CARRA GARRETT DILLARD and SUZANNE GARRETT MONTAGUE

Mrs. Dillard and Mrs. Montague grew up in Williamsburg, the daughters of Van F. Garrett, one of the "Seven Wise Men" of William and Mary. Their recollections of their childhood days before World War I are sharp, delightful, and all too brief.

The interview was taped at Mrs. Montague's summer house, and the two ladies were interviewed simultaneously, as they felt they could spur each other's memory.
Interviewee: Cara Garrett Dillard and Susanne Garrett Monteague
Date of interview: July 13, 1976
Place: King's Knob, Grafton, Va.
Interviewer: Emily Williams
Session number: 1
Length of tape: 33 mins.

Contents:
- Description of town
- Pastimes: plays
  - Debates
  - Receptions
  - Dances
  - Athletics
  - Dances (cont'd.)
- Railroad station as social center
- Visits
- Local plays
- Effect of coeducation
- Excursions, interest in historic sites
- Picnics
  - Henry Bills, William Colt, Alexander Pleasants
- Schools
- Braxton Parish
- Description of Van Garrett
- Summary

Approximate time:
- 2 mins.
- 2 mins.
- 1 min.
- 1 min.
- 2 mins.
- 1 min.
- 3 mins.
- 1 min.
- 1 min.
- 1 min.
- 2 mins.
- 2 mins.
- 3 mins.

See back of sheet for names and places mentioned in interview.
Williams: I'll ask both of you ladies this to start off with: we read in Parke Rouse's book, *Cows on the Campus*, and we are led to believe that Williamsburg about the turn of the century up to World War I was a sleepy little town. Is this an accurate picture?

Dillard: It was sleepy in a way. Of course the story got around about the time we forgot the election day completely; everybody was happy without it. But I think among ourselves we weren't quite so sleepy—we had projects going on, and there was a great deal of social life.

Montague: It was a sleepy town, maybe, but it was the most pleasant town to live in because there wasn't so much hustle and bustle.

Dillard: No great rush about things. Of course, I don't think people realize how much smaller Williamsburg was. We had Duke of Gloucester Street, which we used to call Main Street, sometimes Front Street. Nicholson Street was never anything but Back Street. Francis Street did go by its name. York Street was Woodpecker Street.
Different little communities had different names; back of the Wythe House was known as Buttermilk Hill; I think it was because the cows used to congregate there.

Montague: The cows just ran rampant all over town. They grazed on the green there.

Dillard: Our father was on the city council at that time, and he had voted not to allow the pigs on the street (he would let the cows go). He wasn't reelected the next year!

Montague: The pig people voted him down!

Dillard: But it was a mighty pretty little town—the buttercups just ran wild. But what we (she and Mrs. Montague) were thinking about is that really there was so much social life there, but we made our social life; it wasn't that there was much coming in.

Montague: The college was the center of the cultural life of Williamsburg. The Ben Greet Players and the Coburn Players would come every year and put on Shakespearean plays that were very fine for us. A great many of the children would participate with them. I remember being part of a crowd of dogs that jumped on Caliban's back—that was one of our roles.

Dillard: Yes. We were little spirits—or little fairies in Midsummer Night's Dream. All of us looked forward to that.

Montague: Were they always given down in Player's Dell?
Dillard: They were given either in Player's Dell or right behind
the Main Building (the Wren Building) at the college.

They had a little raised platform. I remember as a child
when we went up on the stage to be made up and put on our costumes,
I was so disillusioned: I had thought [Defanya was the]
most beautiful thing I had ever seen in my life from the
audience, and then when I saw her with the greasepaint
and the false eyelashes it was quite a shock to me.

We had the wonderful Chataqua that used to come every
summer. It was lots of fun. They had plays and classes
we'd learn
for the children and songs.

Montague: They had a big tent right out on Courthouse Green, which
was right in front of the house where we grew up.

Dillard: Then at the college they had these two literary societies.
(The college wasn't very big at that time—I guess less
than two hundred boys.) They were very active; one was
called the Phoenix and one was called the Philomathean.
They used to give programs. Of course, they were very
high-brow: debates and orations.

Montague: And all the Williamsburg people would attend them.

Dillard: They'd sometimes have a reception. In those days a
reception meant little bars of neapolitan ice cream and
usually macaroons. That was wonderful!
Of course, the Phi Beta Kappa reception was the great social event of the year. I remember my mother saying that her evening dress (I think it was the one evening dress she had in twenty years) should be initiated into the chapter because it had been to so many meetings!

