

SEVEN ISLANDS

* No longer standing

Islands" to his young sons John and Henry. This included "bank" land as well as the large island. After acquiring his brother's inheritance, John began buying adjoining lands until he owned three miles of riverfront land along the James. (There was a hill on Ware's land close to Lawson's Branch which is still called "Gallows Hill," where legend has it that a man was hung for some long-forgotten dark deed.)

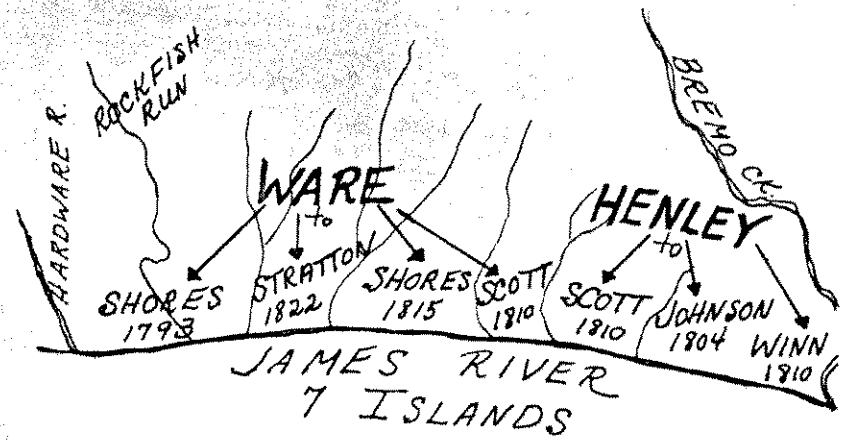
During the late 1700's the only other man owning riverfront property between David Ross on the Hardware and the Cocke family at Brems Creek was William Henley, who held 300 acres.

Much has been written about John Ware in previous *Bulletins*, but a few facts bear repeating to illustrate his prominence in early Fluvanna. He was Justice of Albemarle County until Fluvanna County was formed in 1777, when he became a member of its first Court of Justices. He was a Vestryman first of St. Anne's Parish and later of Fluvanna Parish. He served in the General Assembly in 1781. Ware's involvement in the Revolutionary War has been chronicled in *Bulletin Number Twenty-four*. His last public office was that of Sheriff in 1796.

In addition to his involvement in county affairs, John Ware farmed his lands and built at least two mills. There is some mystery about the exact location of one of the mills, but it must have been on Rockfish Run. Tradition says that during the Revolutionary War Rebels threw muskets, etc., into his millpond, in order to hide them from the British. In this century George Seay found pieces of old muskets in the silted bed of the millpond.

The second mill was located on the James, at the foot of today's State Route 640. The location of this mill was determined by records; when Charles Scott bought this land from Ware's heirs, it included "mill sills, and canalls and all appurtenances." When he applied for permission to build his mill in 1810, the jurors summoned to examine the site reported that Scott wanted to open a canal formerly cut by Ware. The site was described by deeds, by diary entries of Andrew J. Seay, and in an article from the *Miller's Review* as being located at present-day Shores. Wood's Map of 1820 places the mill too near the mouth of Brems Creek.

Ware was ingenious in preparing for his James River mill and undoubtedly envisioned a large commercial enterprise. The location, at the foot of a hollow which formed a break in the bluffs, could easily be reached by land. To supply water for his mill, he blasted rock from the bluff upriver about 1500 yards. This rock fell into the river, giving rise to the landmark known as "Falling Rock," and thereby diverted river current into a primitive canal dug to carry the water to his mill. This canal was there at least as early as 1785. In 1794 he applied to the Court to have two roads opened: one from Bryant's Road just below



the Cary Creek bridge to his mill, and the other from the Fork Ordinary, which he owned, to his mill. There is no record that permission was granted, but twenty years later General John H. Cocke of Brems referred to "Ware's Old Road," placing it generally on the path of today's S.R. 640.

Toward the end of his life John Ware began to think of selling land. Thomas Shores, Jr. bought 754 choice acres along the James between the Hardware and the Little Rockfish; however, when Ware died in 1801, he still owned at least 1500 acres in Fluvanna, plus an estate in Buckingham. His will directed that the Fork Ordinary Tract be sold to satisfy a debt. He left to his children Ulysses, Washington, John and Polley "all my tract of land known by the name of 7 Islands whereon I now live." The will did not mention his son Peter H. Ware, but earlier he had given Peter slaves "... for and in consideration of my son Peter H. Ware's intermarriage with Patsey Lindsey. . . ."

