

**A Brief History of
South Keswick
in
Troy, Virginia**

Prepared by

Stuart Miller

June - November 2001

South Keswick, originally farm and timberland in the early to mid 18th century, was created from two farms or tracts, each maintaining a separate identity until a buyer of both combined them in 1970. During the surveyed period of about 250 years, the fortunes of various owners rose and fell partly due to economic conditions and partly due to cruel mismanagement of the land. Some benefited from hard times, gaining ownership of lands at fractions of their true value, others found ways to benefit from ownership by less than salutary means, but the one constant was the frequent changes of ownership.

The earliest settlers arrived in Albemarle and Fluvanna without hostility. The Monacan Indians had earlier migrated westward leaving few traces of their settlements. The largest local remnants of their civilization are found at Point of Forks, the junction of the James and Rivanna. Deed descriptions in colonial times, in recorded deeds, provide a metes and bounds measurement between blazed and/or named trees, stakes in the ground, or branches of the Rivanna. Consequently, the plantations or farms became known locally by their occupants' names, such names remaining long after ownership changed hands. Only in recent times did the recording of surveyor's plots become an official requirement.

In the case of South Keswick, the southern part was called the "Michie Land" while the northern portion was known as the "Marshall Farm". The history of each parcel

is being reported by those names.

Road and River Access

The farms were notable for their location on the Rivanna (River) and along Route 616. The Rivanna, originally called the North River when the upper James was known as the Fluvanna, was an essential opening into Albemarle County. Very soon after land grants were obtained by early settlers, a long section of the Rivanna became a river of commerce, but the inconvenience of portage, occasioned by an uneven bottom and an uneven water flow, brought Thomas Jefferson's engineering knowledge into play. His pioneer work in 1763 initiated the construction of locks and dams, a series of works that continued until the 1870's, when the Rivanna's usefulness as a commercial enterprise ended following the opening of a railroad system.

Shipping companies may have contributed to their own demise by transporting many of the oak railroad ties used for railroad beds. Nevertheless the Rivanna has remained a navigable river and was named by the state assembly in 1975 and 1988 as the "Rivanna State Scenic River". Part of the river's scenic attractions are the remnants of locks and dams and canals stretching 41 miles from Charlottesville to Columbia. They may be seen in part by local canoe trips of various durations between landing points as

follows:

Milton to Foot of South Keswick Drive	6.4 miles
(easement access for South Keswick owners)	
then to Crofton ramp	4 miles
then to Palmyra ramp	6.7 miles
then with various stops to Columbia	

Traces of wing dams are in the river just north of South Keswick's north boundary at Burgoo Creek. Canal boats were towed by horses or mules along the right (north) bank between Palmyra and the beginning of the loop a few hundred yards north of South Keswick although no trace can be found on South Keswick lots. But surely the most appealing feature of the Rivanna through Fluvanna county is its utter tranquillity. [The Rivanna Scenic Atlas, W.E. Trout III, Map 12]

Land access for plantations or farms in the vicinity consisted of paths and trails across privately owned land, slowly gaining stature and permanence from the increasing population. Descriptions in deeds and plots drawn in the 1700's show the road from Three Chopt Road running south past South Keswick as "Mr. Adams Road". Sometime later, the portion from Boyd Tavern to and including Woods Edge Road was called Valentine Woods Rolling Road. Valentine Wood was the heir of an early plantation

owner on the south side of the Rivanna, [Patent #5, 1732-1735, page 96; 20 June 1733; Patent #15, 1732-1735, page 200, 6 April 1734; Patent #18, 1736-1739, page 415, 22 September 1739. Surveyors Plot Book 1 & 2. 21.125 (Alb)] creating the presumption that this road began on his plantation, forded the Rivanna, crossed Mr. Adams Road, joined Three Chopt Road, and was constructed for the purpose of rolling hogsheads of tobacco or other produce from the Wood Plantation to a point where produce could be picked up and carried to Richmond. This road was also used for access to Charles Lewis's plantation, the original owner of part of South Keswick. Subsequently, Valentine Woods Rolling Road was renamed for owners of the adjoining land until it secured its current title of Woods Edge Road. The part between Route 616 and Three Chopt Road was abandoned. Mr. Adams Road continued south through Union Mills (c. 1780) where it connected with other roads leading to Richmond through Wilmington and Columbia. The length from Boyd Tavern to Richmond was then identified on surveyors' plots as the "Stage Road leading from Richmond to Charlottesville". (c. 1830) A deed written in 1847 describes the road as "the road leading from Boyd Tavern to Union Mills" and another drawn in 1898 includes a plot with the description "Stage Road". In the last century the state numbered the road as Route 616 and it became "Union Mills Road". The same Charles Lewis, earlier named, owned sixteen stagecoaches at one time and probably used the Stage Road leading from Richmond to Charlottesville until Three Chopt Road became dependable for coaches.