Montague: No one had much money to buy a lot of clothes; nobody else did, either. So you didn't have to worry about competition. If mother had to wear the same dress it didn't bother her; she just wore it the next year when they had the Phi Beta Kappa reception.

Dillard: When we were little children we used to go up when the college had commencement. They'd have these bands come to play for the dances. The different fraternities (I think there were five of them at that time) used to give a dance at the end of the year, a "ger-man," as they called it. The college yard would be lit up with all these beautiful Japanese lanterns, and the children of the town would go up and dance around on the sidewalk to the music of the band. And if there happened to be any ice cream left over from the night before they would come out and serve it to us. We
wouldn't have thought of missing that!

Montague: The V formed by the Wren Building, the Brafferton, and the President's House was where they hung the lanterns, and it was perfectly beautiful!

Williams: How were they lit?

Dillard: By candles. And of course, every now and then one would catch on fire and add to the excitement. If you were lucky enough they would give you a few of them; if you hung around while they were dismantling them you would usually be presented with some lanterns to hang in your own yard.

Montague: Of course, one thing that we remember vividly about the college was their sports activities. They played with Richmond, Randolph-Macon, and Hampden-Sidney. Whenever there was a big exciting game and they won, they would come down and have a bonfire on the green. My daddy learned the hard way, and very often he would take our front gate off its hinges and hide it so it wouldn't be burned in the bonfire.

Dillard: They'd come down and serenade the professors. My father was very shy, and we'd be very sad because he'd go in the back of the house so he wouldn't have to go out and make a speech.
Then as we grew older, of course, we attended the dances. Everybody in Williamsburg made their debut when they were about fourteen years old. There were very few girls around.

Montague: The college wasn't coeducational.

Dillard: They gave dances in the old gym, which was long ago torn down. We'd go over in the morning (of the dance) and help the boys decorate for the different fraternity dances that they had. We'd put up their colors and get greens and make great long garlands that we'd hang all over---it made it very pretty.

Montague: Did you make daisy chains?

Dillard: We did anything we could to make the gym look pretty.

It would be highly decorated. Then of course each fraternity had what they called a figure, and if you had gone with a member of the fraternity (Kappa Sigma, Kappa Alpha, and PiKA were the big ones in those days) they would have a kind of a cotillion in which you marched with a member of the fraternity. At the end each girl was given a little present—a card case or one year they had pretty silk parasols. We put the parasols up and walked under them in the figure; it was all very gay.
Then the last night was the final ball. That was nonfraternity; everybody chipped in to give that. It usually lasted all night along, and you'd have breakfast in the morning with your gentleman. I remember one year all of us went down to the station to the 8:00 milk train that went to Richmond to bid them all farewell.

Montague: It's funny how the train station was a center, too.

There wasn't much exciting to do, especially on a Sunday. We were right on the corner where the street led to the old depot. All the students would come down to meet the train; that was the big excitement. Of course, all of us would get excited seeing all the boys.

Dillard: We'd sit on the baggage wagon and hold court. And when we were quite young (long before that period) we'd go in the old stable that was built out over the sidewalk (this was at the old Archibald Blair House, which was very close to the station). We'd go in the top of the stable and make lemonade, then we had a board with ropes on it, and Gladys Guy and her brother and my brother and I used to pass down this board out of the
window with lemonade on it and sell it for five cents a glass. We had a very profitable business on Sunday afternoons.

Montague: Another center, I think, of William and Mary were our two aunts: Aunt Lottie and Aunt Mary Garrett. They had the old home down behind the Capitol--the Coke-Garrett House. They were maiden ladies, very fond of the students. Especially on a Sunday afternoon, they would entertain with tea and cookies. And Aunt Mary had a Bible class. I've forgotten the exact number, but there were something like six or seven out of her Bible class that became ministers.

Williams: This would have been at Bruton Parish?

Montague: Yes, at Bruton Parish.

Dillard: You know, as I look back on it, I simply can't imagine today students spending their Sunday afternoons having tea and cookies with two ladies. But they loved going down there. My different friends and I would go down when we were about fourteen or fifteen and help serve. That was (you might say) a debut for us. We got to know the different boys; we looked forward to it.

Montague: Parke Rouse brought in in his book so many of the people who lived there at that time. It's strange to me how
many groups of sisters there were at that time: Miss Estelle and Miss Cora, and the other two misses Smith: Miss Edith Smith and Miss Alice Smith, and our two aunts.

