**Marion Cabell Tyree of Diamond Hill**

*Adapted from a program at the Jones Memorial Library on May 14, 2003, given by Mary Kathryn McIntosh*

Marion Cabell Tyree was the last surviving granddaughter of Patrick Henry and the daughter of Spotswood Henry. On her mother’s side she was descended from the Cabells, having been the great granddaughter of Col. John Cabell who figured in the Revolutionary War. She was born January 24, 1826, and lacked only about two weeks of being 86 at the time of her death on January 10, 1912.

Marion married Mr. Samuel Tyree of Lynchburg on February 9, 1843 at the age of 17. According to the 1880 census, Samuel was listed as an auctioneer, as his father, Richard, before him. Local histories indicate he later entered the real estate business, and that the Tyree and Wilkins Agency evolved from the venture.

Samuel’s mother was Mildred Young Douglas. She was the daughter of prominent Quaker parents, Achillis Moorman Douglas and Elizabeth Terrell Douglas. The marriage of Samuel’s parents on December 31, 1805, must have caused a stir because Richard was out of the faith. Samuel was fortunate in that those who knew him felt he exhibited in his own person some of the best Quaker traits. He was prosperous in business, and, according to Mrs. Tyree’s obituary, the couple had “a beautiful and comfortable home in which they dispensed in the most gracious and genial manner that hospitality for which old Virginia was famous.” During the Civil War especially, their doors were flung open not only to friends and relatives, but to strangers from the South.

In those days there were no sanitariums nor the thousands of appliances of today for mitigating suffering, and the war times and blockade rendered it harder to procure “dainties and remedies for the sick.” Mrs. Tyree kept a little sanitarium of her own. She created one of the more than thirty hospitals in Lynchburg established to care for the sick and wounded during the Confederacy. She sought out those soldiers who were far from their homes and friends and carried them to 1421 Harrison Street, on Diamond Hill.

She was described by her contemporaries as “a person of bright, quick mind, with a good command of language and fine descriptive power.” From her early youth she was a faithful and zealous member of the Episcopal church.

Mrs. Tyree had a peculiar aptitude for domestic economy. With her it was both a science and an art. In addition to being very energetic, she had “an infinite capacity for taking pains.” And thus every detail of her housekeeping received the most careful and efficient attention. She was induced by her friends to embody the result of her experience in an admirable cookery book published in 1879 by John P. Morton and Company of Louisville, Kentucky.

It was interesting to discover that Housekeeping in Old Virginia was used as a reference for the PBS series The Frontier House in 2002. Mrs. Tyree was a famous Lynchburger

What was the configuration of her book and how was it used in every day life? Most homemakers today probably have kept yellowed family recipes somewhere in a notebook or drawer. Indeed, we bring these treasured cards out on special occasions to create family dishes, and, therefore, continuity in our lives. Mrs. Tyree used a format much like earlier cookbooks in print. She gathered those family recipes from friends into one volume. In addition to the recipes, there is a chapter on housekeeping hints, and another on sickroom remedies. Mrs. Tyree has a lengthy treatise on two subjects: Setting up a Kitchen and the Art of Making Bread. The book contains over 1700 heirloom recipes in all including Flannel Cakes, Pigeon Pie, Souse Cheese, and Nasturtium Sauce. There is also a section of old advertisements which includes an entertaining description of Dr. Scott’s magnetic corset

Like other Virginia cookbook authors, Mrs. Tyree capitalized on the reputation of gracious Virginia hospitality derived from the Cavaliers who first settled here.

According to her, Virginia hospitality was opulent as a Royal Colony. When we declared our independence, its citizens “discarded all the showy extravagance of the old, and retaining only inexpensive graces, they succeeded in perfecting that system which surviving to this day, has ever been noted for its beautiful and elegant simplicity.

This system which combines the thrifty frugality of New England with the less rigid style of Carolina, has been justly pronounced, by the throng of admirers who have gathered from all quarters of the Union around the generous boards of her illustrious sons, as the very perfection of domestic art.”

Mrs. Tyree admonished women to master domestic arts, “making American homes more attractive to American husbands, sparing them a resort to hotels and saloons for those simple luxuries which their wives know not how to provide.”

