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## A Plantation Family Wardrobe, 1825 - 1835

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## The Carter Family

Shirley Plantation claims the rightful spot as Virginia's first plantation and the oldest family-run business in North America. It began as a royal land grant given to Sir Thomas West and his wife Lady Cessalye Shirley in 1613 and developed into the existing estate one can currently visit by 1725. The present day estate consists of the mansion itself and ten additional buildings set along a Queen Anne forecourt. These buildings include a Root Cellar, Pump House, two-story Plantation Kitchen, two story Laundry, Smokehouse, Storehouse with an Ice House below, a second Storehouse for grain, Brick Stable, Log Barn and Pigeon House or Dovecote. At one time the Great House was augmented by a North and a South Flanker: they were two free standing wings, 60 feet long and 24 feet wide and provided accommodations for visitors and guests. The North Flanker burned and its barrel-vaulted basement was converted into a root cellar and the South Flanker was torn down in 1868. The same year, its bricks were cleaned and used in the construction of Upper Shirley, home to Hill Carter's son, Fitzhugh (Young 57). The mansion and the dependencies described above are all "built of brick laid in the Flemish-bond pattern" and are each an architectural treasure in that they are the only Queen Anne-style forecourt existing in the United States (Roberts 26). The elaborate brick exteriors hint to the extensive carpentry and detail in the mansion itself; a three story building with "superb paneling...elegant carved woodwork...and a floating walnut staircase" make the mansion at Shirley Plantation the perfect backdrop for the beautiful portraiture, fine furnishings and extraordinary decorative accents that fill the family home. The stylish setting would give welcome to centuries of guests including early Americans like the Harrisons, the Byrds, the Randolphs, the Lees, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Tyler (Roberts 9, 27). Clearly, the Carter family home and

plantation served as an impressive supporting character in a cast of thousands that would create the rich history found at Shirley Plantation.

Although the land surrounding Shirley plantation was granted to the aforementioned Lord and Lady, it was eventually sold to an ambitious Edward Hill I who acquired Shirley in 1638. The following century would be occupied by the Hill family with three generations of Hill patriarchs who served in the Virginia Government and establish the hundreds of acres in Charles City County, known as Shirley Plantation, as a productive tobacco farm. By the time Edward Hill III would consent to the marriage of his only daughter and heir, Elizabeth Hill, the Hill family was a prominent fixture in Colonial Virginia. Elizabeth aligned herself with one of the most wealthy and important families in Virginia during the eighteenth century, the Carter Family, thereby ensuring the continued success of her family's plantation.

The Carter family legacy and their connection to the Hill family begins with the son of a self-made English emigrant, Robert Carter. An orphan by age six, Robert Carter spent his adolescence in London dutifully absorbing the education provided for in his father's will. He returned to the family's estate in the Northern Neck of Virginia to assist his older brother, John Carter II, with the daily operations and the development of the wharf at Carter's Creek. During this important period "Robert Carter was given the time and opportunity in his own formative years for preparing himself to exploit across all fronts the changes his brother's contemporaries were bringing in planting – commercial enterprises and in political responsibility – in total, responsible leadership" (114 Dowdy). In reality, "exploit" diminutively describes the success Robert Carter would achieve. He would grow to be regarded as an exemplary family man who abstained from ostentatious displays and was continually concerned with his education, the quality

of his products and production and his personal responsibility in the politics of his country. His character is summarized in a letter he wrote to his grandson where he states, “You are now growing toward manhood. It is not fine clothes nor a gay outlook, but learning and knowledge and virtue and wisdom that makes a man valuable” (Dowdey 152). At the age of twenty-eight, he established himself in government by serving in the House of Burgesses. In fact, Robert Carter would become so entrenched in Virginia Government that during his lifetime he held most of the coveted offices. He was a two time Speaker of the House and a member of the Council where he was voted in as the Colony’s Treasurer during the crucial period when the new capitol, Williamsburg, was being built. He would also serve as Council President which entitled him to the position of Governor for one year after Governor Hugh Drysdale died in office in 1726 (Wright 249). In addition he would contribute to the College of William and Mary as a trustee, member of the board of visitors and rector. However, the majority of his wealth was amassed while he held the post of agent of the Fairfax’s, the noble family which held by royal patent “the proprietorship of all the Northern Neck Region” (Wright 250). When Carter died in 1732 he was the richest man in colonial America. His influence and wealth in the Virginia colony was such that he earned the nick name of “King:” one will often see him referenced as Robert “King” Carter or simply King Carter.

In order to ensure his place in society, Robert “King” Carter aligned his children with families of the same level of wealth and prestige. His daughter Anne married Benjamin Harrison V (heir to and eventual resident of Berkeley Plantation, Shirley Plantation’s neighbor) and became the mother of William Henry Harrison, our country’s ninth president. William Byrd II, owner and operator of Westover Plantation (also a Shirley Plantation neighbor) and founder of Richmond, Virginia had three children who

married Carters: King Carter's sons Landon and Charles married Maria and Anne Byrd and King's granddaughter Elizabeth Hill Carter married William Byrd III. Finally, King Carter's oldest son, John Carter married Elizabeth Hill of Shirley Plantation. Her father was a profitable merchant -shipbuilder who dealt in tobacco and a military Colonel who held company with such contemporaries as Governor Spotswood and William Byrd II, his neighbor.

John Carter, eldest son of King Carter and the first Carter to own and operate Shirley Plantation was a successful man in his own right. At twenty-six, he received a lifetime appointment as Secretary of Virginia Affairs that included a generous salary which, coupled with his inheritance, certainly made him "Crown Prince" Carter (Young 21). He would find success at Shirley with the continued farming of tobacco and he supplemented this endeavor by acting as merchant for the tobacco raised by other planters. Additionally, he and his brothers "bought an ocean-going brig of their own in 1733" to sustain his venture as a merchant (Young 25). Most notably, it was John Carter who built the existing mansion and outbuildings on Shirley Plantation providing for his family, and the generations to come, a residence fit for Virginia Royalty. Unfortunately he would not see the fruition of his growing family: he died in 1742 leaving his wife to tend the property until ten-year old Charles Carter was prepared to inherit Shirley.

Elizabeth Hill Carter was able to call her childhood residence home well into the twilight of her life. She remarried around 1752 to a man named Bowler Cocke, a widower from Henrico County, and they lived at Shirley until their death in 1771 (Young 27). Charles Carter, Elizabeth and John's oldest son, was a man of almost forty before he would move to Shirley Plantation and take on the duties of the property. Prior to moving, he had maintained his other inheritance, his grandfather's and father's estate Corotoman

in Lancaster County, Virginia, where he and his wife Mary Walker Carter of Cleve had eight children, of which five survived into adulthood. However, Mary died in 1770. So by the time Charles took up residency the following year at Shirley he was remarried to Anne Butler Moore. They moved into Shirley as newlyweds and together they had fifteen children; nine lived into adulthood. The oldest daughter Ann Hill would marry Lighthorse Harry Lee in 1793 and give birth to Robert E. Lee in 1807.

As a Carter, Charles followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather becoming an active participant in Virginia Government and pursuing his interests as a planter. His inventory of possessions and record of slave holdings and their treatment would bring one to assume he was a traditional, southern gentile plantation owner. His will, written in 1803 and contained in the Shirley Collection, catalogues the thousands of acres of farmland he bequeathed to his children along with hundreds of slaves and valuable belongings including a vast amount of family crested silver and an impressive suite of hand carved furniture. In fact, the tax records of 1780 show that Charles Carter owned more slaves and cattle than any other man in the state of Virginia (Young 38). Charles viewed his slaves solely as such taxable property to be included with the farm equipment and cattle. As Douglas Egerton points out in his book, *Gabriel's Rebellion*, when several slaves revolted and were put on trial, Mr. Carter "demonstrated little concern for (his) slaves beyond their monetary value" (97). Evidently, the state would financially compensate an owner if a slave was tried and condemned to death. Carter Berkeley wrote a letter to his cousin Charles and advised him "[I]f all [of] your personal property in Henrico & Charles City were annihilated tomorrow you might derive more neat profit from your estate. How much better it would be to convert *them* into money & draw from it a certain annual fee." Other masters whose slaves faced the same

consequences after this organized revolt, “felt guilty enough about the institution to understand the desire of their slaves to be free, and these men worked to obtain pardons”(Egerton 97). Clearly, Charles Carter did not empathize with the slave’s plight and sided with the traditional and conservative slave owners.

Charles did split from the traditionalist when it came to government affairs. He was part of the movement who saw a new horizon for his country and took an active part as The United States sought its freedom from England. Although some of his close family and friends remained British Tories, Charles Carter chose his homeland and the interests of his emerging country. He joined the protest in 1774 when he signed non-importation agreements against England, he was a member of the “Virginia Convention which set up a colonial government of its own” and was named “as one of the nine members of the privy council” (Young 28). He also served in the Charles City County Militia and supported the American effort by organizing food supplies and a safe haven for militia stores. His service to his country continued in the reconstruction period as he assisted with restructuring such institutions as Virginia’s Episcopal Church. In short, he was a patriot and model American citizen in the fight for independence.

His son, Robert Hill Carter, was the oldest child from Charles’ marriage to Anne and was in line to inherit Shirley Plantation. He attended William and Mary College but his interests were never deeply rooted in plantation life. His studies at the college suffered because he fell in love, married and started a family early. Consequentially, when Robert and his wife Mary Nelson (the daughter of Governor Thomas Nelson of Yorktown) settled on the farm in Hampton, Virginia his father had given him as a wedding present, he struggled to succeed. A tragic accident finally brought Robert to his

true calling, medicine. Unfortunately, his endeavor to study medicine would also bring his early demise.