Dillard: One day Miss Estelle said, "Cora, I don't understand: Williamsburg used to have such interesting characters. What has become of the old characters?" Cora said, "Estelle, don't you realize we're the characters now?"

Another thing that we used to do (but it didn't have anything to do with the college) was that we were very dramatic: we would give a play at the drop of a hat. If there was any worthy cause that needed to raise a little money somebody would get up a play. Now the college had its own group, called the Elizabethans, who used to give [plays] not only by Shakespeare, but Ben Johnson, Moliere—that era. Of course, they were extremely good. But the Williamsburg groups—I don't think we were particularly high-brow! We would put on these silly little plays in Cameron Hall. Cameron Hall was over at Eastern State (you've probably heard of Cameron Hall). It was supposed to have been condemned; it was in very bad condition and would probably fall down, not to stamp our feet on the floor because it
probably would cave in. We didn't pay the slightest bit
of attention to that (I don't know if it was like the
people who live on top of Vesuvius and never expect it
to happen to them). We always gave the plays there, and
the first night, which was a dress rehearsal, we invited
all the patients to come. Then the next night it was
open to the public. We gave a great many plays. Mrs.
was quite a playwright and
Coleman used to write up these different little fairy
stories and so forth.

Williams: Dr. Kimbrough's mother?

Montague: Yes, Dr. Janet Kimbrough's mother. And of course the
patients were rather strange critics.

Williams: You had spoken briefly of life for the girls before
coeducation; now how did it change when girls started
going to William and Mary?

Montague: Well, of course, Carra was off at school about that
time, so she didn't see that side of it. Dr. Janet
Kimbrough, who lived next door to us, was in the
very first class (of women), and I entered in '21.
It changed, but it was so new that it didn't make a
great deal of difference. I remember going up to a
dance hall in Norge, Viking Hall. The William and
Mary orchestra would go up there and play. My best
friend, Cynthia Coleman, and I would go up there with some of the boys, and we had a perfectly wonderful time because the coeds couldn't come there, and so we had all the boys to ourselves!

Dillard: I remember another thing in Williamsburg: we used to have various dancing schools. I remember one that Miss Pinky and Miss Kitty Morecock had, and it was located, in all places, over an undertaker's shop. Seems a strange place to hold dances, but they did. A little house where the Kendrews used to live used to be an undertaker's. Of course, they would just have either victrola records or somebody playing the piano, but we would have regular dates. It stopped really being a dancing school, and they little dances that would be held about twice a week.

Williams: And these were for the townspeople and the college people?

Dillard: Yes, anybody who wanted to come. You just had a little fee you would pay, and your date would take you down there.

Another thing that we used to enjoy were the excursions. Even before Williamsburg was discovered by the Restoration it was considered to be an historic city. Many people used to come down and visit. There were these excursion trains
that would come down from Richmond or Washington or Norfolk, and they would stop at the station. Then the people would be conducted through the town, and they usually ended up on Courthouse Green. They'd bring their lunch and sit down on the green. Lots and lots of people came.

Then they would have excursions to Jamestown; of course getting to Jamestown took practically all morning. You either went in a ramshackled old Ford or in a horse and buggy.

Montague: There again, our Aunt Mary went to Jamestown and did a great deal of the actual digging when Jamestown hadn't been restored. Two or three of those ladies would go out to Jamestown and work on the graves, dig around them to preserve those graves.

Williams: Were they members of the A.P.V.A.?

Montague: They were.

Dillard: At that time you could get so little help. Of course, Virginia didn't have much money as a state, so they had to do it themselves. Finally John Tyler, who was President Lyon Tyler's son, managed somehow or another to get some kind of bill through in which they put up a breakwater because Jamestown was being eaten away. (They point out now where the cypress tree was.) And
later, people became interested in things like Jamestown. But I can see those ladies going down now—Miss Lightfoot and Aunt Mary and Miss Willie Taylor—they'd go down with their little lunch bags and work all day. They didn't just supervise; they got in there and dug. So many of those old graves had been so covered with weeds and ivy that you wouldn't know that they were there.

Montague: I had two godmothers: one was Mrs. John Lightfoot from Richmond and the other was Mrs. John Lecher from Norfolk. who, as my sister said, were so interested in that. Mrs. John Lightfoot was head of that department of the A.P.V.A. that was trying to preserve Jamestown. She would come down from Richmond and get permission from mother to take me out of school. She'd ride me down in the buggy, and I'd spend the day in Jamestown. She worked on that project—well, she just preserved it, that's all.