In the early days of our nation, most of the cooks could neither read nor write. The most common recipes were not always written down as the cook knew what to do by practice. After slavery ended, cookbooks were helpful for women who had not spent much time in the kitchen. There was no format followed by those who wrote or used the recipes. Much of the actual instructions were often not mentioned as the lady of the house was expected to know how to put the ingredients together. If she was ill prepared, food was wasted. As mistress, she supervised kitchen activities, especially the making of jams and jellies because sugar was very expensive. She also had to be sure that non-edible products such as soap were made to assure adequate supply.

Measurements were often approximate and could vary widely.

Here are a few such measurements and their equivalents:

1 wine glass ¼ cup

1 jigger 1.5 fluid ounces

1 gill ½ cup

1 teacup a scant ¾ cup

1 coffee cup a scant cup

1 pinch / dash what can be picked up between thumb and first two fingers; less than 1/8 teaspoon.

½ pinch what can be picked up between thumb and one finger.

1 salt spoon ½ teaspoon

1 kitchen spoon 1 teaspoon

**Temperatures**

Very slow oven 300’

Moderate oven 350’

Very hot oven 450’-475’

**Common Weights**

1 penny weight 1/20 ounce

1 drachm 1/8 ounce

60 drops thick fluid 1 teaspoon

Butter the size of an egg ¼ cup or 2 ounces

Butter the size of a walnut 1 tablespoon

Butter the size of a hazelnut 1 teaspoon

Even these measurements were found on the internet, a form of standardization itself. Other factors to consider were:

2 lb Two pounds of flour--3 ¼ cups

6 eggs Six eggs -- 2 or 3 due to the larger size in our eggs today. One could weigh the eggs to be sure.

Sug Sugar was very course and had to be pounded and sifted from the loaf or cone.

Butter, especially in the winter months, was extremely briny and had to be washed repeatedly to free it from salt. Even then it might be rancid.

Flour was inclined to be very heavy. To get an equivalent texture with the modern product almost a third more is needed. Gelatin was made from calves’ feet, or from a product called isinglass, taken from the swim bladders of fishes. These were good in meat dishes but gave a meaty or fishy taste to molded desserts. Spinach was used to color the mold green and beet juice was used for red. The taste of those foods permeated what was being colored at times.

Often to us the quantity of spices in old recipes seems excessive, but was designed to cover the taste of other ingredients. Meat was tough and needed pounding, marinating and prolonged cooking.

Yeast was often made using the barm or sediment of brewing beer. Other recipes were leavened with simply eggs or soda and sour milk, until the invention of baking powder in 1843 by Alfred Bird.

When Mrs. Tyree published her book, stoves were used by many families, but some cooks preferred the open hearth. Cooking by hearth required painstaking management of the fire. Temperature was regulated by turning the Dutch oven to prevent a “sad cake” that sloped up sharply on one side that was barely done while the other side was close to burning. Another way of controlling the temperature was by lowering heavy pots and kettles with pot hooks. Recipes were affected by the method of cooking as more liquid was needed over the open fire versus a stove.

Housekeeping in Old Virginia is a rather amazing volume with most of the recipes contributed by 250 friends and acquaintances of Mrs. Tyree. They include such prominent women as General Robert E. Lee’s widow, many Lynchburg women such as Mrs. John F. Slaughter and a few men. The majority of contributors lived in Virginia with a few from other places such as New Orleans, with undoubtedly local connections.

Mrs. Tyree was a great entrepreneur. The endorsements of her book read like any new best seller today. There are lists of testimonials from women all the way from Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes, the wife of the President of the United States, to women whose names were familiar to most Virginians and others.

From the wife of Chief Justice M. R. Waite: “I do not hesitate to say that in my opinion it is an excellent guide to the art of cooking.”

From the wife of Governor F. T. Nicholls of Louisiana: “I regard Housekeeping in Old Virginia as a sensible and valuable book.”

From the wife of the Secretary of State W. M. Evarts: “Every lady who desires to learn some of the secrets which have made so enviable a reputation for the matrons of ‘Old Virginia’ should possess this book.”