When Hill Carter, Robert's oldest son, was a young boy, he fell and broke his "thigh bone so badly that it came through his skin" (Young 43). Robert had read medical journals and understood that the break was serious enough to warrant traveling to Philadelphia in order to receive the best medical attention available. It was in Philadelphia that Robert Carter found his calling and decided to enroll in the University of Pennsylvania in order to pursue a career in medicine. Soon after completing the two year program, his wife Mary died. However, Robert was determined to finish his studies: he arranged to have his four young children stay with their grandparents, the Carters at Shirley and the Nelsons in Yorktown, and left for Paris to finish his education. Within two years he had contracted a violent fever and in 1804 he died in Paris.



## Historical Context

The life and politics of the Antebellum Era in the United States centered on Westward Expansionism, Industrialization and Slavery. Hill Carter, the patriarchal subject of this study, began his residency at Shirley Plantation after his heroic service in the War of 1812 and finishing his education in Agriculture at the College of William and Mary. In March of 1816 Mr. Carter took possession of the family business and property. Despite the obstacles Hill faced as a young farmer, in an economy where agriculture was on the decline and manufacturing was on the rise, his occupancy would prove him to be one of Shirley Plantation's most determined, innovative and profitable caretakers. However, in the more than fifty years that Mr. Carter would operate his family's business he would have to overcome the competition of a more saturated market, adapt to an ever changing industrializing nation and face the perils and moral dilemma in using slave labor.

Having served in the Navy in The War of 1812, Hill Carter understood the motto, "Free Trade and Sailor's Rights" ("The war of 1812," Heidler). While the war may have lost the battle over the northern border it did succeed in affirming the United States rights to free trade among the European Countries. Following this resolution, the Monroe Doctrine, in 1823, closed the Americas to European colonization and asserted that the United States should strictly enforce this policy and aggressively expand into the west. By 1825 the Louisiana Purchase had been acquired and Texas would join the union in less than ten years. This westward movement expanded the country's farming industry thereby making the plantation owner work harder and more efficiently for a profitable crop. Until Hill Carter arrived, Shirley Plantation's existence relied heavily on tobacco

as the main source of revenue. Export commodities, like tobacco, were mostly “sold across the sea” and therefore depended on Europe for its primary income (Johnston, et al. 11). However, tobacco was notorious for depleting nutrient rich soil and “the growth of the population, wealth, and transportation facilities of the United States... was accompanied naturally by a large increase in the volume of internal commerce“(Johnson et al. 229). In addition, “the line of Plantations was creeping up the Arkansas and Red Rivers, while many Planters were moving with their slaves...over into the rich coastal plains of Texas” (Johnston, et al. 222). Despite the success of the War of 1812 and its impact on transatlantic trade, the onset of westward expansion would poise Shirley Plantation for a new generation and a shift in agriculture.

The introduction of steam driven machines became the springboard for a new kind of America. The framework of the nation’s existence would slowly alter from that of an agriculturally based society to an industrial nation which “progressively replaced humans and animals as the power source of production with motors powered by ....fuels” (Stearns 5). Europe, with the same entrepreneurial spirit that brought the first settlers to the New World, would lead the way in an industrialized economy and way of life. “Europe’s ability to draw disproportionately on world resources,” its domination in world trade, “growing consumerism,” and Western Europe’s population explosion in the eighteenth century created the perfect arena for manufacturing innovations, new “ideas about science and material progress” (Stearns 36-40). With its abundance of natural resources, capital and risk-takers, England was in the forefront of Europe’s revolution. English influence, while already deeply rooted in American society, would gradually find new ways of influencing the United States: railroads would connect major cities,

especially along the eastern seaboard, and factory towns would spread across New England sustaining textile factories that would “form the core of initial American factory industry” (Stearns 50). In order to maintain a profitable existence, the southern plantation owner would have to adapt to the changing economy.

Prior to the nineteenth century, a plantation would thrive on a self sufficient philosophy and a local economy while internationally exporting cash crops. However, industrialization brought a nation-wide increase in manufactured goods and encouraged farmers to focus on domestic market specialization. In Mr. Carter’s case, he would aptly combine the convergence of old and new. He immediately retired “worn-out farm equipment which had long out-lived its usefulness” and replaced it with “threshing machines, reapers and horse rakers when these inventions were new” (Young 45) (Phillips 230). He then turned his attention to reclaiming the land: he “experimented painstakingly with fertilizers and better ways to till the soil,” he implemented deep plowing and crop rotation and he constructed dikes and drains “to reclaim swampland” (Young 45) (Cahsin). Hill would also change Shirley’s market focus to that of producing domestic grains, a move that would prove immensely successful with his production of wheat and its profit rising with each decade. In 1843 the National Intelligencer reported his “eight thousand bushels from two hundred and seventy acres...unequaled in Virginia Agriculture” (Phillips 230).

The business savvy of Hill Carter enabled him to recognize the virtue of some level of self sufficiency. He enlisted the services of Wortham and Magruder in Richmond, Virginia to market his crops in exchange for dry goods that he could not produce at the plantation. However, on the plantation, he made excellent use of his

gardens and livestock in addition to employing crafts people to turn raw plantation materials into useable goods. For example, during the 1820's there are several receipts for payment to Rebecca Taylor, a woman employed to spin and weave fabric for plantation clothing. While Hill maintained a lifestyle suitable to his place in society, buying luxury goods such as a porcelain bath tub and season tickets to The Richmond Theatre Company, he expertly budgeted his operation: when one looks at the ledger receipts from all the years his family inhabited the plantation, his "cash receipts...seldom exceeded his expenditures" and year after year Shirley Plantation showed "enlarging... revenues" (Phillips 232).

Coming out of the Revolutionary War there was considerable sentiment that all men were created equal. Although forefathers, such as Thomas Jefferson, were slave owners, they still "denounced the slave trade and spoke of slavery's pernicious effect on master and man, of its injustice, of its violation of natural right" (Davis 23). In 1807 President Thomas Jefferson would lobby for the end of the slave trade industry however it would take over fifty more years to solidify the argument and put an end to the practice. Hill Carter was a slave owner. However, his family had a history of questioning the slave owning practice and even emancipating slaves. Hill Carter's grandfather, Charles Carter, had a cousin and contemporary, Robert Carter III, who resided at Nomini Hall in Westmoreland County, Virginia during the later part of the eighteenth century. In 1791, when Hill's father (also named Robert Carter) was in his twenties, Robert Carter III wrote a "Deed of Gift that...signaled his intent to free more than five hundred slaves...no other Virginian of the Revolutionary Era – including those like Jefferson and Washington, who spoke out passionately against slavery – managed to reconcile freedom

in theory and freedom in practice with such transparent simplicity” (Levy). At the end of his life, Robert Carter III walked away from his plantation and holdings, “giving away \$100,000 (in 1790 terms) of inheritable property” and retired in Baltimore until his death in 1804 (Levy).

Coincidentally, Hill Carter’s father, Robert Hill Carter died the same year and was cut from the same cloth. One might assume Robert Carter III had some influence on his cousin’s children, including Robert Hill Carter, since both men were related and lived during the same time period. Once married, Robert Hill Carter undertook the expected profession of plantation proprietor on an estate his father gave him along the York River. However, he quickly discovered that his moral core could not reconcile the necessity of slaves and plantation life. In a letter he wrote to his young children shortly before he sailed to Paris, France to complete his studies in medicine he describes this dilemma. He writes:

From the earliest point of time when I began to think of right and wrong, I conceived a strong disgust to the slave trade and all its barbarous consequences. This aversion was not likely to be diminished by becoming a slave holder and witnessing many cruelties, even at this enlightened day, when the rights of man are so well ascertained....Suffice it to say that my short trial of the agricultural line disgusted me entirely with the mode practiced in the southern States...I could not tolerate a mode of life, at once at variance with my conscience or rational social enjoyments.

In Robert Hill Carter’s final sentiments he suggests that his children be humane to their slaves since, although he wished otherwise, they would probably inherit the “misfortune of slavery.” Tragically, this was his last communication with his children: he would leave his four young children under the age of ten to be raised by their relatives.

With this history of anti-slavery sympathy one must also note the fact that Hill Carter and Robert E. Lee were first cousins and spent many days growing up together on

Shirley Plantation. The fact remains that when Hill took possession of Shirley, he utilized his inheritance to the fullest, including the slaves he relied on to keep the operation running. Although his father must have influenced his adult life, one can also assume his grandfather's influence was indeed present as he approached the issue of slavery as a necessary component in the function of his business. In 1840 Robert E. Lee expresses this sentiment when he writes to his cousin as to the recommendation of an overseer. He asks Hill if he knows

a suitable person now available... You are so fully aware of the requisite qualities; and I presume of the extent and importance of the estate that I need enter into no particulars. It would require an honest, energetic man capable of managing all the operations and of keep and rendering his accts: In his treatment of the negroes to be as attentive to their comfort and welfare, as to the discharge of their duties; and to be neither harsh nor severe in his discipline. In other words a first rate man...

Certainly, this passage demonstrates the business- minded approach that was shared by these cousins. However, as we will later explore, Hill, along with his wife Mary, found some balance between the practical, commercial minded, southern plantation owner and the spiritually guided, benevolent leader.

## Plantation life

Life on Shirley Plantation was dictated by the growing seasons and Hill's agenda. His records indicate that his primary work lay in the day to day operations of the farm, optimizing his land's production and the acquisition of goods and services. The growing season was dominated by agricultural work and the winter months were spent scheduling repairs to the buildings and fences, harvesting ice and producing fabric and clothing. While Mr. Carter was the head of the operations at Shirley, he did enlist the help of his family, several important employees, tradesmen and slaves.

