

Richard R. Garrett ~ Winder-Garrett Cemetery

Sarah E. McCartney

“Died at Marlebanks, in the county of York, on the 14th day of January, Mr. Richard R. Garrett, in the 46th year of his age.”¹

Richard Roper (R.R.) Garrett was born in York County, Virginia, in 1810.² He was the son of Richard Garrett and Ann Major. R.R. had several siblings, including Dr. Robert Major Garrett of Williamsburg who was the superintendent at Eastern State Hospital, a warden of Bruton Parish Church, and a mayor of Williamsburg. R.R. attended the College of William and Mary and afterwards studied law; however, “being of an active and enterprising character, he preferred the pursuits of agriculture.”³

As a young man, R.R. Garrett moved to an estate near Yorktown, in York County, Virginia. On November 8, 1831, he married Penelope Winder of Elizabeth City County, Virginia. Their marriage was announced in the November 12, 1831 edition of the *American Beacon and Virginia and North-Carolina Gazette*.⁴ R.R. and Penelope’s son, George Richard Garrett, was born circa 1833.⁵ It is believed that Penelope died a few years after George’s birth.

In 1836, R. R. Garrett ran unsuccessfully for a position in the Virginia House of Delegates, and his election campaign opened with a meeting in James City County. The statements of both Richard R. Garrett and his opponent, Colonel Robert McCandlish of Williamsburg, were published in the *Richmond Enquirer*.⁶ Mr. Garrett spoke after Colonel McCandlish, and a detailed description of his statement was included in the newspaper article.

Mr. Garrett then rose and addressed the people, in a neat and appropriate maiden speech. He commenced by remarking, that when he came from home he expected to meet Mr. Lightfoot as his only opponent; and he could not help expressing his very great astonishment at finding that that gentleman had withdrawn, and Colonel McCandlish, so late a candidate for the Senate, taking his place. He

¹ R.R. Garrett Obituary, *Garrett Family Papers*, Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg.

² R.R. Garrett, York County, Virginia, 1850 United States Census.

³ R.R. Garrett Obituary.

⁴ Marriage of Richard R. Garrett to Miss Penelope Wynder on Tuesday, November 8, 1831, *American Beacon and Virginia and North-Carolina Gazette*, November 12, 1831.

⁵ Matthew M. Wise, *The Littleton Heritage* (West Columbia, South Carolina: Wentworth Printing Corporation, 1997), 347; George Richard Garrett, Death Record, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

⁶ *Richmond Enquirer*, vol. XXXII, issue 105 (Richmond, Virginia), March 19, 1836.

thought, he said, that the mystery could be easily explained, for Mr. McCandlish, no doubt, finding out that his prospects for a seat in the Senate were completely blasted, he had retired from that contest, and was content to take, if he could get it, a more humble station in the House of Delegates. Mr. Garrett said, he was a Whig, and a States Right man, and contended that the States in all cases of infraction of the Constitution were the only judges of the mode and measure of redress. He said that he was in favor of Judge White as next President, and opposed to Mr. Van Buren, who was the last man he could think of supporting.

It is likely that R.R. Garrett owned the land that is now part of the Marlbanks Cove development in York County, Virginia. The property belonged to the Garrett family, but at this time, it is unknown if the property belonged to R.R. Garrett, or to his parents. In 1837, the Garretts made modifications to the estate in York County. A new manor house was built on the property, and the estate was named “Marlbanks.”⁷ “Marlbank” refers to the layer of marl (a mixture of mud, shells, and clay) that is found beneath the soil surface on the banks of the York River. The estate was originally about 800 acres, but within two decades, they increased their holdings to 1100 acres.

In the late 1830s or early 1840s, R. R. married Laura Winder, Penelope’s sister.⁸ (A widower with a young child in the nineteenth-century would have quickly remarried, and unmarried sister-in-law would have been a typical choice.) From 1844 until 1848, Garrett held a position in the Virginia Senate representing Accomack, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Warwick and Williamsburg.⁹ He wrote to Laura on January 27, 1845, from the Senate Chamber in Richmond.¹⁰ In the letter he mentions his sadness at leaving “my dear Laura & little children” and his “uncomfortable ride to York” from Chesterville in Elizabeth City County, where the family had been visiting Laura’s mother Mary. After spending the night with his college friend,

⁷ Marlbank Cove Historical Perspectives, www.yorkcountyva.org/index.cfm?action=n63&id=169,22,84

⁸ R.R. Garrett to Laura Garrett, January 27, 1845, Garrett Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary; Wise, 347.

⁹ R.R. Garrett obituary; Cynthia M. Leonard, *The General Assembly of Virginia, July 30, 1619-January 11, 1978: a Bicentennial Register of Member* (Richmond, VA: Published for the General Assembly of Virginia by the Virginia State Library, 1978).

¹⁰ R.R. Garrett to Laura A. Garrett, January 27, 1845.

William Pettit, in Yorktown, R.R. journeyed on to Richmond. Altogether, the trip took several days.

In the letter, Mr. Garrett told his wife about a party in Richmond, saying, “There were a number of ladies, present, and I looked around through the crowd and upon my honour I did not see one single lady (& what I mean to say will be the honest and conscientious expression of my heart) as handsome & to my eye so sweet as my dear Laura.” A committed Baptist, he also noted to his wife that there was a revival in progress at Richmond’s Fourth Baptist Church. In his obituary a decade later, a friend wrote, “Such was the estimation in which he was held by his Christian brethren, that at the two last meetings of the Baptist Association he was made “Moderator” of that intelligent body.”¹¹

In 1850, Garrett wrote to his son George, who was away at school. The letter was full of fatherly advice, and said, “I was delighted to hear you liked your school, and still more pleased to learn you had determined to make good use of your time and that while an opportunity was offered you intended to not only to make yourself a man but a big man (for you know knowledge is power/a blessing and a comfort to your father and friends).”¹² He also included a reminder to attend church and be morally upright, saying, “Do not my Dear Boy be led off from the path of rectitude by vicious young men in the temptation of which you are surrounded. These things please for a moment, but leave a death sting behind. I hope you attend church every Sunday. If you do not, don’t longer neglect so to do.”¹³

Although the obituary quoted at the opening of this article says that R.R. Garrett died on January 14, 1855, his tombstone records the previous day.¹⁴ He died at Marlbanks and was buried in the small cemetery near Chesterville where his mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and two daughters were already buried. His death was also noted by an obituary in the *Daily South-side Democrat* on January 23, 1855. Information about his burial is documented in Richard M. Bucktrout’s *Daybook and Ledger*.¹⁵ On page 81 of the ledger, Bucktrout’s entry for January 17, 1855, notes that the estate of Mr. R.R. Garrett paid \$10.00 for “one metallic coffin for himself [6

¹¹ R.R. Garrett obituary.

¹² R.R. Garrett to George R. Garrett, November 8, 1850.

¹³ R.R. Garrett to George R. Garrett, November 8, 1850.

¹⁴ There is a discrepancy between the dates of R.R. Garrett’s obituary and tombstone.

¹⁵ Bucktrout was an undertaker in Williamsburg and his ledger spans the years 1850-1866.

ft in the clear].” It also documents \$5.00 for “a case for the same” and another \$10.00 for “tending funeral on Back River” and carrying the coffin “down to huse.”¹⁶

From his tombstone:

In Memory of
R.R. Garrett
Born Jan 1, 1810
Deceased Jan 13, 1855
Age 45 Years
This Spirit Rests in the Arms of the Redeemer

¹⁶ Richard Manning Bucktrout, Daybook and Ledger, 1850-1866, Special Collections Research Center, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.