Notes from Virginia (Taylor) Syndor, born in 1900, daughter of Henry Taylor III and Virginia Bagby.

These notes are remembrances of her childhood days spent at Westend with her siblings Parke, Mary and Henry IV. Their permanent home was at 2001 Monument

Avenue in Richmond.

The notes are written in a 1956 Mason Insurance Agency planner, leather bound.

Before she begins her own remembrances, she seems to copy a remembrance from her grandmother, Mary Minor Watson Taylor, her grandmother:

*Feb. 9-1898-*

*That cold spell we had 2 hens, 25 chickens, 2 lambs and one calf in the pantry for 2 nights. Now Lucy has 2 more lambs, all from Burley and the 2 last ones refuse to eat, so sheep have to be held for them to suck and they are mighty troublesome.*

She then writes what appears to be a list of hired help names.

*Servants- House- Mourning- Head*

*Daughter Peggy was cook*

*Daughter Nanine*

*Peggy offspring- Sard and Jake. When he was born, Peggy retired to her room- next to kitchen- for a month. George was Mourning’s husband. Old Joe and Barbara lived at the quarters. Little Joe- Felix and “Stiff Lad Johnny” were their sons. Old Joe as a young man had been sent to work on the “Breast Works” around Richmond. Wen the war ended he said he did not want to be free, that Westend was his home and he came back. As he got older he told my grandfather he was not able to do a man’s work but he could keep the vegetable garden paths weeded. When I knew him he had the back trouble that made him bend over so badly you had to lean down to see his face or talk to him. He used a little sorrel mule Dolly to plow the vegetable garden. Speaking of mules, my grandfather* (Henry Taylor II) *had gone to Kentucky and bought 12 mules- 6 very large and 6 average. They were in “field back of the kitchen”, and didn’t have enough to do and would chase rabbits or anything handy- also my grandfather’s hose Black horse and the cows and a bull grazed there. He was strictly “off limits” to children!*

*In the earliest days I think Mourning was there and Mother too, much more than she wanted to be. As breakfast was not until nine o’clock little fry had to have a glass of milk on the pantry steps. I vaguely remember being taken to the creek through the stable lot. The gate to the lot was where the gate that started you to Grassdale. Through another gate you went up the hill to Mr. Loving’s house* (the overseer, later farm manager) *past the quarters and on to Burley. At the creek was a fine, deep sand for in which to play. Where the creek made a bend around some tree roots it was deep enough to catch tiny sun-fish, which Peggy cooked.*

*I do not remember just when Mourning retired and Aunt Lucy took over. Aunt Nancy refused to take any responsablety* (sic) *of children so if Aunt Lucy went off the place wherever children on hand had to go too. She was a firehandler of children, She laid down the rules for our safety and, as she had an explosive temper, no one would think of breaking one. On occasion we would want to ask her something after her temper had exploded so we would trail along after her until she began to whistle- the storm was over-. She had lots of chickens. When the eggs hatched the hen and her chickens were kept in hovels dotted all over the western part of the yard. Then hen was tied to a brick and the chickens free to run around. When a hen made her nest outside somewhere and came up with a bunch of chickens they were handed over to me to take care of. The enthusiasm soon wained* (sic) *and Aunt Lucy took over. When the chickens were eating size Aunt Lucy bought them from me. A neat type of business wouldn’t you say. In the stable lot were two stables- one for mules- one for horses. The oxen shed. These were huge creatures with very long curved horns- eight of them I think. When very young I decided to talk up to the “Woods Gate.” At the top of the hill there were the oxen! All bovines have a lot of curiosity and they came to see what I was. I turned and ran as fast as I could, got through the small people gate and fell to the ground completely out of breath. The oxen lost interest and did not follow. I never saw them hitched up for work. There used to a fence that started at the cow pen ran at the edges f the two kitchen buildings and one to the flower garden. It had a style near the small building that had once been the smoke house but was used for chicken and pig feed. I got pinned to the top of the style by a large turkey gobbler who could get under the fence so I had no way to escape his belligerent attitude until a grown person came along. For a few years I had ridden horseback, but with Little Joe holding lead line. Came the day I was to take a solo ride to the Honey shuck gate and back. That gate led into the Burley property. We were living at 2001 so I was seven or more. All went well until I got back to the quarters and saw all the household include Mother, out to see me. I wanted to do a bit of showing off so kicked the horse to a fast trot, lost my balance and fell off. When I got p the right arm would’t* (sic) *work. Dr. Scott was sent for and thought it was a broken collar bone and with with 4” wide adhesive tape bound the arm to the body from the waist up- lots of adhesive. A few days later it was decided it was not a break and the adhesive tape had to come off. That was a very bad time for all concerned. I was taken to Rd. where Dr. Op. said it was a paralyzed nerve and would wake up. But as son as it did I must be put on a horse as I might be too timid to ride again. I never was a very bold rider. The cow pen was next to what was politely call the “Garden House” The Garden House was in a yard of its own with a lot of trees. Adult 3 adult holes* (?) *and one small. It had taken a hen nest and there was a first time I saw a hen lay an egg and was astonished when you got a call at night such a doings of getting a lantern lit and on the way the ducks quacked and the birds gave warning signals so it was a very noisey* (sic) *walk.*