Three Chopt Road was simply a path until 1733 when improvement work began, but it was much later before the road became suitable for wheeled traffic. Work was performed by local owners (titheables) under the direction of county officials; one description calls for any stumps to be no higher than 12 inches above the ground.

Tarleton's Raid in 1781 brought him down Route 22 to Shadwell and Charlottesville, but when he withdrew on June 5 1781 he moved east on Three Chopt Road then south along the Stage Road past South Keswick to Point of Forks on the James River where captives were paroled and released. Lafayette, a lifelong supporter of the American patriots, made a triumphant visit to his old friend Thomas Jefferson in 1824. He was feted and dined along the Stagecoach Road. Entering Fluvanna from Goochland County, he was escorted by county officials through the county and after an overnight stay at Wilmington, drove past South Keswick and was handed over to an Albemarle county contingent at Boyd Tavern for the last leg of the journey to Monticello.

The Marshall Farm

Returning to the earliest European settlement of land that is now South Keswick ("Marshall Farm" portion), Charles Lewis was granted 1200 acres by patent in 1731, [Land Office Patent #14, 1728-1731 pts. 1 & 2, page 375 (Roll 11)] about 400 acres on the

south side of the Rivanna beginning at the mouth of Buck Island Creek, and 800 acres on the north side running from the Rivanna in a north easterly direction to Boyd Tavern. He paid the customary 12 1/2 cents per acre. His son, Charles Lewis Jr., settled (patented) the land and built his dwelling on a cliff above the Rivanna with access from River Road (now 616) and Woods Edge Road, naming his land the Buck Island Plantation. Perhaps he first reached the plantation via the James River and Rivanna as the home farm of Charles Lewis lay on the James in Goochland County, or more likely he bounced along the roughly formed roads beside the James to Columbia and hence in a meandering fashion across Fluvanna County to the plantation. Three Chopt Road, predecessor of Route 250 between Charlottesville and Richmond did not exist in 1731. Charles Lewis Jr. obtained another grant in 1760, [Land office patents #33, 1756-1761, page 73] that comprised a contiguous area of 400 acres, the Limestone Tract, lying between Rivanna and Three Chopt Road, the latter in the process of becoming the primary route between the Shenandoah Valley and Richmond.

It was Charles Lilburne Lewis (grandson of Charles Lewis) who added the last segment of the Lewis holdings that at their peak totaled more than 8000 acres. In 1780 [Deed Book 2 (os) page 155 (Flu.)] he acquired 190 acres along the north bank of the Rivanna between property already in his possession and the “Michie Land”. The purchase price was 100 pounds in current currency. In the description of the 190 acres is the first reference to the “Burgoo Creek”, the small creek that flows from just below

Route 616 to the Rivanna. Part of its length coincides roughly with the rear or west boundaries of some South Keswick lots. Burgoo Creek, over the intervening years was variously called “Burgo”, “Bugrue” and “Bogyew”, but Burgoo is the first recorded spelling. A portion of the acquisition, from the Burgoo Creek to the “Michie Land”, estimated to contain 120+ acres, subsequently became part of the “Marshall Farm”.

The Lewis family were true and fervent patriots during the Revolution, unlike some plantation owners along the north bank of the Rivanna to their south. In February 1780 at the conclusion of a jury “Inquest” in the Fluvanna County Court, Walter King was declared a subject of Great Britain and his entire estate in Fluvanna was forfeited to and seized by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the County.[Deed Book 1 page 246. Flu.] His plantation consisted of 5,600 acres, 77 named slaves, 170 head of cattle, 25 horses, flocks of sheep and hogs and all plantation utensils. On the same day, Samuel Martin’s plantation was confiscated. It consisted of 4,979 acres, 59 named slaves, 93 head of cattle & horses, flocks of sheep and hogs, plantation utensils and the stored crops. No defense was heard; probably both royalists had fled. [Deed Book 1 page 248, (Flu.)]

Five years after the formation of Fluvanna County in 1778, John Timberlake, Deputy Clerk, recorded a list of inhabitants taken by order of the court.