Most of the records, in terms of receipts, from Hill Carter's residency are in his name but there are a few that indicate his wife, Mary Carter, had a hand in the daily household operations. For example, there are receipts from Catherine Scully in the 1830's to Mrs. Carter for the construction of servants clothes and a receipt for repairs to Westover Church, the family's place of worship, from Nathaniel Nelson to Mary B. Carter. In addition to raising the children one can certainly assume that her daily work lay in maintaining the household: she made sure the family and the house servants were clothed and fed and guests were attended to. Assisting Mrs. Carter with the cooking, cleaning, laundry and daily household duties were the house servants who "lived on the upper floors of the Kitchen and Laundry buildings as did the staff of those dependencies" ("Slavery at Shirley Plantation"). As Mrs. Carter grew into her position of a plantation owner's wife and mother to ten living children, her duties grew to include making or supervising the construction of clothing for slaves, servants, herself and the children. By 1825 the Plantation Collection records indicate an extensive relationship with Jacquelyn

P. Taylor and Co. This merchant dealt in fabric as well as clothing related dry goods and one can see regular purchases for large quantities of such items: On October 22, 1825 Hill Carter paid a bill for \$90.00 for the purchase of “forty blankets” and fabrics which included “six yards flannel, five yards red flannel, four yards domestic and four yards linen wrapper” (Collection). By 1832 the purchases increased exponentially in order to meet the growing demands of the growing population at Shirley: that year one purchase from Jacquelyn P. Taylor and Co. shows a receipt for 26 yards ticklengburg and 31 yards domestic. Due to the lower quality of the fabrics and the times of year, these items would provide clothing for daily wear for the family members, servants or even field slaves.

In the fields, Hill Carter employed the help of an overseer to manage the daily operations and the slaves who were responsible for the manual labor. Tax records and lists of slaves from various years indicate that Hill had anywhere from 98 slaves in 1830 to 193 in 1860. These laborers, including the overseer who managed the farm’s daily operations, lived in housing provided by the Carter family and they “tended the fields, harvested the crops, maintained the house, cooked the meals, and provided the majority of skilled labor, including carpentry, masonry, and blacksmithing” (“Slavery at Shirley Plantation”). While he often purchased dry goods and ready made clothing supplies, several receipts point out that some slaves were also responsible for maintaining clothing and accessories such as shoes. In July and August of 1823 Hill paid a bill to a Mr. Richard Johnson for “making shoes and teaching Bob how to make them” (Collection). However, there are also multiple receipts from the Penitentiary Store, beginning in 1824, for items that included large quantities of shoes. One can only assume from the large quantities in multiple sizes and the source of these items that they were purchased for the laborers. In October of 1819 Mr. Carter paid Mr. William Griffin for “cutting out clothes



for Negroes” (Collection). There may have also been some instruction in this instance as there is only one other receipt the following year for Mr. Griffin’s services. After these receipts there are examples where someone was paid for the making of servant or slave clothing or in some instances someone was paid to simply cut the fabric. The large lists of dry goods from such merchants as Wortham and Magruder and Co. and the previously mentioned textile merchant, Jacquelyn P. Taylor, and Co. for large quantities of fabrics indicate that these items were cut and sewn by the laborers themselves.

While his records prove him to be a practical man, there is also evidence that he valued his social standing and appreciated the amenities a gentleman’s life provided. Besides Hill Carter’s meticulous farm journals and personal journal entries that show us a man who was highly intellectual about the operation of Shirley Plantation, there are receipts from the years of his residency that offer a glimpse at his genteel side: a “blue cloth coat with silk lining and a velvet collar” in 1817 from Thomas H. Bradley, the previously mentioned porcelain bathing tub in 1818, the season tickets for the Richmond Theatre also in 1818 and a fine gold watch for his wife in 1824 from a New York Jeweler, James Ladd are a spattering of early examples that represent Hill’s level of taste. In an account written by Henry Barnard in 1833 and contained in the Plantation Collection, he describes his visit to Shirley Plantation as an “experience [of] princely hospitality of the gentleborn families.” One can glimpse into the lifestyle at Shirley through his description of a visitor’s typical day on the estate:

When you wake in the morning, you find that a servant has been in, and without disturbing you, built up a large fire in your, taken out clothes and brushed them, and done the same with your boots, brought in hot water to shave, and indeed stands ready to do your bidding. As soon as you are dressed, you walk down to the dining room. At eight o'clock you take your seat at the breakfast table of rich mahogany, each plate standing separate on its own little cloth. Mr. Carter will sit at one end and Mrs.

Carter at the other ...it is fashionable here to drink a cup of tea and after a cup of coffee. Mr. C has a fine cold ham before him of the real Virginia flavor; this is all the meat you get in the morning, but the servants will bring you hot muffins and corn batter cakes every two minutes: you will find on the table also loaf wheat books, hot and cold corn bread.

After breakfast visitors consult their pleasure – if they wish to ride, horses are ready at their command; read, there are books enough in the library; write, fire and writing materials are in his room. The master and mistress of the House are not expected to entertain visitors until an hour or two before dinner, which is usually at three. If company has been invited to the dinner, they will begin to come in about one-ladies in carriages and gentleman on horseback. After making their toilet, the company amuse themselves in the parlor; about half an hour before dinner the gentleman are invited out to take grog.

When dinner is ready (and by the way Mrs. Carter has nothing to do with setting the table, an old family servant, who for 50 years has superintended that matter, does it all) Mr. Carter politely takes a lady by the hand and leads the way into the dining room, and is followed by the rest, each lady led by a gentleman. Mrs. C is at one end of the table with a large dish of rich soup, and Mr. C at the other, with a saddle of fine mutton; scattered round the table – you may choose for yourself - ham, beef, turkey, duck, eggs and greens etc., for vegetables potatoes, beets, hominy. This last you will find always at dinner;... After you have dined there circulates a bottle of sparkling champagne. After that, off pass the things and the upper table cloth, upon that is placed desert consisting of fine plum pudding, tarts etc., etc. After this comes ice cream, West India preserves, peaches preserved in brandy etc. When you have eaten this, off goes the second table cloth, and then upon the bare mahogany table is set the figs, raisins and almonds, and before Mr. Carter are set 2 or 3 bottles of wine, - madeira, port, and a sweet wine for the Ladies -- he fills his glass and pushes them on. After the glasses are all filled, the gentlemen pledge their services to the ladies, and down goes the wine; after the first and second glass the ladies retire, and the gentlemen begin to circulate the bottle pretty briskly. You are at liberty, however, to follow the ladies as soon as you please, who after music and a little chit chat prepare for their ride home.

Barnard's passage not only provides some insight into the level of service guests were afforded but also lists the foods common to Shirley's kitchen and additional luxury goods such as wine and nuts that Hill acquired from merchants like Wortham and McGruder and C. & A. Warwick.

Except for a few specialty items, it is evident that Mr. Hill Carter dealt with localized businesses and merchants when it came to the acquisition of goods the

plantation itself could not supply. As mentioned, he dealt extensively with Wortham and McGruder, a Richmond based grocer and commission merchant who also acted as an agent for the Carters in the purchase and sale of farm produce and livestock. Wortham and McGruder sold Hill everything from nails and shingles to bushels of clover seed to molasses and whiskey and even shoes, blankets and lower quality fabrics. This nineteenth century “Wal-Mart” provided staples to Shirley Plantation for the duration of Hill Carter’s ownership. A second local merchant who also dealt with Hill Carter on a regular basis was Jacquelyn P. Taylor and Co. and provided a constant supply of fabrics ranging from Irish Linen to Osnaburg (a course fabric used primarily in slave’s clothing), buttons and thread and even specialty accessories like the “London Hat” purchased in October of 1826 (Collection). Hall Neilson and Company was another fabric merchant that Hill carter frequented during the 1820’s and 1830’s. Included in the receipts from this particular vendor is an interesting item dated November of 1832 where the margin has been filled in with the purpose of each fabric purchase. For example, “44 yards Chicks” and “15 yards Bed Ticking” is assigned to the “house” and “20 yards Lindsey, 8 yards red flannel” and a little over 30 yards “domestic” are assigned to the “maids.” In addition, the children are assigned “15 yards Casinet, 1yard Lawn” and “one gross buttons.” There are even items for Mrs. Hill like, “25 ½ yards Irish Linen, 5 yards green French Merino” and a pair of “black silk shoes” (Collection). Finally, Binford, Brooks, Gay and Co. began dealing with the Carters after 1830. They prided themselves on carrying the best available merchandise there was to offer. All of their receipts have a logo and the following note in the margin:

Always on hand, the most fashionable style of Silks, Muslins, and other goods for Ladies dresses; Cloths, Cassimeres, Vestings and all other articles of Gentleman’s apparel; Irish and German Linens, Sheetings, Damask and Diapers; Handkerchiefs; Laces; Embroidery;

Silk and Cotton Hoisery; French and English Bombazines and Merinos; Insertings and Edgings. With a General Stock of Domestic Goods, Course Woollens, Blankets and every other article in the Fancy and Dry Goods line.

Their claim must have been true as most of the finer fabrics the family purchased after 1830 came from this particular vendor. While the family's taste evolved over the years, Hill still preferred to shop locally. These merchants maintained a steady business with the Carter family and provided fabric, notions and accessories throughout the time period in question for attire that would be made by and for the residence of Shirley Plantation.

While there was certainly a steady supply of fabric coming into the household, rarely does one see fabric items that are designated for Hill Carter. Daily wear such as shirts, drawers and possibly work wear or more casual clothing may have been made for him, but Mr. Carter seemed to have his own personal taste and style that was fulfilled by gentleman's tailors and ready-made clothing merchants. Around the same time that Hill settled into his residency at Shirley Plantation the country was transitioning into a different mode of acquiring their wardrobe. In the early part of the nineteenth century, after the War of 1812 secured free trade with Europe, the country had a ready supply of foreign imports which included "unprecedented quantities of ...fashionable apparel for a varied clientele of gentleman." These "low...cost clothes...being dumped by British firms in the United States" went to storefronts who were not necessarily tailors or craftsmen selling their own skilled labor, but instead, venture capitalist pursuing a new business opportunity "presented by British dumping" (Zakim 42,43). Michael Zakim also points out, in his book *Ready Made Democracy*, that by 1840 the "art of household manufacture" was quickly on the decline and that "with all the advantages of large capital and machinery [clothiers were supplying] every town and village with ready-made clothing at the lowest prices" (37). Hill's wife, children and laborers still maintained the

more traditional mode of handmade clothing, but Hill frequented the new trend in fashion. The clothing receipts for Mr. Carter's wardrobe specifically list clothing items like trousers, vests and coats as opposed to lists of yardages and are mostly from one Richmond merchant who began his relationship with Hill in 1816 as Thomas R. Bradley. Over the next twenty years this merchant would become Thomas Bradley and Co. located at the southwest corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and F Street, then Bradley, McCreary and Co. and finally William McCreary located at the East Corner of Main and 13<sup>th</sup> Street. Despite the changes in ownership and location, Hill must have been a content customer since the majority of his clothing seemed to come from this merchant. It was not until 1833 that he began to frequent Beers and Poindexter in Richmond. In both cases Hill bought men's clothing items from these merchants (with charges for alterations) as opposed to his wife, young children and staff which the majority of their clothing was definitely made from the large purchases of fabric recorded in the Shirley Plantation Collection.