*The only memory I have of my grandmother was when the milking took place. She sat all in black on one side of a stile* (sic) *and the lard tin sized containers on the other for milk. As she died at our house, 804 W. Grace, when I was only 5 yrs old the memory is faint*.

*Aunt Nancy too over that job. The open tins would be full of flies. They were strained out and the milk went into other tin pans, handles on both side, which were put in the spring house where the water flowed through at just the height not to get in to the pans. The skim milk went into a fig barrel. There was a contraption that would lift the barrel up, a horse was hitched to it get it up the steep hill to the quarters and on to the house where it fed pigs and chickens and ducks. The spring was a lovely spot all shaded by willow trees. At the right time the pans were removed to the tables outside. Aunt Nancy would skim off the cream for butter.*

*The horses for the house and the calves grazed on the farm. Occasionally at night the mules would get in and chase the calves. Such excitement! All workers waked up, lanterns lit, and out to sve the calves! The front gate entrance had beautiful and huge Dutch Elm trees lining the drive way to the house. They got the Elm disease. Aunt Lucy tried in every way she could to save those trees, but one year the poisoned leaves fell off and killed 7 calves. She could not afford such a loss. Uncle David* (Admiral David Watson Taylor) *turned loose a variety of European wasps that were supposed to eat the beatles* (sic)*, but it was too late and the trees all died. I haven’t said a thing about Aunt Julia* (sister to Lucy, Nancy, Admiral David, and daughter of Mary Minor Watson Taylor and Henry II) *and Uncle Tom Watson. I was told that when they were married they came to Westend, but Uncle Tom was allergic to work and did not allow either white or colored to work and m grandfather did not allow either white or colored to hang around with workers and he told Uncle Tom to get out. In my day they lived at Burnley. They had a son close to Henry’s age who, I think, died of Typhoid by Dr. Broom giving him quinine. I am pretty sure about Dad’s youngest brother Edward* (actually Edmund Pendleton Taylor, who died at age twenty in 1894 while a student at Cornell) *having such treatment I was always welcome at Burnley when May Taylor and I went to dinner Aunt Julia would cut up the squaks* (?) *for us- into what you ate with knife and fork and what with fingers. She had the biggest and best squaks you ever tasted. I got mine first as I was a few hours holder. The cook was “My Lou” and a good one. Uncle Tom still did as little work as he could. He rented his fields to Mr. Block for gazing. They got full of broom straw which he burned off in fall. He buggy horse named Topsy would go right through the flames- thrilling! Topsy was the enemy of cars and motor cycles. She was not afraid of them, unusual for her day, and Uncle tom would given half the road no more. The roads were rounded up for drainage so hard for cars and motor cycles to pass which made the drives mad. A work horse he owned was a large grey which had the name of “Seeworeboues”. He fascinated (sic) e with going to “Lover’s Leap” and telling all sorts of tales about it. There was a large gray stone in one of the fields which he said was left by the Ice Age and animals left it strickly* (sic) *alone. Age made them decide to move to C-ville. The were told to update the house, in the Kodak pictures there is one of it as I knew it and of the update one. They bought or rented a house next to the Martha Jefferson Hospital, lived there a few years and deiced to go back to the country, but again decided to go to C-ville.*