In 1810 the Ware heirs began to sell the land. John J. Johnson bought a tract on the highlands, known for the rest of the century as the "Johnson Tract." Charles Scott bought 400 acres, which soon became the nucleus of the Middleton Mills (Shores) community, with the miller's house and the brick home he built, called Melrose.

The last land sold was John Ware's original inheritance, which together with land he bought from Creed Childress was known as "Ware's Old Tract." Thomas Shores bought part of it — 410 acres of productive land high on the bluffs next to Scott's land, plus the lower part of Ware's island. Finally in 1822, Washington Ware relinquished

al! At one point he wrote General Cocke that his wheat crop failed and the General would just have to wait for his money. Wilson also mortgaged 600 feet of poplar and walnut plank, as well as the furniture he made: clocks, cupboards, looms, bureaus, sideboards, tables, chairs, and even a washing machine.

Wilson died before the Civil War, but Martha lived on Wilson's trust until her death. In 1860 part of the land, including the Johnson Tract, was sold. The largest part of the trust, the "Wilson Shores Tract," remained intact until 1871 when Martha relinquished her interest. (Today the land near the river is owned by Chester Jennings; Fred and Helen Barker farm their extensive property; and the Odell Woodson family owns a large tract. Except for the sites of Union Baptist Church and the houses along S.R. 640 above Seay's Chapel, much of the rest of the land has reverted to woodland.)

Chastaine Shores

Chastaine Shores inherited nothing, but his father had given him land in the past which, Shores wrote, "is all I intend him to receive from my Estate." Chastaine was a clever businessman and very wealthy in his own right.

Mr. Omohundro wrote that Chastaine (Teeny) Shores was handsome, very wild and "would drink at times." On one such spree he rode his horse right into the general store in Cartersville! He married Betsy Steger from Buckingham, against her father's wishes. In a quarrel with her parents, she told them that she would marry Teeny if he were the devil himself, and local wits declared that she certainly caught the devil after the wedding!

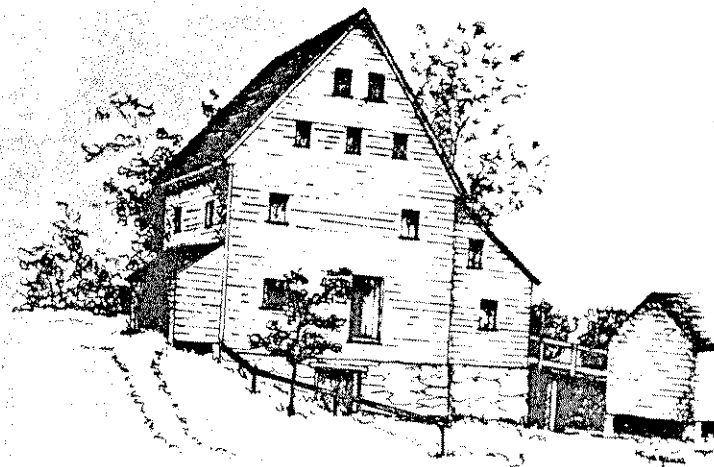
Chastaine and Wilson often hired slaves from General Cocke of Bremono on a yearly basis. When Chastaine owned Melrose, the two brothers farmed approximately 1000 contiguous acres. In 1828 the General wrote:

I must object to any of my hirelings being hired by Chastaine Shores because they have been badly treated by him or his brother whose place is so sickly as to have greatly endangered the life of the woman he hired this year and who will probably be an invalid for the rest of her life.

In 1831 Chastaine sold the last of his Fluvanna land, except some islands, and settled in Buckingham. There he owned Windy Hill, a 600-acre plantation opposite Seven Islands. Like his father, he had many slaves and owned his own boat. According to Mr. Omohundro,



Built in 1813 by Charles Scott, Melrose was home to the Shores, Tutwiler, Johnson and Seay families. Greek Revival pediments, a refined water table and corner "rubbed bricks" are gracious touches which offset the unusually tall proportions.



Virgin's Mill. A mill race brought water from the millpond on the left to an overshot wheel on the far side of the mill. The old Grist Mill operated for ninety-three years.

Champ Pace and they stayed on at Pleasant Hill, farming sixty acres.