## Hill Carter

The character of Hill Carter is preserved in the meticulous records that he pored over during his lifetime at Shirley Plantation. His journal entries, farm journal notes and receipts represent a man who was intellectually driven, thoughtful and incredibly practical. Furthermore, his choice of clothing tells us he carried these traits over into his wardrobe and his outward appearance was definitely a reflection of the man he strived to represent. In the years between 1825 and 1835 he annually or biannually made purchases for the same type of items: for example in 1827, 1828, 1830 and 1832 he purchased a pair of “mixed cassimere trousers” from William McCrery’s establishment and there are similar multiple purchases for matching vests, boots and a “best blue cloth coat” (Collection). These specific items were staples in Mr. Hill’s wardrobe with an occasional deviation like the “olive cloth surtout, brown trousers” and “brown silk vest” purchased in 1831 or the “black beaver cloth frock coat” and “striped buckskin color pantaloons” purchased in 1835 (Collection).

The descriptions on receipts of each purchase paint a wonderful picture of the clothing in Hill Carter’s “large stained wardrobe” (Collection). The type of garment, fabric and color as described in each purchase create half of the visual and the rest of the picture is filled in through research, historical representations and antique clothing; combined, one has a sense of the fashion, silhouette, construction techniques, and materials of the time period. The Valentine Museum in Richmond, Virginia as well as the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s Collection is home to some telling examples. There are several items from these two collections that, in combination with additional research, provide insight into Mr. Carter’s appearance during the 1820’s and 1830’s.

To begin with outerwear, Figure 1a through Figure 1j is a white linen frock coat, from the Valentine's Collection, indicative of the 1830's, and is a close representation to something that could have been found in Hill Carter's wardrobe. The Valentine example is made of white linen and the construction and style illustrate a fashionable, period frock coat worn for a casual occasion. In August of 1832 Hill bought a "black bombazine coat" from William McCreary for \$17.50. The cost and fabric description indicate that it was close in style and cut to the Valentine's example. There are other receipts for multiple coats but they are listed at twice the price. The biggest difference between Hill's coat and this preserved example is the type of fabric: Hill's was bombazine which is a "twill fabric with a silk warp and worsted weft" that was typically worn as mourning wear (Bassett 40). Both types of fabric are similar in weight and durability but were worn for different purposes. Hill may have had a funeral to attend, but whose it was is unclear. In terms of the coat, I would also hypothesize that someone at the plantation may have made him a linen coat or two due to the large quantities of linen that were purchased on almost a yearly basis; there are several receipts like the February 1833 Hall and Neilson record which lists "25 yards fine Irish Linen" for "\$18.75" (Collection). Hill's frugal nature and the fact that a coat from his favorite clothing store would have cost as much as the linen for a coat for him and possibly a dressing gown for his wife may have brought him to settle for homemade talents, especially in the case of a daywear coat that would have been worn casually.

The frock coat I examined has a notched lapel, one welt pocket on the left chest and three buttons down the front. Figures 1d, 1e and 1f illustrate the extensive seaming throughout the garment with four pieces in the back and two pieces making up each side

front. This cut and seaming were essential in creating the fitted bodice that was in vogue. The right and left fronts are lined in the same fabric as the jacket but the back is not lined and constructed with flat felled seams. In addition, a waist seam, as seen in figure 1d and 1f, allows the lower part of the garment to have full cut tails which are finished with two buttons, each two inches from either side of the center back seam. Figure 1h shows us the interesting addition of hidden pockets in the back tail seams and Figure 1i points out an additional pocket found in the interior of the front, lower left portion of the coat. The tail portion of the coat is vented at the center back with an opening that runs from the hemline to the waist seam and the sleeve is fitted with a self-lined cuff (Figures 1d, 1g and 1j). As fashion dictated, this light weight and lighter color coat would have been worn with a darker colored waistcoat and was intended for warm weather and daytime wear.

As previously mentioned Mr. Carter did make regular purchases of additional coats. In the ten year period in question he purchased a total of ten such coats, seven of which are listed as a “best blue cloth coat” at a cost of \$34.00 to \$38.00. If Hill illustrated anything through his clothing, it was definitely a conservative refinement and consistency. The blue coats were frock coats cut in the style of the Valentine’s example however, as the price reflected, the fabric was much finer, there was probably more internal structure including a contrasting fabric (of lesser quality) lining, padding in the chest and these coats were usually adorned with a velvet collar. Around 1833 Hill began to frequent Beers and Poindexter and those receipts show us a man who was beginning to change a little in terms of taste. In 1835 he bought a “green cloth frock coat with a velvet collar” for the sum of \$36.00 and added a “velvet collar” to his “drab Over Coat.” This



over coat as well as previously purchased surtouts, or greatcoats (a total of three from 1825 to 1835), were an additional piece of outerwear that would have been worn outdoors as the final layer. These coats were fashionably cut “like a frock coat but [often] double-breasted and somewhat longer” (Nunn 107).

We see the military influence in the last type of coat in Hill Carter’s wardrobe record. There are more than fourteen purchases for either a round jacket, also called a roundabout, or a coatee. Both of these jackets come from military uniform styles of the early part of the nineteenth century. Figures 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b illustrate reconstructed period examples of these two types of jackets. The round jacket, or roundabout, was a tail-less coat worn as a casual day style. It began with a standing collar and evolved into a short jacket with a shawl collar that was structured with padding and therefore, stiffened. Roundabouts had a notched lapel, were single or double breasted and any pockets would have been welt pockets. There are several receipts for such jackets that also include a matching pair of trousers and the material described is always of a durable, lesser quality fabric like drill or jean. These ensembles were most likely used for everyday wear when working on the plantation. On the other hand, the coatee, or coatee as it is spelled on several receipts, was usually, in Hill’s case, constructed out of finer material like mixed cassimere or even silk. Along with the purchase of these coatees, Hill would also buy a matching pair of trousers and a vest for a complete suit of clothes. The coatee had a similar look to the tailcoats of the time period but the tail portion was shorter: it had the “same type of collar as a tailcoat” and it could be “double breasted or single with pockets set in the rear tails.” This particular type of coat was popular as day wear as it was widely available and often found in clothing stores as a ready made

garment (“Custom Vestments”). In the case of both the roundabout and coatee, Mr. Carter’s more frequent purchases of these two items tell us that he preferred the practical and economic choice for his work and everyday wear and left the more expensive frock coats made of finer fabrics as his choice for dress attire.

As gentleman’s style dictated, under the aforementioned coats or jackets, Mr. Carter wore a vest. The vest was the one area where Hill was a little less conservative and selected pieces in finer fabrics and varied colors. The receipts show the purchases of several “Fancy Marseilles Vests:” Marseilles describes the type of fabric which is a double cloth silk or cotton that is quilted together in the weaving process (Bassett 38). He also bought several black velvet vests which were mixed in with descriptions like a “ribbed vest” in 1825, a “mixed cassimere vest” in 1827, a “fancy Florentine vest” in 1831 and 1832, a “brown silk vest” in 1831 and a “buff quilting vest” in 1835 (Collection). As illustrated in the antique garments pictured in Figures 4a through 4c the style of the vest that Hill Carter wore was fitted, cut to the waist or just below and generally straight across the waistline. The earlier version, as seen in Figure 4a, had a standing collar which developed into a rounded shawl collar neckline in the other two examples. If nicely tailored, like the three vests shown, the garment might have welt pockets, covered buttons and a back strap or back lacings in order to adjust the vest’s fit.

By the time Hill came home from the Navy, men’s pants had moved away from the short breeches synonymous with America’s colonial period and graduated into long trousers and pantaloons. It is often difficult to distinguish between pantaloons and trousers since “both terms were used rather indiscriminately,” however the pantaloons were commonly worn as dress wear, “very close fitting” and ended at the ankle with a

“slit at the side” and later strapped under the foot (Nunn 110). Trousers were more for day wear, the ankle was not as fitted and they were secured at the waist with a fall front closure and later a fly front. Being that a trouser was more practical for the working man, of course, the trouser was predominant in Hill’s wardrobe.

Figures 5a through 5i illustrate a nineteenth century pair of men’s linen trousers and the details that would have been characteristic of Hill’s trousers. The pair pictured have a broad fall front secured with buttons (a narrow fall front could have been found as well), they are ankle length, and made of lightweight, yet durable, linen. Figure 5b, 5c and 5d provide a close view of the fall front detail and reveal the two welt pockets hidden behind the fall front. In addition we see that the pockets and waistband are lined in a lightweight cotton material and the waistband lining continues around, meeting at the center back seam. Finally the exterior back is finished with two suspender buttons.

From 1825 to 1835 Mr. Carter bought a variety of trousers including drab drill and mixed cassimere to match the coats he purchased. There is even one receipt from 1832 for a fashionable pair of “checked drill trousers” (Collection). Beginning in 1833 the receipts begin to refer to all of Hill purchases as “pants.” Some of which may have been pantaloons because they are made with finer fabrics like the “Black Bombazine Pants” purchased in 1833 (Collection). However, as pointed out, the terms trouser and pantaloons were often used arbitrarily so it is difficult to say these “pants” were definitely pantaloons. The one specific pair of pantaloons that Hill did own was purchased in 1835 from Beers and Poindexter and are described as “Fancy Colored Drill Pantaloons” (Collection). Whatever the case with the pants, it is again clear that Hill Carter valued function and practicality over fashion and style. With the exception of a couple of

trendy items, the majority of his wardrobe consisted of sturdy fabrics in conservative colors and sensible cuts.