Dillard: We always had these picnics; picnics were a big thing in those days, and we'd take any kind of wheels at all to get to Jamestown. The 13th of May, of course, was Jamestown Day, and everybody brought food, and the tables were put up in that little enclosed part of the old fort.
We'd have a lovely day. In those days nobody bothered about pollution; unfortunately they did get typhoid fever, but still we'd go swimming at that beach at Jamestown. There were a lot of places for picnics: we used to go down where Fort Eustis is now—what was that beach called? Kingsmill—that was it. We used to go down there and have picnics. There was a livery stable, and you could hire an old hack (as we called it) that would hold about eight people, and I believe they had about four horses.

Williams: That would have been a good drive down there.

Dillard: It was—three or four miles, I guess. That was the closest place to the river.

Montague: Have you had anyone to record anything about Henry Billups?

Williams: Yes, a few people I've talked to can remember one or two Henry Billups stories. Was he well known even to the children?

Montague: Oh, my goodness, yes. You see, our father was one of what they called "the Seven Wise Men." Henry came right with them, didn't he?

Dillard: He was just a real young boy.

Montague: Of course, Henry adored our father, and our father was very fond of him. When I went to college I had to walk from our house. I had a 9:00 class, and I'd be a right sleepy and a
little bit late; Henry would ring that bell with the
watch in his hand another two or three minutes to let
me get there on time.

Dillard: Our father married rather late in life; he had a confirmed
bachelor, everybody thought. When he married and came
back to William and Mary, Henry said, "Doctor, you's left
me the only bachelor on the faculty."

Another great friend of ours was William Galt, the
sexton at Bruton Parish Church. He'd always say, "Who's
your friend." "You are." (So he was) "Friend" Galt. He
was so good to us--a very fine man.

Montague: He told a group of tourists that Hamlet's ancestors were
buried there because the forefathers of the village hamlet
were buried there.

And old Alec Pleasants--remember him? What a hand-
some old fellow!

Dillard: Williamsburg was quite a different little town from most
little towns, it seems to me always was. It was peace-
ful and pretty and a happy little town. I remember our
little school--there never was a little school in the
world like little Matthew Whaley School. It was just
a wonderful little school.

Montague: It was ahead of its time. Tell some of the distinctive
things that they did.

Dillard: I think we had so much more interesting classes than the
children have today. Our books were not, "Jump, Spot, jump," and "Run, Betty, run." They were what they called stepping stones to literature: fables and stories and poems put in simple form. But it made it so that you wanted to read the real book a little bit later on.

Say, in the fourth grade there'd be little scenes from Treasure Isle--well, you could hardly wait to get the real Treasure Isle and read it after that. I remember in the first grade we had two books: one was the Hiawatha Primer, so of course, we were all Indians and we built teepees in the room and made all kinds of designs and read about Hiawatha. Another was about some little Dutch children; I don't remember too much about them, but of course we became Dutch. Later, in the fourth grade, we were studying about Greece, and Miss Nannie Davis, who was wonderful, would come in and draw all these Greek designs on the board. We knew all the gods and goddesses and the myths. It seemed to me we were greatly enriched.

And we'd have cooking classes; Miss Pinky Morescock would teach us cooking. We had a little room we'd all go in to learn to cook. Of course, Miss Pinky never hesitated to put in a dozen eggs or a pound of butter, so we learned to be very extravagant cooks.
Every spring we'd have the spring concert. We'd practice all year long; we'd sing every morning in assembly and learn all these songs (particularly patriotic and Confederate songs). Then at the concert at Cameron Hall we all wore our white dresses and roses in our hair. Of course the boys wore their best suits, and it was really a lovely little concert.

You were reminding me, Suzanne, of that outdoor classroom that we had.

Montague: That was a real innovation. It was screened-in, and when it got warm they would take us out to have classes in that classroom. I remember seeing in an educational book later on in college a picture of that being one of the first outdoor classes.

Dillard: And we always took these various walks. If there was something interesting in the spring, if somebody had a beautiful flower garden we'd all go up and see it. I remember particularly Miss Marshall's house had lovely flowers we'd go up to see. In the fall we'd go different places where there were lovely trees. We'd plant trees on Arbor Day; a whole group would participate.
Montague: And remember when we'd go over to Matthew Whaley's grave?
Matthew Whaley was the little boy the school was named after, and we'd go over and put flowers on his grave.

