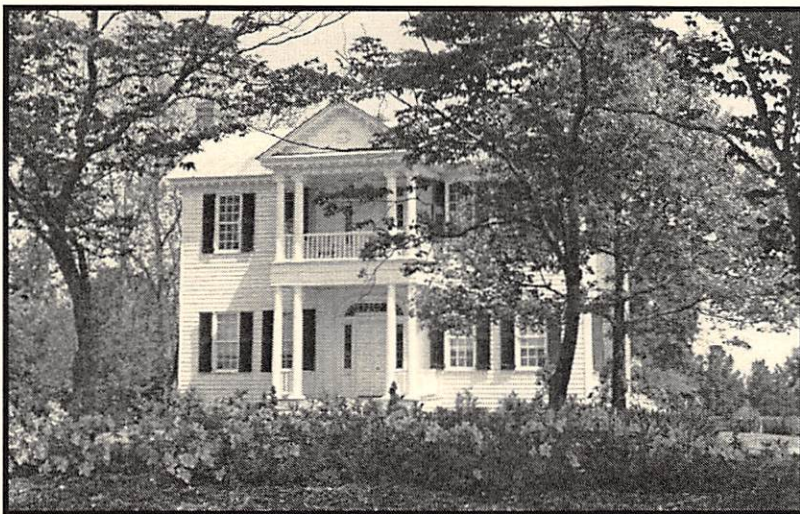


The Value of Study - From Generation to Generation

In 1993 I was honored and delighted to be asked to join *The Up-to-Date Club* — honored to become a part of such an esteemed group of ladies and delighted to have the opportunity to study a variety of interesting topics with them.



Lowry-Erwin House (Home of Edith Abell Cantrell, the sixth generation of her family to occupy the house.)

Both of my parents' families are from Chester County. There are several buried at Hopewell, some lived in Baton Rouge, but most lived in Lowrys and Armenia. We did have several city cousins, and two mentioned throughout this book were Cousin Bob Abell, the surgeon, and Cousin "Fanny" Erwin Abell Davidson, both of whom lived on York Street in Chester. My grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Erwin Abell, Sr., even moved into town for a very brief period, but my great-grandmother, Martha Lowry Erwin Abell, with whom they lived at the "old homeplace", sent one of the farm hands after the children in the

buckboard with a note stating, "You may live where you like. The children will remain at home." She was the undisputed grand dame of the family and, needless to say, everyone returned home post haste.

I would like to think that my interests in study and intellectual pursuits (as feeble as they may be at times) came from my great-grandmother, Francenia Carroll Hamilton. She was an extremely introspective, but well-balanced woman. After the death of her husband in 1909, she moved from Columbia to Charlottesville, Virginia to be near her sister Sara, whose husband was a professor at the University of Virginia. She lived very near the campus and was actively involved in academic life.

"Mother Hamilton" believed that women had a personal and social obligation to be beautiful in every way ~ physically, spiritually, emotionally and intellectually. She also believed that all of these were attainable characteristics, not inherited. In her later years, and until her death, she lived with my grandparents in Lowrys, so we are blessed with many of her writings and much of her correspondence. Among her writings are letters of advice and encouragement to young suffragettes, and a book she wrote for women in search of happiness and contentment (which she clearly states is to be found, with God's guidance, within each of us). To follow are excerpts from that book, entitled Shells Gathered From the Shores of Life or Stepping Stones to Happiness and Contentment.

Oh yes, back to my membership in *Up-to-Date*, I think "Mother Hamilton" would approve.

Mary Edith Abell Cantrell

Excerpts from an Essay on the Value of Study Written in 1905

"A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bard and sage."

Emerson

Learn to trust yourself, and to accept the place Divine Providence has found for you, believing that what God chooses is better than what we should choose. Life presents to us such a well-arranged, beautiful succession of interests, that it seems a pity anybody should, through a willful or intentional ignorance, miss them, or try to take them out of their course.

In beauty-culture, they advise women to cultivate a "hobby," claiming that persons with a "hobby" retain bright eyes and rosy cheeks, and an expression of animation, which in themselves constitute beauty, far beyond the period at which the "hobbyless" women lose their attractions. The best "hobby," says the *New York World* ~ the one which will keep women young longest and will afford them the most enjoyment during the time ~ is an intellectual one.

In this advanced day and generation, most women have enough knowledge of various branches of learning to be able to choose one in which they will be honestly interested. The impersonal nature of study is one thing which should recommend it. If one studies French, or literature, or music, or dives into forgotten poets, or makes a study of some period of history, she is doing something which takes her mind completely away from herself ~ her own worries, pleasures, friends and foes. This in itself is a blessing and a beautifier. Nothing produces wrinkles and the signs of care and age so quickly as thoughts of one's self, and conversely, nothing wards these evils off so effectively as the thoughts of other things.

Study is a better hobby than the collecting mania. She who stores her mind rather than her cabinets is not increasing her anxieties. The woman who studies most knows most; knowledge has a way of moulding features and imparting new graces to the expression. Knowledge makes women better talkers, better listeners, better hostesses and guests. Persons devoid of all mental culture may have beauty of a sort, but they have not the refined expression of countenance which charms and captivates those students of the beautiful whose opinion is really worth having.

In every way the study hobby pays. While we may not be able to enjoy immortal youth, however, or even attain the highest altitude of which we are capable, it seems to be generally conceded that age can be warded off for many years by judicious care, and that it is, more or less, a matter of personal choice as to whether or not the mind and body shall be allowed to grow old prematurely.

To be happy and contented through life, spend part of each day in muscular work, part in study and part in good deeds to men, and last, but by no means least, trust in God and pray.

Francenia Louise Carroll Hamilton

About the Authors

Francenia Louise Carroll Hamilton was born in 1861 in Columbia, SC, the daughter of Albert Francis Carroll, a carriage manufacturer in Columbia, and Catherine Flynn Brady Carroll of County Cork Ireland. She was married to Foster Marion Hamilton, also of Columbia, the son of Robert and Sarah Darby Hamilton formerly of the Baton Rouge section of Chester County. Mrs. Hamilton died in Lowrys on February 22, 1949. She is buried in the Zion Church Cemetery in Lowrys.

Edith Abell Cantrell is the great-granddaughter of Mrs. Hamilton, and the mayor of Lowrys. She is the daughter of Capt. Robert Walker Abell (dec.) and Julia Faye Atkinson Abell. She is married to Ray William Cantrell, formerly of Spartanburg, SC.