The remainder of Hill's wardrobe was filled with his undergarments and accessories. To begin with his shirt, one must consider his choice of fabric, who made it and how it changed in the ten year period we are examining. Since there are no records of him purchasing a shirt from his favorite clothing stores, we must assume that in the varied lists of fabrics purchased from Jacqueline P. Taylor, Hall and Neilson, Hall and Moore and Binford, Brooks, Gay and Co. that his shirting material was included in these acquisitions. There are multiple purchases for cotton shirting as well as white cambric and fine linen: all of these materials could have been used for his shirts depending on the purpose of the garment. For the field, a simple cotton shirt would suffice. For receiving guests at dinner he might have chosen a white cambric shirt: cambric could be cotton or "a fine white linen cloth in a plain weave" (Bassett 26). Finally, for a formal event Hill would have worn his finest linen shirt. In all three cases, the shirt would have the same cut but the type of fabric would designate the occasion. And, since we know shirting was bought for Hill's use, we can surmise that either a house servant or Mrs. Carter regularly made this undergarment.

Figure 6a shows us a period example from the Colonial Williamsburg Collection of an early nineteenth century shirt. The construction is basic: a rectangular front and back piece gathered into a collar which fastens with a single button. Each side has a slit for easier wear and the sleeves are gathered into the shoulder section. As the century progressed, the shirt became more fitted, developing a "yoke at the back and slimmer sleeves" (Nunn 106). In addition, a two part collar with a neckband developed to

accommodate the fashionable cravat and stock that were predominate during this time period. Beginning in 1831 Mr. Carter started to show regular purchases for collars. The first example of such a purchase was two “linen collars” from Mr. William McCreary telling us that he had transitioned into the new style of shirt. “Around 1820 a separate collar was introduced, attached to the shirt by a button at the front and ties at the back.” (Nunn 110). Eventually, the ties would be eliminated and buttons and button holes would provide a more efficient mode of attaching the collar to the stand.

Around the collar of his shirt, Hill wore a stock, cravat or handkerchief. The number of receipts for stocks and handkerchiefs far exceed the references to cravats so we know his choice of neckwear was usually one of the two predominate purchases. A fact which is appropriate to Hill’s character: a “stock was simpler: it was readymade....with a lining, and often had a faux wrapped look, with a bow in the front and closed with a buckle in the back” (Bassett 22). In contrast, the cravat was hand wrapped and tied in a multitude of variations of which instructions to achieve these looks could be found in period publications. The only record of a cravat purchase is in 1829 from the dry goods merchant Hall and Moore for an “Italian Cravat,” then in 1832 he paid \$0.30 to have a “cravat stiffened” (Collection). It is unlikely that this cravat was the same four year old piece of fabric: it is more likely that since the cravat was essentially “a deceptively simple looking triangular piece of silk or cotton,” he had some made at the plantation for the more formal occasions which called for proper neck attire (Bassett 22). Finally, the handkerchief was only for very informal use. For instance when working on the plantation, Hill might have worn a handkerchief folded and tied around his neck with the shirt collar turned down over this simple piece of fabric.

It was not uncommon during this period for men to wear their shirt as the primary undergarment. Based on an 1834 receipt from Beers and Poindexter though, I would speculate that Hill wore drawers in addition to his shirt. The purchase in 1834 is listed as “cotton for one pair of drawers for son” (Collection). If he would have them made for his son, then he most likely had them made for himself. Mr. Carter also made purchases for suspenders, gloves like the “English Buckskin Gloves” he bought in 1827, and “fancy handkerchiefs.” He purchased a “London Hat” in 1826 and in 1833, four “palm leaf hats,” which were a widely popular men’s summer hat introduced in 1826. In terms of footwear, Hill’s receipts show regular acquisitions of boots and payment to have the boots footed or mended. There are a few records of shoes, but boots were definitely Mr. Carter’s first choice in footwear.

As one becomes familiar with the record of Hill Carter’s attire, a clearer picture evolves of the type of man Hill Carter was. He preferred sturdy cotton drill in the summer months and mixed woolens in the winter. His trousers and coat often matched and he bought the same type of blue coat almost on a yearly basis. He reserved the silks for the rare appropriate moments and was sometimes drawn in by fashion trends like checked pants, detachable collar shirts, and palm leaf hats. He saved money on the things that he could by having his undergarments such as his shirts and drawers made on the plantation and mending his boots instead of purchasing new ones. Lastly, he presented himself as a fine gentleman would with a stiff stock or cravat tied around his neck.

## Mary B. Carter

Mary Braxton Randolph, the daughter of Col. Robert Randolph and Elizabeth Hill Carter (the daughter of Charles Carter and his first wife, Mary Walker Carter) was born in 1800. She married her cousin, Hill Carter, in 1817 and began her duties as Shirley Plantation's Mistress and mother to ten surviving children (she gave birth to seventeen). Her adult life is recorded in the Shirley Plantation Collection in the form of correspondence she received from her family and close friends. These letters chronicle Mrs. Carter's relationship with her mother and other close relations, her children including her daughter-in-law, Louis Humphries Carter, and her husband. Henry Barnard's account of his visit to Shirley describes Mary B. Carter as "of a high and wealthy family, and is one of the plainest most unassuming women you will meet anywhere" (Collection). By all accounts, she was a pious woman who cared deeply for whom she felt responsible, including the slaves. Her communication with her spiritual advisor, the Rev. N. A. Okeson especially illustrates her compassionate and serious nature in their discussions concerning slavery, adultery and morality. Okeson was a trusted advisor: their documented exchange takes place over a five year period and the level of their communication was quite intimate. We see this in an 1848 letter that Okeson wrote to Mary concerning the issue of adultery and ultimately sex. He writes, "Many a noble son has been lost by not having been faithfully warned and instructed. The truth honestly and plainly spoken is in fact this – that sense of modesty which prohibits the seventh commandment from being more publicly and openly taught and enforced, both by ministers and parents is false, hypocritical and unnatural." He goes on to advise Mary that, "Mothers have this whole matter in their hands. If they will do their

duty I will venture that soon this sin would be unknown among refined and cultivated people. Mothers can do more with their sons in influencing and forming their habits, principles and character than all else besides which this world contains” (Collection). The Reverend impresses upon Mary her obligation to her family and this deep sense of responsibility carried over into all aspects of her plantation life. Certainly she oversaw daily activity but as a Shirley Plantation historian points out, “She spent long hours at the slave quarters, caring for the ill and teaching the slaves how to read, which was an illegal practice in Virginia and throughout the South” (“Slavery at Shirley Plantation”). Hill Carter also documented in his plantation journal that his wife sponsored forty children’s baptisms at Shirley during the same time she was actively corresponding with Rev. Okeson. Together, Mr. and Mrs. Hill Carter were a thoughtful pair who insured Shirley Plantation ran at its highest operating potential. Hill focused on the field and daily operations and Mary lived a life devoted to her husband, children and religion.

From 1825 to 1835 Mary B. Carter matured into her role at Shirley and during this period became the mother of six boys and one girl. Therefore the needs of the plantation grew each year and the lists of dry goods increased over these years. As mentioned, Hill separated some of his purchases categorically, making it clear which items were intended for Mary. Nevertheless, many of the sales receipts are simply extensive lists of fabrics, notions and accessories and one must guess as to whom the items are designated. When we consider the time period and what Mary would have in her wardrobe the lists of supplies actually create a clearer picture of how Mrs. Carter presented herself on a daily basis. When these fabric choices and notions are combined with period examples, a picture of Mary B. Carter emerges.



To begin with, we have established that Mary was often pregnant. Because she was pregnant seven times during this ten year period, she often wore a maternity dress. It was not uncommon for women to dress in or alter their everyday attire until they could no longer fit into their underpinnings and regular clothing, but eventually they would have to put on maternity wear. The Valentine Museum's collection contains a fine example of a simple, nineteenth century maternity day dress. The garment is made of lightweight brown cotton gingham, the bodice is lined in linen and the dress consists of a full skirt and a cleverly adjustable, semi-attached bodice. Figure 7a is the back view illustrating the higher waist line necessary to accommodate a growing belly, a full skirt which is cartridge pleated into the back of the bodice and the five pieces which construct the bodice back. The back's construction is made up of a center back piece, cut on the fold, and attached on either side to an additional right or left side piece. The fourth and fifth pieces are located in the shoulder area and cover the shoulder so that there is a seam on the back and the front of the shoulder but not on the top. This piece creates a smooth area to attach the sleeve which is simply one piece with a seam on the underside of the arm and, for additional fit, a gusset located under the armpit. The sleeve is semi-fitted and has very little fullness in the cap. Figure 7b and 7c shows us that while the bodice lining is fixed, the front bodice is adjustable: it has a wrap construction with drawstring ties at the neckline and waistline so the wearer can adjust the bodice to meet the skirt at a naturally higher position due to pregnancy. The front of the skirt is also adjustable with drawstring ties and both the left and right sides are constructed with a four inch opening to provide more ease in dressing

and fitting. As the period's style dictated, the skirt is floor length and was worn over the belly so that the bodice adjusted to meet the skirt at the higher waistline. The Valentine Collection Maternity Dress is dated 1825 which is congruent with the slope of the shoulder area and the style of the sleeve which indicates that it is from the early part of the nineteenth century sometime after 1820 but before 1830. The sloping shoulder detail is characteristic of this time period but conversely, the sleeves on ladies' dresses around 1830 grew into a larger and more exaggerated style with the top of the sleeve containing a huge amount of fullness.

Mrs. Carter had at least one of these types of dresses in the same type of fabric or a comparable fabric such as the calico that was bought from Hall and Neilson in 1828. As Linda Baumgarten points out in her book, *What Cloths Reveal*, "the high-waisted, uncorseted styles of the period around 1800 were ... more convenient for maternity wear" and since Mary had her first child in 1818 she most likely benefited from the style of the earlier period. However, as the waistline dropped down she may have used dresses already in her wardrobe, adapted her gowns to pregnancy or even had maternity wear constructed in the period style that "was made over afterwards to reuse the expensive textiles" (Baumgarten 152).