Dillard: I remember way back (and this really dates me) President Taft came to Williamsburg. And I don't know what particularly virtuous thing I had done, but I was appointed to present President Taft with a bunch of flowers. The whole school went down with our little flags to meet him at the old station. He was a huge man, and I'm sure the poor man didn't know what to do with a bunch of roses, but anyway, I duly presented them to him. I remember he patted me on the head and said, "Thank you, little girl." I was very impressed.

Montague: Part of the spring festivities came the last day of school, when they'd have all the races. One thing they had was the greased pole, and all the little boys would try to climb up the greased pole and then they'd slide down. The proudest moment of my life was the time my brother climbed to the top and waved his cap and won the prize.

Dillard: Mother said the prize that he won didn't begin to pay for the suit that he had ruined climbing up the greased pole!
Then we used to have the little county fair. That was held in the college yard. Williamsburg at that time was in sort of a slump; the old knitting mill had closed down, and that was our only industry at that particular time. And for some reason Toano had taken an upward surge; the rival we had in those days was the Toano High School. Particularly they had a girls' marching team that wore midibouses and carried flags. We had a rather strangely marching team. Also we'd had competitions for sewing and painting and drawing and cooking. We just had a lot of fun. Great crowds came. You spent the entire day up there at the college. They set up tables where they sold lunch.

Williams: Let me ask you about the church. In a lot of small towns, I know that the church is the center of the life of the town. Did Bruton perform that function as you were growing up, or was the college more of the center?

Dillard: I think the college was more of the center. We went to Bruton; we usually sang in the choir. We were great Sunday school people, of course. I remember during Lent how hard we used to work to fill our mite boxes, selling flowers and candy from door to door.

Montague: It had a great deal of influence, but I think the college was more of the center.

Dillard: The college was more so, but Bruton was certainly a
very definite part. We always had the Sunday school picnic and big Christmas tree. Mr. Ruffin Jones was Santa Claus.

Williams: Your father was very prominent in the church.

Dillard: Father was senior warden for more years than I can tell. Mr. Dennison Cole (Carrie Cole Geddy's uncle) was junior warden, and they used to carry up the collection. You know how the church is cruciform-shaped, and if father had finished he'd wait for Mr. Cole or Mr. Cole would wait for him. My little brother and I used to put penny bets as to which one would get there first.

Williams: You said that your father was a shy man. How would you describe him?

Montague: He was one of the gentlest, sweetest men, and the boys at college just loved him.

Dillard: He just never liked to put himself forward. If it was an important matter he always spoke out. But he didn't like getting up and making speeches. When you knew him by himself he was a very interesting and very amusing person to talk to. Like making those little speeches for the students—if he could get out of it, he would.

Montague: I remember walking up the street with my daddy and meeting the college students coming down. I can hear daddy
greeting them, "Gentlemen." And they'd nod their heads.
It was just that quiet way he said, "Gentlemen."

Williams: How did he feel about the college going coed? I know
there were some people who just thought it was going to
be the ruination of William and Mary.

Dillard: I think he was in favor of it.
that.
Montague: He felt, I think so, too. He thought it would save the
college; it was financially troubled about that time.

Williams: You were saying that it was more or less a nonstratified
town. Would there have been anyone who would have been
considered the first citizen of the town or among the
first citizens?

Dillard: I don't know. Sometimes the person who was mayor.
would be more or less honored, but I don't really think
so. Of course, the minister of Bruton and the president,
Mr. Tyler, and Mr. George Coleman were certainly leading
citizens, but I don't know of any one person.

Montague: I think that was part of what was nice about it.

Dillard: It wasn't a snobbish town at all. There were very few
little children that we were not supposed to play with.
Williams: You said you need to go, but I appreciate your both taking the time to talk with me because you've both been absolutely terrific on this.

Montague: We're just giving our own feelings about the town. You know, of course, about the reunions we've been having of the Williamsburg group. That shows that we weren't the only ones; there were just people from all over the world who came back because they thought so much of Williamsburg.

Dillard: For one thing, while certainly I appreciate what has happened through the Restoration, I don't like people to think there was nothing here to start with because there was so much here. I'm sure that's why Mr. Rockefeller was interested was that there was so much left here in Williamsburg. I thought Williamsburg was lovely; I never had the feeling of not knowing what to do.

Montague: No, there was plenty to do. It was a delightful place to grow up.