Whites 1985

Blacks 1330

Page 8 of 41

© Stuart Miller 2002

Total 3315

It was in 1801 that Charles L. Lewis leased a parcel of land to Thomas Duckford Boyd. [DB 1 page 162 (Alb.)]. Boyd leased a 100 acres for eight years. Erected by Lewis was an existing tavern called Watson's Ordinary but by 1801 Boyd was already in possession. He was required to maintain the improvements and was given the incentive of receiving 20 shillings for each acre of woodland "cleared and enclosed in a good and lawful fence". Sub-lets or timber sales were prohibited. Boyd retained possession for perhaps 30 to 40 years but his name is still associated with the district. Mail sent to residents of the "Marshall Farm" was delivered via the Boyd Tavern Post Office at least into the 1940's.

Fortunes of the Lewis family waned in the 1790's when a series of crop failures combined with an economic depression. The land had become exhausted from farming practices prevailing and the family had been forced to sell much of its property. By 1803 Charles L. Lewis was ready to move to Kentucky. He still owned 852 acres that included part of the "Marshall Farm" and this was conveyed to Hugh Nelson by deed in 1803 although the deed was not recorded until 1806.[DB 15 page 332 (Alb.)] The sale price is unknown but 12 years later Hugh Nelson resold the land for \$12.25 per acre with the improvements. Charles L. Lewis was able to buy an equal sized tract in Kentucky for little more than \$2.52 per acre.

Hugh Nelson was a hugely successful resident whose prominence arose from his public activities-Congressman, Federal Judge, Minister to Spain. He married into the Walker family of Belvoir, Betsy Walker being the best known following the publicity of her rebuffal of Thomas Jefferson that erupted in 1802 although the incident had occurred almost 30 years earlier when Jefferson was single. It was scandalous for the times but the publicity failed to upset Jefferson's second term in the presidency. One measure of Hugh Nelson's wealth was illustrated in an auction sale advertisement appearing in 1810 when he offered 100 slaves for sale. When Hugh Nelson resold the 852 acres in 1815 to John R. Campbell, [Deed Book 19 pages 396-398 (Alb)] he had added 250 acres to the tract. The total area of 1,102 acres now included the upper portion of the "Marshall Farm" that lay along Mr. Adams Road (Route 616), connecting it to the lower portion acquired by Charles L. Lewis in 1780. During his ownership of nineteen years, farming practices were probably confined to the bottom lands along the north bank of the Rivanna. The "Marshall Farm" supported limited farming but more likely was cut over for "saw timber".

In 1834 the 1,102 acres was sold to David Hancock. [Deed Book 32 pages 257 & 259 (Alb)] The metes and bounds description that previously enclosed the property used the term "following the meanders up the said river to the point of beginning", the beginning being a sycamore tree on the north bank of the Rivanna. The new deed used

the partial description “up the river to locks recently constructed by the Rivanna (Navigation) Co. to the pond at the upper set of gates, the point of beginning”. The sycamore tree was probably inundated by the pond.

David Hancock owned extensive lands in Albemarle County and in Fluvanna County although all his land was taxed in Albemarle. He died in 1858 leaving to his eldest son, David E., the farm called Bellview and the residence lying on the Rivanna and reached via Woods Edge Road, the lime quarry tract, Shepherds Old Place and a small (36 acres) tract bought from Fountain M. Wells, a land area of about 1,200 acres. [Will Book 25 page 362 (Alb)] David E. was also bequeathed several slaves and their children, a gold watch and a sorrel riding horse. Almost immediately, David E. Hancock, by contract, agreed to sell 313 3/4 acres to John G. and Edwin O. Gooch, retaining the title until the full purchase price had been paid. From 1859 until 1867 the Goochs' were in possession if not occupancy. Land records at the Fluvanna County Courthouse are so replete with the Goochs' names as to suggest they were primarily land speculators. The “Marshall Farm” came into existence when John Wesley Marshall and his brother George Baxter Marshall obtained the Gooch contract, paid \$3000 to David E. Hancock and received a deed for 313 3/4 acres in Fluvanna although later plots showed about 35 acres lying in Albemarle County. [Deed Book 20 (os) page 30 dated 4/24/1867 (Flu)] For the first time, the “Marshall Farm” became taxable real property in Fluvanna. The Land

Book Assessments for 1868 carry the following line:

J. W. Marshall 313 3/4 acres

Land \$1266.75

Building 300.00

\$1566.75

The prevailing tax rate of 30 cents per \$100 of value created a tax obligation of \$4.70. Tax records in Albemarle County show that both counties were taxing the same land. David E. Hancock paid taxes on 1,102 acres of the land bought from John Campbell for several years after the “Marshall” sale.