When Mary was not pregnant or showing, she wore the style of the period. Beginning with her underpinnings she wore a corset, drawers and a petticoat. While the earliest part of the nineteenth century had moved away from corseting, by 1830 the new silhouette of woman's wear made them necessary again. Figure 8a through 8g is a corset from the Valentine Museum and Figure 9 is a corset in Colonial Williamsburg's collection. The first example is dated 1830, has relatively simple detailing and is made of

heavy weight cotton. The overall construction can be noted in Figures 8b and 8c: there are three gussets on each side of the bust area, a busk that is three inches wide and runs down the center front, quilted stitching along the waistline provides added strength and support and additional gussets, for fit, can be found along the hipline. Figure 8d shows us that, much like its eighteenth century predecessor, it has a busk that is a stiff, removable piece inserted into a casing along the center front. The busk is the only interior structure as the remainder of the undergarment is not boned. The two back pieces each have ten baleen eyelets and both the left back and right back are attached at a side seam as well as to the wide shoulder strap. Finally, the seams and edges are all bound in the same material as the corset. The Colonial Williamsburg example is a little earlier: it dates from 1820 to 1830 and is cotton embroidered with silk. It is infinitely more intricate in detailing as the whole undergarment is finely quilted for added stiffness and durability. Also in contrast is the number of gussets and the seam lines: there are at least two large gussets in the bust area on either side of the busk and the fit in the hip is achieved through additional seaming. It does share a similar shape to the Valentine's example in that the shoulder straps are wide and the overall effect is an hour glass figure. Also in comparison, this corset has baleen eyelets and a stiff busk that runs down the center front, but the rest of the corset is not boned.

With her corset, Mary wore drawers, also called pantaloons, a petticoat and stockings. The drawers were straight legged, without a crotch seam, finished below the calf and trimmed with "tucks and broderie anglaise or lace" (Nunn 117). Over the pantaloons one wore a petticoat which was instrumental in filling out the fuller skirts of the period. Figure 10a and 10b is a petticoat with an attached chemise that can be found in the Manchester City Gallery in Manchester, England. This particular undergarment is

a beautiful example of the time period in question as it dates between 1828 and 1835. It has a slightly higher waistline, is constructed of cotton and is trimmed at the neckline and hemline with lace and embroidery. The neckline is adjustable with the use of a drawstring and the bodice front is cut on the bias for an easier fit. The skirt is full and cut in five sections which are gathered into the waistband. It is trimmed with sixteen lines of piping that are spaced about one half inch apart. The piping begins just above the hemline embellishment and moves up the skirt to finish about two feet from the hemline. This piping gives the petticoat the stiffness necessary in filling out the overdress. The other petticoat example, figure 11 is a period garment contained in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and is dated from the 1830's. This undergarment is paired with a corset and sleeve supports but the petticoat itself is a separate piece. This petticoat is also cotton and has the corded detail but as one can note, the cording begins at the hemline and continues up the skirt until it ends about ten to twelve inches from the waistline. As the Met's description points out, "the cording serves to stiffen [the petticoat] into a rounded shape that would push the skirts of a dress outward into a bell form" ("Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History"). This undergarment also appears to be made of one long piece of fabric gathered or pleated into the waistband. In addition, in keeping with the later styles, the hemline is somewhat shorter. The sleeve supports pictured were also typical of the time period and were often necessary in supporting the donut-shaped, sometimes down-filled, puffy sleeves popular around the 1830's (18 Bassett). The stockings Mary wore were in a limited variety of fabrics: either cotton or silk. There are multiple purchases for both types of footwear and some of these may have been designated for other family members like Hill or the children. The pair pictured figure 12a and 12b are

from the Valentine Museum Collection, dated 1820's and have been hand embroidered with the owner's name.

In October of 1826 (a year when she was not with child) there is a receipt that includes "25 yards Irish linen...2 yards linen cambric, 2 spools cotton, [and] 1 bunch silk thread" (Collection). I would hypothesize that these supplies were for Mary's undergarments and possibly a dressing gown. The linens would make sturdy pieces that were easy to launder, the cotton may have been cording as it is not designated as thread and the silk thread would be for durable stitching and possibly embroidered embellishment. Also, at the time of this purchase Mary had a six year old boy and a toddler to dress which means their needs probably did not include fine linens. In addition, much like Hill had staple purchases on an annual or biannual basis, Mary purchased about 25 yards of fine linen regularly. There are receipts from 1826, 1828, 1831, 1833 and 1834 for around 25 yards of premium linen. These fabrics were of a finer quality and more expensive so they were certainly designated for the immediate family: the most logical of which is Mary herself.

When we examine outerwear we must first look at the types of fabric Mrs. Carter purchased then at the period style in order to develop a framework for Mary Carter's appearance. For daywear she bought lightweight fabrics like French and Irish linen, cambric and cottons like calico and organdy. Fine fabrics that would have also been used for daywear or special occasions and evening wear included damask, lustering, Florentine silk, gros de Naples and bombazine. For the colder weather we see purchases of woolen materials like linsey, merino, baize and cassimere. It is definitely possible that some of these items were used for the children or house servants. However, receipts for about ten to fifteen yards of a single type of fabric bring one to think that particular yardage was

intended for a specific dress. And when the fabrics listed are of a finer quality they were certainly intended for the Mistress of the house.

Woven linen in simple “stripes and checks, or in solid colors” in addition to printed cottons were widely popular choices for woman’s daywear (Bassett 15). Mary purchased such items, usually in the spring and mostly from Hall and Neilson and later from Binford, Brooks, Gay and Co. As previously discussed, she bought fine linen regularly but she tended to purchase a wide variety of additional lightweight fabrics. For example, in April of 1835 there are two receipts from Binford, Brooks, Gay and Co.; one is for “22 yards of Calico, 14 yards plaid silk [and] 10 yards of French cambric” in addition to some accessory items like a “straw bonnet and trimmings” and “silk gloves”. The other receipt includes two additional purchases of “12 yards Calico” (Collection). Undoubtedly, some of this fabric was planned for day dresses for Mrs. Carter.

Figure 13 and figure 14 are garments in the Colonial Williamsburg Collection. They are both made from printed cotton, from about 1830 and are period appropriate representations of the type of dress Mary Carter would have in her wardrobe, especially constructed out of the aforementioned fabric purchases from Binford, Brooks, Gay and CO. By the 1830’s woman’s dresses had changed notably in silhouette and construction. The new fitted bodice and flared skirt required a skilled dressmaker since a woman’s dress had become dropped shouldered, narrow-backed, and slender-waisted. The larger sleeves and fuller skirts were the signifying characteristic of the period and this emerging dress style is clearly illustrated in the two examples from Williamsburg’s Collection. Figure 14 is a cotton day dress, circa 1830 and illustrates the popular trends like the gathering in the bodice and the gigot sleeve. The gigot was a “daytime sleeve very full at the shoulder but tapering towards the elbow and tight at the wrist, was cut on the bias, set

in smooth under the arm and pleated or gathered around the top; it required stiffening to hold it out some 12 inches or more beyond the shoulder” (Nunn 121). The other dress, figure 15, is also a cotton print from the same time period. This dress illustrates the trendy pelerine collar fashionably tucked into the waistband with an imbecile sleeve, or sleeve a la folle as it was also called. The imbecile sleeve was also considered a “day sleeve, very full and gathered into a narrow cuff but with the fullness falling more softly to give width at the elbow or forearm” (Nunn 121). Both dresses have a bell-shaped skirt that fall to the ankle or just below and a tightly fit bodice.

The Valentine Collection has a dress very similar in cut and style to Williamsburg’s Figure 14 example. Figures 15a through 15d illustrate the similarities: it is lightweight cotton with a wide neckline and a gathering detail down the center front. The sleeve is a gigot sleeve that consists of an upper sleeve and a lower sleeve constructed in four pieces. According to Janet Arnold’s, *Patterns of Fashion C. 1660-1860*, the way this sleeve is cut could have been to conserve yardage. Her example of the gigot sleeve pattern calls for one pattern piece and one seam (61). The huge upper sleeve is tightly gathered into the top of the arm scye as is the skirt which is gathered into the two and a half inch waistband.

As the weather turned colder Mrs. Carter required more substantial clothing for outdoor wear. Figures 16, 17, 18 and 19 are items that Mary would have in her wardrobe for a daytime outing such as a walk in the gardens, a visit at the neighbors or an excursion into Richmond or Petersburg. In October of 1827 Jacquelyn P. Taylor provided “8 yards mixed cloth [and] 8 yards lining” possibly for an overcoat for Mrs. Carter much like the one pictured in Figure 16. The overcoat from Colonial

Williamsburg's collection has all the characteristics of a dress from that period, except that it opens down the front and is fastened with hooks and eyes in the bodice and ties made from the same velvet material as the contrast detailing down the center front. The silk walking dress from the Metropolitan Museum of Art is from the same time period as the coat, is accessorized with a detachable pelerine collar in a contrasting color, is fashionably cinched at the waist and could be worn with a leather belt as it is pictured. Fabric for a dress like this was purchased on several occasions including in the "13 yards gros de Naples" bought in 1828 or the "11 yards Florentine silk" bought in 1829. The leather gloves and silk hat would have been the finishing touches for Mrs. Carter's ensemble. Gloves were a regular purchase for the Carters. The ones pictured are from the Valentine Museum's collection, are dated 1830 and the interior contains a stamp that reads, "Gants Brillantes, Brevetes, s.g.d.g., D. Jugla, Paris" (Collection). The wrist has a small one-button closure and the bottom edge is scalloped with a tiny pinked detail. The interior and exterior seaming on these gloves is immaculate: they are completely hand made with tiny, uniform stitching. The hat in Figure 18 is an 1830's silk bonnet that was on display in Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. It is simply decorated with a bouquet of silk flowers and could have been made at the plantation with the "1 ½ yards buckram" bought in 1829.