Hattie of Melrose

And what happened to Hattie Johnson? Her life could fill the pages of a bestseller. Her husband Francis L. had died without leaving a will and still owing the estate of the deceased Martin Tutwiler for Melrose. Within a year, Hattie married Richard Harlan, a "canal boat driver" who was born and raised upriver on the Stratton farm. She foolishly signed a marriage agreement granting all her interest in her husband's estate to Harlan. Elizabeth and her son John Jedediah II immediately brought suits against Hattie to recover debts she owed them. In April of 1868 Hattie's baby daughter Elizabeth Johnson was made a ward of the Court and eventually went to live at Pleasant Hill.

At the same time, the Tutwilers brought suit to recover either the money owed Martin's estate, or the Melrose property. Court action allotted Hattie her dower rights, that is, one-third of the estate. She was given Melrose and 179 acres surrounding it. The Tutwilers obtained an injunction to restrain Hattie and Richard from "cutting timber or wood more than shall be sufficient for firewood" and to enjoin them to keep up all necessary repairs to plantation fences and buildings. In September of 1869 the injunction was lifted and Hattie's dower rights were confirmed.

The Court appointed Thomas H. Tutwiler (who was Commonwealth Attorney) Special Commissioner to sell the balance of Francis L.'s estate at public auction. By some coincidence, Tutwiler's son Edward became the purchaser of all but the Western View tract.

Hattie at least had a home, but her troubles were not over. In November of 1869 her husband Richard Harlan was killed by Washington Shores, a son of Chastaine and cousin to Thomas Tutwiler. This new tragedy left Hattie with two baby boys; a widow for the second time at age twenty-seven. Court records do not offer a clue as to a motive for the murder or where it occurred, but Shores pleaded not guilty and asked for a change in venue, which was not granted. The case was continued from one Court term to the next for six years and was finally just dismissed!

Poor Hattie's story finally ended with this terse entry in the Court minutes of November 23, 1874:

On the motion of John F. Tanner [a relative] and it appearing to the Court that Hattie T. Harlan is a Lunatic, the Court doth appoint Lewis J. Walton, Sheriff of this County committee of the said Hattie T. Harlan.

Melrose slipped into disrepair, sustained another fire (could Hattie have set it?) and finally was sold at public auction to Jack and Josephine Seay in 1883. Ironically, Jack was a first cousin of Richard Harlan, while Josephine was a cousin of Washington Shores.

William McCoy bought Western View, then sold the house to his partner John Stanton. Stanton and McCoy were successful black businessmen who bought a great deal of land around Shores, including the Wilson Shores Tract where McCoy built his home Charity Hall. The partners owned a store near the Middleton Mills where McCoy secured a license to sell ardent spirits. Later they owned a steam-powered saw mill and in 1905 built another store, a brick building which is now the home of Fred Burkholder.

MIDDLETON MILLS

The mill at Shores, begun by John Ware and rebuilt by Charles Scott, created the village and in turn, life in Shores revolved around the mill. Martin Tutwiler, Horatio Magruder and Gilly Lewis, "merchants and millers," bought the mill in 1828. The firm did a large business in the county, with sales amounting to about \$30,000 a year for the eight years they owned it.

The mill became known as Middleton Mills after the James River and Kanawha Company bought it in 1836. The Company considered tearing it down, as it stood in the proposed path of the canal. Instead, they did considerable blasting and digging to locate the canal between the mill and the rock cliff. The engineers built a crib dam on John Ware's primitive rock dam in the James and enlarged the original canal to accommodate boats. Two cut-stone arches with sluice gates were built to regulate the amount of water diverted to the mill.

The towpath ran directly in front of the mill and a large bridge was built over the canal on the northeast corner of the mill. The bridge led to the road (S.R. 640) which wound up the hollow following Cotton Patch Branch. Several small businesses lined the road, including the cooperage, the smithy, general merchandise stores and warehouses.

The mill, like all mills, was the social center of the neighborhood. After bringing a wagonload of wheat or corn to be ground, the men congregated around the stove in the office, or in summertime lounged in the shade of the mill, exchanging views on crops, the latest freshet, and politics. During the canal era from 1840 to 1881, they leaned on the fence watching freight boats being loaded with produce, swapping tall tales with the boatmen and eying the pretty ladies on the packet boats.

During the years that Middleton Mills was owned by the James River and Kanawha Company, it was rented to a succession of millers, including Isaac Roberts, John Burgess and Clement R. F. Seay.