Transfer deeds often omit the sale price but sales along Mr. Adams Road show prices were slowly moving upward.

1834 263 acres lying across Three Chopt Road and Mr. Adams

Road (Route 616) at \$3.25 per acre

1834 90 acres lying on the west side of the Stage Road leading

from Richmond to Charlottesville (Route 616) at \$5.00

per acre

1847 Resale of 90 acres in above parcel, lying on the south side

of the Stage Road leading from Boyd Tavern to Union

Mills at \$5.00 per acre.

1867 313 3/4 acres, the “Marshall Farm”, at \$9.56 per acre

Prior to the brothers’ purchase of the “Marshall Farm” George Baxter Marshall bought 178 3/4 acres from David E. Hancock. In a contract dated 25 November 1865 and a deed recorded on March 21 1866, the land was described as beginning at the mouth of the Burgoo Creek then running north beside lands of Gooch (later Marshall) to Woods Edge Road and back to the Rivanna. [Deed Book 62 page 110 (Alb)] By the following year, the brothers owned adjoining farms when they completed the purchase from Gooch (Hancock). In all likelihood the Marshall acquisitions were initiated during the Civil war. David E. Hancock and George Baxter Marshall served side by side in the Albemarle Light Horse, Company K, 2nd Regiment, a cavalry unit. George Baxter Marshall was wounded in one engagement. A third brother, Patrick Henry Marshall also served in this unit. [Muster Roll Albemarle County Records]

For the next thirty two years, the Marshalls engaged in a series of land transactions for reasons unknown, selling, buying or exchanging land adjoining or partially on the “Marshall Farm”.

1866 George B. Marshall buys 178 3/4 acres DB 62 pg. 110 (Alb.)

1867 John W. & George B. Marshall buy

	“Marshall Farm”	DB 20 pg. 30 (Flu.)
1869	George B. Marshall sells 178 3/4 acres to brother Daniel W. Marshall	DB 64 pg. 166 (Alb.)
1877	Daniel W. Marshall sells 178 3/4 acres to brother George B. Marshall	DB 73 pg.296 (Alb.)
1877	John W. Marshall sells 20 acres from “Marshall Farm”	DB 72 pg. 378 (Alb.)
1879	George B. Marshall sells his 1/2 interest in “Marshall Farm” to John W. Marshall \$1,409.62	DB 22(os) pg. 240 (Flu.)
1881	John W. Marshall buys 210 acres west side of George B. Marshall property	DB 87 pg. 173 (Alb.) Recorded 10/2/1886
1881	John W. Marshall buys 45 non-contiguous acres on Rt. 616 north of Deer Meadow Rd.	DB 87 pg. 173 (Alb) Recorded 10/2/1886

1883 George B. Marshall sells 178 3/4 acres,
separating the John W. Marshall Farms DB 82 pg. 145 (Alb)

7

1889 John W. Marshall sells 45 acres (above) to
B.C. Hearn, whose heirs recently parted
with the land after 100 years of family
ownership DB 116 pg. 30 (Alb.)

At the beginning of the 20th Century, John Marshall and family were owners of 295.60 acres, the result of the 20 acre sale in 1877 and more accurate surveys. The farm remained in family ownership until 1950.

For a history of the Marshall family written about 1937, the writer is indebted to Anna Thurman Robertson for making it available. A family historian, through her own visits to the Marshall Farm and from her conversations with a daughter of John Wesley Marshall, wrote about early life on the farm subsequent to its acquisition in 1867.

At the date of acquisition the existing house, located on Lot 15 of South Keswick, stood together with numerous dependencies. The house, still standing in 1937, had two rooms up and two down with a large chimney in the center. It was vertically boarded,

unpainted and unfinished in the interior. Nearby were at least seven tenant log houses (possibly converted from slave quarters) and a tobacco barn. This cluster of buildings is suggestive of a secondary base for farming operations because until 1859 the “Marshall Farm” was a portion of holdings by previous owners exceeding 1100 acres. Until 1803, the lower part of the “Marshall Farm” had been accessible only across the Burgoo Creek from the larger plantation of Charles Lilburne Lewis. It was during the ownership of Hugh Nelson (1803-1815) that Nelson acquired the upper part of the farm that fronted Rt. 616 creating direct access to the group of buildings acquired by John Wesley Marshall.