Evening dresses during this period were constructed of silk and were cut slightly more revealing: a woman would wear a lower neckline without a capelet or pelerine and the dresses were shorter sleeved. The silhouette remained the same with a broad neckline, cinched waist and a bell-shaped skirt. Figures 20 through 23 give us an idea of what Mrs. Mary Carter might have worn for an evening event. The first dress pictured in



Figure 20 from the Manchester Art Gallery is actually two dresses: a red silk gauze evening dress with a woven gold thread pineapple motif and an attached underdress constructed of cream satin. The sleeves are distinctive of the beret style that was popular during this period for evening wear. Janet Arnold shows us that this type of sleeve was cut as a complete circle with a bound slit on one side for the arm. The circle was then gathered into the arm scye with the small section under the arm left flat (Arnold 61).

Figure 21 is a silk evening dress from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and it also has the beret sleeve but it is constructed of an opaque silk with a small pattern throughout. These sleeves are supported by sleeve pillows and the skirt is pleated into the waistline. Also pictured is a beaded bag and a pair of silk net mitts both from the Valentine Museum Collection. The bag is dated 1830 and is completely beaded with a floral motif band running around the center. The mitts are circa 1820 however, the Met's representation of the silk dress in Figure 21 is accessorized with the same type of evening gloves. They are sheer and purely decorative but provided an added detail to the evening ensemble.

As a woman of a prominent Virginia family, Mrs. Mary B. Carter would have a current wardrobe with an array of fine fabrics. The purchases for the plantation list such fabrics in quantities large enough for a lady's dress and we see these regular purchases throughout the ten year period in question.

## The Children

By 1825 Hill and Mary Carter had two boys. Lewis Warrington was six years old and Robert Randolph had just been born. By 1835, Mary had five more boys and one girl but lost one boy, bringing their total number of surviving children seven. Robert Randolph would eventually take over the duties of the property but that would not happen until 1866 when Hill was well into the twilight of his life. For the purposes of this study, since all the children were young during the ten year period in question, we will examine garments for a young Elizabeth Hill Carter and her brothers, Lewis Warrington, Robert Randolph, Charles, Williams, William Fitzhugh, and Bernard Hill.

The boys definitely had most of their clothing made from the fabric purchases between 1825 and 1835. As infants and toddlers children wore simple bed gowns and frocks: “Bed gowns were often made of inexpensive small-scale printed linen or cotton. Frocks were fitted dresses intended for public wear, usually fastened at the back with ties or laces” (Baumgarten 161). The previously mentioned 1832 Hall and Neilson receipt where Mr. Carter has written in the margin, tells us that the children needed casinet, lawn and cambric which all could have been used for such garments as bed gown or frocks. Figure 24, 25a and 25b are examples of such garments. Figure 24 is a linen bed gown from Colonial Williamsburg’s Collection that dates from the early part of the nineteenth century. It is basic in cut and construction, has a center back opening and a drawstring at the waist for fit. The other garment pictured is from the Valentine Museum and is labeled as a “girl’s dress” circa 1830. I would argue however, that this could be a small boy’s frock as it opens down the front and has more of a resemblance to a man’s coat than a woman’s dress, especially in the cut of the bodice. Although the fabric of this

frock is fine and the floral pattern is somewhat feminine, “gender distinction had nothing to do with the...color of the fabrics, or the use of flowers, or delicate textiles”

(Baumgarten 164). This frock is silk damask, lined in cotton and has hook and eye closures down the bodice front. The bodice is cut in four pieces, two in the front and two in the back, the frock has a small banded collar and a two piece, fitted sleeve. The skirt is somewhat full and is gathered into the waist which can be adjusted with a drawstring tie on the interior. In May of 1827, Hall and Neilson provided 2 yards of silk in addition to “6 yards brown linen” (Collection). The silk certainly could have been for a skirted frock, much like this one, that the younger boys would wear with pantaloons until they were about four years old. The older boys, like Lewis, may have worn the brown linen as they graduated into a skeleton suit or a skirted tunic and trousers.

Figures 26a through 26h and figures 27a through 27f are examples from the Valentine Collection of clothing for boys who were older than four but younger than twelve. The first garment is a green wool, skirted tunic with matching trousers from about 1835. The tunic is decorated in a military style with black buttons and soutache trim that continues down onto the full skirt. The top is constructed to resemble a man’s frock coat with the buttons and a center opening down the front of the tunic skirt. Conversely, the sleeve is closer to a woman’s gown from the period. It resembles a gigot sleeve but is more versatile in that the lower sleeve portion is detachable. The interior sleeve is lined in brown linen and the bodice is not lined but the seams are all bound. In addition, the decorative buttons are reinforced on the interior with the use of a heavy weight cotton thread. The trousers are constructed of the same material except for the waistband which is brown linen. There are hook and eye closures on the waistband but the center back is neither seamed nor equipped to fasten: it is simply left open. The

trousers are ankle length and slightly tapered. This type of tunic would have been worn by the boys in many variations of fabrics and quite likely were passed onto the younger boys as they began to walk and outgrow the bed gowns and frocks.

As the period progressed the skeleton suit became more streamlined and less feminine. The other example from the Valentine Museum is later: it is dated 1840. The later garment gives us an idea of how boy's garments were changing and becoming more mature. While this skeleton suit is dated a little later, the fashion trend began closer to 1835, especially for older boys who might have worn a skeleton suit with a short jacket and a collard shirt underneath. Figure 27a through 27f is a brown and blue skeleton suit made of a lightweight wool and lined in linen. Skeleton suits were two pieces that attached at the waistline with the use of buttons and button holes. This suit has beautiful brass and blue glass buttons on the top that are continuous around the waistband of the shirt. The shirt has a simple wide pleat detail across the front and a button down closure on the back. The neckline is wide and the sleeves are simple, short, cut in one piece and trimmed with two rows of blue velvet ribbon. The buttons on the shirt's waistband attach to the button holes on the pant's waistband. The pants have a side opening with a three button closure and we can note in figure 27e that there is a right and left pocket detail. The lining is a coordinating blue stripe linen and the pant leg is cut a little wider, indicative of men's trousers.

The first receipt for Lewis Warrington's education appears for the 1828 to 1829 school year. The record not only lists his books but also items like bedding, mending for clothing, socks and shoes. Obviously young Warrington, as he was called, left for boarding school at the age of nine and graduated into a more manly attire. Later receipts in 1829 and 1830, for example, show tailoring services for the nine year old, although the

first record does not provide a description of the type of clothing made, the second tells us that he received “one pair of pantaloons [and] three waistcoats” (Collection). After these records there are regular listings of clothing purchases for Hill Carter’s sons from the merchants Mr. Carter frequented. They are generally mixed in with their father’s purchases, but are for the same types of men’s clothing their father was wearing. In 1835, when Warrington was sixteen, Beers and Poindexter outfitted Hill’s son with a whole wardrobe for the school year which included a “black bombazine coat, pantaloons, and vest,” a pair of “fancy, mixed cassimere pantaloons,” and a “fancy silk vest” in addition to altering a frock coat and repairing a blue coat (Collection).

Elizabeth Hill Carter was born in 1834 so she was barely a toddler by the following year. We have already discussed what children under four were wearing during this time and one final example in Colonial Williamsburg’s Collection gives us a second look at a frock for a young child. Figure 28 dates from around 1835, is made of a textured, lightweight wool and further illustrates the idea that these garments were often gender neutral. In fact, this frock could have been a boy’s garment. The smaller sleeve and lower waistline indicate that a small child of either gender wore this piece. A girl may have worn it with lace trimmed pantaloons or a boy could have worn it with a version of trousers. In either case, it exemplifies the notion of child’s clothing before the age of four. The remainder of the examples is older girl’s clothing which “followed woman’s fashion on the whole, though their skirts were shorter” and their pantaloons were purposely visible (Nunn 125). Figure 29a through figure 29d is a girl’s cotton printed summer dress, dated 1830’s. Except for the sleeve, this garment is very similar to the woman’s dresses that we examined from the time period. The neckline is wide and scooped, there is a gathered detail down the center front of the bodice and the waistline is

slightly higher than the natural waist. The waistband connects the bodice to the skirt and the full, bell-shaped skirt is tightly gathered into this waistband. The closure is at the back of the dress and is equipped with hooks and eyes. The sleeve, although short, is more like a gigot than a beret sleeve due to the way it is set slightly off the shoulder and shaped more like the top part of a gigot sleeve. There is one receipt from 1835 that contains a purchase from Binford, Brooks, Gay and Co. for “5 yards pink French chintz” (Collection). While Elizabeth was probably too young for a dress such as the Valentine’s example, I’d like to imagine the possibility or, at the very least, a beautiful little bed gown made of this material.

The final two garments, figures 30 and 31 are silk dresses in the Colonial Williamsburg Collection from approximately 1835. Figure 30 is an ivory silk fabric trimmed in lace and satin bows with a beautiful embroidered flower and wheat motif down the skirt’s center front panel. The bodice has a wide, scoop neckline and a pelerine-like collar overlay which falls over the sleeves and is attached to the wide waistband. The neckline and the bottom edge of the collar are trimmed in lace as is the bottom of each sleeve. There is also bias trim and a tiny piping trim that creates a linear pattern on the collar. The sleeves are in the beret style and in addition to the fine lace trim, each sleeve has a satin bow at the bottom opening. The dress’s skirt is bell-shaped and attached to the waistband with wide pleats. The final details are the four satin bows on either side of the front embroidered panel that frame the beautiful focal point. Clearly, this is an exceptional dress that would have been worn for a special occasion.