*They rented a house across the street from where they lived before. Uncle Tom got sick and died. I went up at once. Uncle Tom was laid out on the bed in their bedroom- Aunt Julia and I slept in the company bedroom. Before we slept Aunt Julia offered a glass of wine. It must have been a very strong one for it made my head swim- thought this was a ridiculous situation- Uncle Tom dead in the next room, Aunt Julia in the bed with a drunken neice! Came the time Aunt Julia could not function alone. It was arranged for her to go to West Brook. Henry Mary and I were on hand. The Dr. came up to give a sedative so the journey would not frighten her. The ambulance waited, but Aunt Julia was just as lively as could be. Time went on and on. Finally I asked the Dr. if he could give her a little more sedative. Rather reluctantly he did. Worked and the drive down was uneventful. I did the entering and such a lot of ancestry questions you never heard. A lot I could not answer. Anyway Aunt Julia never woke up. So you could say I killer her. Aunt Julia and Uncle Tom are both buried in the C-Ville Cemetery downtown.*

*When I was a small baby the Tobacco barn caught fire. O fire departments in those days you just watched it go. In it was stored the original parlor furniture. Substituted for that- a large set of ugly Victorian. It had 2 sofas, arm chairs and side chairs. When Dads was there he loved to lie on it and listen to what wen ton around him. Both he and Uncle David kept old clothes in Aunt Nancy’s care and would get into them at once. If they were ever cleaned they didn’t look it. The parlor and little parlor had marble toped tables in the center of the room which held a lamp and chairs around the table so people could read. I had quite a time with grandfather when I was reading a book with the title What Katy Did. Grandfather was deaf and used a trumpet. He asked what I was reading and heard Katydid so he would tell me about the insect and I would shout down the trumpet to correct him.*

*Mourning took care of him besides all her other jobs. When I woke up about six o’clock the first sound I heard was Mourning with the waxer rubbing the hall floors. The waxer was a very heavy thing about a brick and a half wide and a brick long and two brick stal. Bottom was a stiff brush and somewhere above was wax. It must have taken a lot of stenght (sic) to push that thing back and forth. When Mourning retired Mothe (sic) was delighted to turn me over to Aunt Lucy. She gave me a wonderfull(sic) happy childhood. I have written a book. Sorry to be so talkative.*

*Some of what I have talked about you can see in dropping to pieces photograph books. Anything else you want to know about let me know.*

*It was grandfather Taylor who added dormer windwos to the kitchen buildings to try to make those upstairs rooms more livable.*

*In the excitement of the fire Mother forgot all about me, but she had put me in the middle of one of those large beds upstairs and was perfectly safe.*

*The meal was ground in a mill that was on the creek opposite Westland. I have been down on horse back with a big bag of corn behind the saddle and back with a bag of meal.*

*Wheat thrashing time was of great interest. The threshing machine was a huge object. The dust was awful. Workers from neighboring farms joined in. A the break for dinner all workers came up the brick walk from the kitchen, cups in hand and grandfather doled out hefty drinks. They talked and sang and had a fine time.*

*The forth of July was a fine time for the household. We all went to the P.O. At Trevilians and so did most of the county not only to get the mail but to swap news and gossip.*

*Most of my enjoyment was with horses. Uncle Charlie Bolting Gave me my first horse- he was really a large pony. He turned out to be a circus pony. It you put him in a circle he would keep it up. When the Navy Yard family (David Watson Taylor) was there we gave as how. The audience sat in the green house. My part was to put Charlie in a tight circle and sing a song about a Cow-Boy. Charlie did Aunt Lucy no good because hitched up to a buggy he would lie down. He was sold and Maisy came on the scene. She was an untrained 5 gaited saddle horse. You never could tell which gait she would do. I knew previous little of that end, but loved her anyway. Think she was sold when I went abroad.*

*Such ice cream! IT was made under the linden tree between house and kitchen. When done we all had a saucer then it was packed in ice to await dinner. Then it joined by little pound cakes in various shapes.*

*The Navy Yard Taylors came for a month while opening Grassdale. After they moved Uncle David and assorted children spent as much time at Westend as Grassdale. They were great sweet eaters, always ate up the candy on the piano top and dumped spoons of sugar in the soup.*

*Watermelons were also eaten on the back porch. You ate your slice at the edge of the porch, spit the seeds on the ground to the great delight of ducks and chickens. When butter was churned you got a glass of buttermilk.*

*In late winter there was usually a lamb or two in the pantry being hand raised because of mother rejection or death. I remember a late one called Billy. Aunt Lucy couldn’t resist encouraging him to butt, so he was something to look out for until he was returned to the flock. I reckon it was about that time that the back steps were squeezed in. They were more like a ladder than step and the servants went up and down side-way. Think of all of the slop jars that had to be emptied every day and the hot and cold waters for the tub baths and then emptied! All up and down those so called steps!*