The contributors of the individual submissions are listed by the title of their husbands such as Mrs. Col. Forsburg, Mrs. Dr. Robert T. Lemmon. Some are listed by initials, and one is by Mozis Addums, a former slave. A lady in those days used her husband’s name in print.

Through the years copies of this 530 page classic cookbook have become increasingly rare, as it was, until 1970, out of print. It is an heirloom that is now selling on the internet for $300.00 or more. A few copies over the years found their way to Lynchburg and were quickly sold. Most booksellers did not really know what the volume was.

The reprint of the book in 1970 has made it possible for Lynchburg to revisit the experience of nineteenth century dining, The wheat-colored paper and delicately grained leather-textured binding replicate the original. It is noteworthy that this was one of the first selections of the Cookbook Collector’s Library series to be published. The advertising for this publication appeared in Better Homes and Gardens, in February, 1970, promising other noteworthy old cookbook reprints in the future. They are presently available for approximately $12.00 or less on the internet.

Below are some of the housekeeping hints, some of which we probably adhere to even now. Mrs. Tyree was a great organizer. In fact, one might call her the Heloise of her day.

**Housekeeping Hints**

1. Do not clean but one room at a time, as it is a bad plan to have the whole house in confusion at once. She continues in a detailed manner to describe spring cleaning.
2. To Clean Furniture- One-half pint linseed oil, one half pint vinegar, one-half pint turpentine. Apply with a flannel rag and then rub with a dry flannel.
3. An excellent furniture polish – Alcohol, three ounces; linseed oil, boiled, two ounces; oxalic acid, one drachm; gum shellac, two drachms; gum benzoin, two drachms; rosin, two drachms. Dissolve the gums in the alcohol, and then add oil and oxalic acid. Apply with a woolen cloth.
4. To freshen old black silk – boil one ounce crushed soap bark in one quart water till reduced to one pint. Strain it; sponge the material with liquid, and while wet iron on the wrong side. Good for black woolens also.
5. To destroy bedbugs—Disolve one ounce corrosive sublimate in one pint strong spirits. Put it on the bedsteads with a feather, and it will destroy the bugs and their eggs also.
6. Remedy for red ants—Kerosene oil is a sure remedy for red ants. Place small blocks under a sugar barrel, so as not to let the oil touch the barrel.
7. Cayenne pepper will keep the store-room and pantry free from ants and cockroaches.
8. To keep blue calicoes bright and fresh – The first time they are washed, put them in water with a cupful spirits of turpentine to each part of water. This will set the color, and they will always look well.

Under Medicinal -There is a lengthy treatise in keeping a sickroom

1. For Sore Throat- Carbolic acid, fifteen grains; chlorate potash, thirty grains; rose-water, one and a half ounces; glycerin, one-half ounce. Use as a gargle, three or four times daily.
2. A cure for epilepsy ( one I have known to succeed in many cases). – Procure the fresh root of a white peony. Scrape and cut in pieces an inch square. Eat one three times a day, never taking any food after four p.m. Use a month, stop two weeks and begin again. The best way to keep the root is to string it on a cord. The red peony will do, if you cannot get the white.
3. For fresh cuts—Varnish them with common furniture varnish. This remedy has been known to prove very efficacious.
4. Mashed finger – Bind up with old linen and keep constantly wet with cold water. If there is much pain, add laudanum or tincture of arnica. If discoloration and swelling remain, after the pain subsides, use stimulating liniment to encourage a flow of pure blood and the washing away of the injured blood.
5. Remedy for Asthma, sore throat, or a cough—Cut up two or three bulbs of Indian turnip, put the pieces in a quart bottle, which fill up with good whiskey. Dose, a tablespoonful, three or four times a day. It is especially desirable to take it just after rising and just before going to bed. Wonderful cures of asthma have been effected by this remedy, and many persons living near the writer have tested its efficacy. The bottle will bear refilling with whiskey several times. Great care must be taken in procuring the genuine Indian turnip for this preparation, as there is a poisonous plant much resembling it.

It is safe to say that whiskey, and laudanum, an opium derivative, were used for most everything to relieve pain. Also the mistress had to be very knowledgeable about chemicals and medicinals as she had to mix the portions as though a druggist of today.