Our final example is figure 31, a yellow plaid, silk dress that is a little later in styling than the previous example. The shape of the dress’s skirt tells us that it is made from one piece of fabric that has been sewn together, selvedge to selvedge, and gathered

into the waistline. The bodice is simple in detailing with gathering at the center front along the neckline and waistline and the sleeves are large beret sleeves that could have been padded or supported with a young lady's sleeve supports. The waistband is a separate piece that is overlaid onto the dress and the back fastens with a hook and eye closure. It is also interesting to note that the hemline is not parallel to the dress pattern. This could be due to the nature of the fabric or the dressmaker who cut the pattern and sewed the garment.

Mary Carter had children for twenty-six years. She began in 1818 and had her last baby in 1844. While nine died either as an infant or young child she raised eight and tended to the needs of her young until the 1850's. Before her death in 1864, she saw all of her surviving children grown and most of them married. Because we know her to be a doting mother devoted to her role as their caretaker she certainly would be sure all of her children wore the best clothing she could procure. Whether she made the items herself, or her house servants were charged with the duty, one can certainly assume great care and detail were taken in the effort to present the Carter children as the gentle-born family of a well known plantation owner.

## Slaves at Shirley Plantation

Tax records in 1830 indicate there were almost a hundred slaves on the plantation that year. We have established the type of work these people were responsible for and we also know that Hill Carter and his wife, Mary, were concerned with their health and well being. It is certainly safe to assume that he heeded his own words from his 1827 Agricultural Society speech where he insisted that laborers should be fed and clothed well. Moreover, the records of purchases from the years in question show us that Hill took the steps to insure his laborers had good shoes and appropriate clothing.

While we can look into the past at examples of clothing for the gentile classes, work clothing, because it was worn, laundered regularly, then discarded, is hard to find. What is clear is that work clothing was styled for practicality, durability and regular wear. The fabrics were durable and sensible for outdoor work consisting of items like osnaburg, linsey woolsey, frocking, drill, calico, jean and gingham. We see these items appear frequently in the purchases for the plantation and some are in large amounts indicating they were meant for his labor force. We can combine the fact that we know the types of fabrics that were being used with descriptions from the period and gain an understanding of what Hill Carter's laborer's clothing looked like.

During the era of slavery, it was common practice to list a runaway slave ad in order to assist in finding one's property. These ads were descriptive and often verbally illustrated what the slave looked like and was wearing at the time of their disappearance. Working woman from this period wore bed gowns or a short gown layered with other clothing like petticoats, a basic shift, an apron and stockings. The bed gown "opened completely down the front like a jacket....[it] fastened with pins or by wrapping it around the body and holding the front in place with an apron" ( Baumgarten 116). The short



gown was similar in that it was an unfitted garment with a shorter skirt however it could “follow the contemporary styles in their overall silhouette ...and began to be shaped to the body with drawstrings or gathers” (Baumgarten 118). *The Genius of Liberty*, a newspaper from Leesburg, Virginia provides a few descriptive ads from the time period in question. In July of 1829 a woman named Bet ran away from James Wrenn of Fairfax County, Virginia. She left with, “one blanket of tow thread, filled in with purple yarn – one striped linsey habit - one cotton checkered [habit] - one new tow thread shift – one black stuff petticoat – one white [petticoat] - one handkerchief, mostly red, together with other clothing. She has been in the habit of wearing a brass ring.” In other words, she left with all of her worldly possessions: her summer and winter clothing and her valuables with the hope, as the ad points out, of finding her family. The “habit” would conceivably be a short gown in linsey woolsey, a cotton and wool blended course cloth, used for work clothes, and the cotton checkered habit was a work dress in checked gingham. Her “shift” was her undergarment and the petticoats could have been worn together or separately over the shift. Finally, the handkerchief was a popular accessory as a head scarf. Some of these fabrics appear on an 1832 record where Hill purchased “31 yards domestic, 19 yards checked domestic and 12 yards apron checks” (Collection). The quantity and quality of these materials are clearly intended for his staff. Other records list immense quantities like the “92 yards flannel” bought from Jaquelin P. Taylor in 1833 or the “344 yards oznaburgs” also purchased from J.P. Taylor but in 1828.

A second ad, in August of 1827, describes two women named Matilda and Maria who ran away from William Chilton’s kitchen in Loudon Country. These two women were considered “house servants” since they worked in the kitchen and therefore, their attire would have been a little nicer than the field laborer’s. An English tradition passed

hand-me-down garments to their servants and some plantation owners adopted this tradition thereby ensuring suitable attire for the house servants (Baumgarten 134). In any case, the house servant's clothing was generally made of nicer materials and could even be cut in the period styles or a modified version. The ad for Matilda and Maria reads, "They have a variety of good and neat clothing. Matilda has a full mourning dress, including a black Leghorn bonnet; and Maria has taken with her a Leghorn bonnet, dressed with coloured riband." In Mrs. Carter's house, she ordered a vast amount of calico over the years so one can assume her house servants routinely wore a printed cotton dress. In addition, in 1832 Mr. Carter notes that the "maids" were designated the following items, "20 yards linsey, 31  $\frac{3}{4}$  yards domestic, 8 yards red flannel, 6 yards black cotton and 10 cloth shawl(s)" (Collection).

The male house servants undoubtedly wore a comparatively nicer wardrobe than the field laborers. Although the tradition of livery had probably been practiced by Hill's grandfather, there is no indication that Hill's house servants were liveried. Receipts do not mention traditional livery trims like livery lace and brass buttons. Although one sees a few listing for "guilt buttons" the quantities would not warrant several coats and britches. Nonetheless, quite a bit of red and yellow flannel was purchased for the plantation so one might presume that certain colors were predominant among the staff. Whatever the "uniform" may have been, it certainly consisted of the same types of garments that Mr. Carter was wearing: a white shirt, trousers, a waistcoat (or vest) and probably a coatee or a roundabout and possibly a frock coat, depending on the occasion. *The Genius of Liberty* contains two ads that reflect the clothing of a more mature, established servant. One ad from 1830 tells us that 35 year old George, who was a blacksmith by trade, disappeared with "a variety of good clothes – it is presumed he is

well dressed.” And Jacob Monday, also age thirty-five, in May of 1833 took with him a “drab cloth coat, two pair drab pantaloons, (one pair tucked at the bottom,) linsey waistcoat, (striped with red, green and black,) a new black fur hat, &c. &c.” In both cases, these men were older and their wardrobe was appropriate to their age and higher station of servitude.

The field hand’s attire was not as refined as his house servant contemporary but often had a similar look to his fellow laborer. Just as the house servants wore a kind of uniform, so did the field workers. Their clothing often consisted of “the common dress of field slaves...osnaburg shirts, cotton jacket and [trousers],...and Virginia-made shoes” (Baumgarten 135). A variation of the common field slave attire is described in an 1831 runaway ad where “Anthony...had on...an osnaburg shirt, and pantaloons, and a linsey twilled coat” (“The Genius of Liberty”). The plantation receipts include fabrics for these types of garments but we also see large quantities of blankets and shoes. The blankets were not only for bedding but may have been used as an outer garment in the winter by cutting arm holes and “the top was drawn up round the neck, so as to form a sort of loose frock, tied...with strings” (Baumgarten 132). Finally, new shoes were a staple at Shirley Plantation. The Penitentiary Store, located in Petersburg, Virginia and a dry goods supply where the manufactured items were made by the prisoners, was Hill Carter’s regular choice for footwear. There are annual lists with large varieties of sizes which could only be intended for his work force.

Hill Carter took the measures to ensure his laborers were properly cared for and attired. Along with the list of supplies that were intended for the field workers are bills, contained in the Collection, from doctors who regularly visited the slaves at the plantation. These documents along with the recorded information that Mary Carter often

cared for the ill and definitely taught the slaves to read and write, tells the story of a family who took on their role as proprietors without ambivalence. They recognized that everything and everyone connected to Shirley Plantation was a reflection of themselves.

## Conclusion

The Shirley Plantation Collection is a document rich in Virginia History. The time span and quantity of information contained in the Collection crosses over a broad spectrum of historical interest. Colonial Virginia, the Revolutionary War, Industrialization, the Civil War, Plantation Life, Agricultural History and Slavery are all woven into the rich tapestry of preserved documents. Careful examination reveals the details in a family's daily life lived almost 200 years ago: Hill Carter, his family and the plantation they occupied are the defining characters whose lifetime and legacy are forever preserved in writing. In any historian's hands these papers are an exciting resource that spans a multitude of topics and time.

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to explore this vast collection and glean from it the wealth of guidance it provided in looking at a period family and their daily wardrobe. Each handwritten receipt, the important details in the descriptions and lists of bulk materials and personal items from dry goods merchants allowed me to become acquainted with one of the oldest families in Virginia: it has been a pleasure getting to know them. This endeavor began with deciphering the vast Carter family tree, pouring over vital records and digging for clues concerning individual family members. Finally, it ended with the image of Hill and Mary Carter, their children and daily life at a plantation.

As each layer was revealed, a clearer picture evolved. I discovered Hill Carter to be a man devoted to his family, to the Carter legacy and whose business operated to its fullest potential due to his own painstaking care. His copious notes included in his farm journals, his meticulous bookkeeping which tracked his purchasing and intent for those purchases and his documented success in his business are clear defining characteristics

that were more than evident in the practicality of his choice in clothing. His wife Mary lived a life devoted to her children and the people of the plantation. The descriptions and quantities of materials she chose proved a level of taste and the fact that she was steadfast in the execution of her duties as a plantation owner's wife and a mother. Not only did she dress herself in fine fabrics but she made sure her children were smartly clothed and the plantation slaves were generously cared for.

In many ways, Hill Carter and his wife were the modern American family during their proprietorship at Shirley Plantation. They were educated, cultured and compassionate people carving out a life for themselves and their children. The examination of their clothing demonstrated their desire for practicality combined with an aspiration to stay within current styles and trends. The personal documents created a framework for understanding choices in garments and fabrics as well as fashion preferences. This half of the picture made it effortless in ascertaining the remainder of the puzzle. The Valentine Collection, the Colonial Williamsburg Collection and the spattering of additional period or reproduction garments give concrete examples which inform the descriptive nature of the Shirley Plantation Collection. Together, they create the whole picture and illustrate the rich history of a distant place and time.

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