilst Auburn and Prospect Hall could boast of larger and grander halls, neither had such a spacious and elegant drawing room, or so beautiful and well kept garden and handsome flower grounds. The approach to the house was through an avenue of more than half a mile, and the road ran through a park of the original forest trees.

No place in the country was so celebrated for its extended hospitality and elegance of entertainment. General Washington was once, perhaps oftener, the honored guest, and he always delighted to pour tea or coffee for the ladies in the drawing room.

This room had six large windows, two south, two north, and two east; a very high and elaborately carved mantel, and the bright high brass fender and andirons, with a blazing fire of good old hickory logs, was of itself a picture.

The windows were curtained and festooned with rich chintz draperies, and the carpet was English brussels, with a large medalion in the center and a border

all around the room. The colors were black and gold and rich dark red. These, with the portraits and mirrors on the wall, and the solid old mahogany furniture of that day, made a picture of no ordinary beauty. The hall was not large, but in front was an ample porch looking out on the long avenue, and at the back you walked directly out on a green sward, which was the whole length of the garden. This was kept in the most beautiful order. On each side of the walk, which was fully ten feet wide, were the bright beds of flowers, tulips, hyacinths and all the bulbs then known. At each corner of the square beds of strawberries, raspberries and vegetables, were large bushes of lilac, snowballs, syringas or mock-orange. I have seen many well kept gardens in Baltimore county, including the celebrated Hampden estate, but none so beautiful as this.

Major Grahame was a man of large and generous heart, and polished manners, and he was an earnest christian, and his influence was for good, over all who came under it.

Major Grahame married Ann Jennings Johnson, daughter of Governor Thomas Johnson, whose estate was a mile or two further north, and was called "Richfield." But on the death of his wife which took place November 22, 1794, he came to Rose Hill, and from this time made his home with his son-in-law, until his death, which occurred there in 1819. Major Grahame had several children who died in infancy. One daughter, Ann Rebecca, died at the age of eighteen, and one son Thomas who lived to maturity and married his cousin, (once removed) daughter of Colonel Baker Johnson. They had one daughter, the present Mrs. Worthington Johnson.

The venerable owner of Rose Hill died at an advanced age, in 1833, and the estate passed into other hands. It was bought by Colonel John McPherson, and held by him for a few years, when he sold it to William Slater, of Baltimore.

One unfortunate occurrence took place in the Rose Hill mansion. Governor Johnson's private papers and the whole of his correspondence with the leading men of the country was packed away in the garret, and in some way they were used as kindling, and burnt. I mention this, as it may make the members of the Historical Society more careful in preserving papers.

This paper was written by Mrs. Ann Grahame Ross, a great-granddaughter of Governor Thomas Johnson, and was read before the Frederick County Historical Society.

## ROSE HILL

The situation of the mansion seems to have been admirably chosen. It is on the summit of the rising ground which slopes gently to that point from the northern edge of Frederick town. It commands beautiful prospects in every direction, and the view towards the mountain at the west, appears to be especially fine. The house is a double two story brick with attic, and the large end building is to the side, not in the rear, in order to afford to as much of the establishment as possible, the advantage of a south front, then so sought after in the construction of buildings. Stretching in front of the house, for the better portion of a mile, down towards the town, was a magnificent grove or park of original forest trees, which was one of the most ornamental features of the whole estate. It was occasionally the spot for picnics, and the notable barbacue held by the Whig party in the fall of 1844, was given at that place.

Rose Hill is part of the original tract granted to Benjamin Tasker, June 9, 1727. The chain of its early history could hardly be established without consultation of the land records at Upper Marlborough, since for nearly twenty years after that date. it was still in Prince Georges County. Major John Graham came to Frederick County in 1767. In the brief notice that I have had of the expectation that I would read this paper, I have not been

able to find when he acquired the estate, or when he built the mansion, of which he had the credit of doing. And I must trust too, to the paper of Mrs. Ross for an account of its history during his long tenure of it.

But early in 1833, he died, and by a very short will, left his entire estate to his wife Ann Jennings Grahame. In September of the same year, Mrs. Grahame sold the property to Colonel John McPherson, Jr. In December 1837, Colonel McPherson disposed of it to William Slater, of Baltimore. In 1843, William Slater conveyed it to his brother, George Slater, who in turn sold it to the late John J. Willson, in 1845.

There seems to be quite a misapprehension about these Slaters. William, who with his wife; they had no children; occupied it during their tenancy, was a very rich man, having made a large fortune in the construction of the first railroad between Baltimore and Philadelphia. George, who was also wealthy, was a wholesale grocery merchant in Baltimore. The brothers were Irish, and with the liberality of their race, they made a great attempt to entertain their neighbors and the people of Frederick. I have heard an old lady yet living say, she went there with some acquaintances of theirs from Georgetown, D. C. She found everything the evidences of wealth and luxury, and the party were entertained with lavish hospitality. But all their efforts to be friendly with Frederick people failed, and they were avoided by all prominent citizens. This was said to be caused by the report that they had been engaged in the slave traffic, which was everywhere believed. To have the reputation of being a "soul driver" was in those days sufficient to condemn anyone socially,

even among people who owned negroes. But afterwards it was reported that the Fredericktonians were mistaken. They had confused these Slaters with a noted character in Baltimore, who was not of the same family, and spelt his name differently. Hope H. Slatter was a well-known slave dealer. He had a private jail of his own in Baltimore, where he confined the victims of his business. He too accumulated a large fortune, and went to live in Richmond, where he also failed in his efforts to get into society. Their friends assert that he had no connection with the Slaters of Rose Hill, not being even of the same nationality.

As I have said, the Rose Hill estate was purchased in 1845, by John J. Willson, Mr. Willson was originally from Montgomery county, but he married Miss Ann M. P. Tyler, the youngest daughter of Dr. William Bradley Tyler. Shortly after his marriage he bought Rose Hill, intending to make it his permanent residence. He spent much money in renovating and embellishing the mansion and its surroundings. He also bought in the eastern cities much beautiful furniture and other fine appointments to adorn the house when he should occupy it. But somehow, his plans never reached fulfilment. Some said his family would not go to the country; others that he himself had become too much attached to town life. Be it as it may, he never moved there, but in the year 1853, he sold it to David Ogle Thomas.

Mr. Thomas resided there until his death in ----- . His widow, however, still retained the property, although she moved to Baltimore. Her recent decease there has again brought it into market, and it is

now advertised for sale, after having been in the hands  
of the Thomas family for ever forty years.