The Marshalls treated the farm as a new settlement, first practically reclearing the land, then building the structures needed for agriculture. A new house, located within a few feet but not connected to the existing shelter, a smokehouse, carriage shed, cornhouse and kitchen were needed. Water was supplied from a spring below the house, that also served to keep milk cool in the summer by means of a “milk box”.

The accessory buildings had all disappeared or “fallen in” by the mid 1930s. Both houses, the older empty and unused for years may have stood until the 1950s, a few years after descendants relinquished title. Land assessment records in Fluvanna County show an assessment for a dwelling until 1955, but no physical traces remain of any building as of this date.

The farm was used for raising tobacco initially and later for wheat, corn and other crops. At all times abundant trees provided cordwood. The canal boats plying the Rivanna used horses to draw them along the river bank past the farm and John Wesley Marshall exported products directly from the farm and imported molasses, coffee, sugar, flour cheese and fish in bulk by the same means, until the Rivanna Navigation Company ceased operation in the late 1870's.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the agricultural uses declined during the Marshall family ownership. The soil, shallow and weak, was not suitable for extensive farming although hardwoods and softwoods abounded. Despite a large family, only one son reached adult age and his efforts fell short of successfully continuing farming. William Baxter (Buster) Marshall was well remembered as a man who made his living buying eggs, poultry and butter from neighbors and reselling his produce in Charlottesville. Great-grandchildren of John Wesley Marshall best remember W.B. with his buggy and a "mean" mule, the buggy piled high with produce and a poultry coop. He never owned an automobile. Neither did he ever marry.

From the early 1900's the land steadily reverted to woodland. The first aerial photograph ever flown for Albemarle in 1937 (portion of the Marshall farm is in Albemarle), shows a clear area only around the supposed location of the house, (February 12, 1937, # BV 16.51 Albemarle County Planning Dept.), perhaps 35 acres, covering

portions of Lots 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16. The balance was uninterrupted woodland split by a winding driveway running about three quarters of a mile from Route 616 where it entered Lot 22, crossing the Moore property, Lot 23, Lot 3, Lot 5 and then generally following the lines of South Keswick Drive to the houses. Reminiscences by Robert S. Pace, an octogenarian living at Union Mills, included a visit he made to the “Marshall Farm” about 1934. A young, somewhat inexperienced driver, he entered the driveway, so deeply rutted that he quickly grounded the chassis of the automobile. He walked to B. C. (Bernie) Hearn’s house, only a few hundred yards north along Route 616, asking for help. Bernie Hearn brought his mule and with chains was able to free the automobile. The visit was completed with the purchase of two chairs and a table that now sit in the Pace family museum located next to his home on Route 616 in Union Mills. A depression forced sale?

By 1942, only female members of the Marshall family remained on the property although some assistance was provided by the children of Orvid Rosser Thurman and Lee Anna Thurman who had inherited the 210 acre farm acquired by John Wesley Marshall in 1881. Customarily, the two families exchanged visits along a road created when the Marshall brothers owned three adjoining farms. Remnants of the road remain, either partly or totally overgrown, generally starting from the house site, continuing down the hill, across the Burgoo Creek, then up again crossing Woods Edge Road to the old Thurman house.

In two deeds in 1942 and 1943, heirs of John Wesley Marshall conveyed their interest to Harry Houser Harris, a grandson of John Wesley Marshall. (Deed Book 30, page 10 and Deed Book 30, page 441, Fluvanna) There is no evidence of active farming during his ownership but there is evidence that the farm was cut over during his stewardship. It is also known that in 1948 or 1949 construction was begun on a new dwelling in a pine growth on Lot 23. The basement was excavated and partial foundations were laid but construction ceased. Nothing remains now except a depression in the ground.

A sale to Carl Omohundro effectively ended the tenure of the Marshall family, a period spanning 83 years although there are hints that occupancy by John Wesley Marshall may have begun in 1863 soon after he sold a 200 acre farm near Woodbridge, VA in 1862. A possible reason for the 1867 deed may have arisen from the delayed payment for the sale of the 200 acres, the deed for which was not given to the buyer until 1866.

Within the deed of 10/14/1950 to Carl Omohundro, the sellers retained a connection to the Marshall Farm. On Lot 13, the sellers retain a private graveyard with right of ingress and egress between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on each day. One more plot may be opened. If all remains are removed the right expires and the land is added to the

part conveyed. The graveyard is a well maintained rectangle enclosed by a wrought iron fence. There are headstones and footstones, all clearly engraved for the following family members:

John Wesley Marshall	1829-1904
Angeline Marshall	1836-1926 (wife)
Ella Frances Elsom	1856-1939 (1st born daughter)
William Baxter Marshall	1858-1939 (1st born son)
Laura Davis Marshall	1861-1890 (2nd born daughter)
Lee Anna Thurman	1864-1937 (3rd born daughter)
Walter Early Marshall	1872-1887 (2nd born son)
Alonzo Marshall	1879-1887 (3rd born son)

also:

Orvid Rosser Thurman	1868-1898 (husband of Lee Anna)
Maude Morton Thurman	1891-1891 (daughter of Lee Anna)

Buried at Riverview Cemetery in Charlottesville two more daughters of John and Angeline Marshall:

Carrie Belle Harris	1869-1954 (4th born daughter)
Cora Elizabeth Marshall	1875-1958 (5th born daughter)

A lingering mystery surrounds the presence of a private graveyard on the 20 acre plot, originally part of the John Wesley Marshall purchase of 313 3/4 acres (Deed Book 20 (os) page 30, Fluvanna), but sold by the family to Thomas McDaniel in 1877, although the deed was not delivered to the buyer until 4/25/1883. The graveyard was known to later owners, but identification of any part was not possible until recently, when by chance, a headstone flat on the ground and covered by decades of leaves and roots was uncovered. The headstone listed the grave as the burial plot of Tilitha C. Gianniny (1845-1885), wife of William James Gianniny. Four smaller plots, still unidentified, lie in close proximity. A past owner recalls a visit in 1987 or 1988 by three persons who identified themselves as kin and believed ancestors were buried there. They related a story that the woman and three of her 10 children had been poisoned by eating a pokeweed salad. Pokeweed is a pretty perennial with red stems, neat leaves and colorful berries. The roots, berries and leaves are poisonous, but a pokeweed salad can be prepared from the tender young shoots that arise each spring. It was a classic spring foragers' food in early years but even the young shoots should be boiled twice using fresh water each time before they are eaten.

Inquiries from the Gianniny family historian produced a record of Tilitha and her husband but the mystery remains unsolved. Perhaps William Gianniny was a tenant of John Wesley Marshall; certainly no record of ownership can be found. William

Gianniny, a great grand son of Anthony Gianniny who came from Italy as a gardener with Mazzi the creator of Jefferson vineyards, is well known to the family historian as having fathered 21 children with two wives, Tilitha Drumheller and Susan Seiler.

Carl B. Omohundro acquired 295.6 acres, the complete “Marshall Farm”, on 10/14/1950. (Deed Book 42, pg. 263, Fluvanna) At that time, Carl B. Omohundro, a successful businessman in Charlottesville and the descendant of very early settlers, owned several hundred acres (now known as Greystone Farm) stretching south from Three Chopt Road to its boundary at Route 616 opposite the “Marshall Farm”. To give himself more flexibility when moving from his farm to the Marshall Farm, he acquired, within the month a sliver, almost a triangle, of 1.64 acres, with 929 feet of additional frontage, from B. C. Hearn. (Deed Book 42, page 332, Fluvanna 11/29/50) Sometime later he moved the Marshall Farm driveway entrance further south thereby creating a direct, across Route 616, connection between the two farms. The “Marshall Farm” was now 297.24 acres.

That Omohundro was looking ahead is evidenced by a letter he wrote to the then owner of the adjoining “Michie Land” asking if the owner was interested in selling a portion lying between Route 616 and the Rivanna, complaining that the existing road was in bad condition due to logging on the farm. In an undated response, the owner said he was not interested at that time because he wanted to sell the whole (about 472 acres).

Both were probably aware that more than half the access road to the Marshall homestead ran across the “Michie Land” but relations remained cordial for another decade.

Nevertheless, Omohundro reduced a portion of the right of way on land of others by buying an 18 acre parcel from heirs of Avis Mitchell (Deed Book 47, page 29). This parcel is bounded by Lots 22, 23, 3 and Route 616 and is now occupied by Lannie Moore Jr. and others. With the purchase, he also added a further 660 feet of frontage on the South side of Route 616.

Perhaps the acquisition of the “Marshall Farm” was simply an expansion plan, but files in the Forestry Department show regular meetings between Omohundro and foresters for developing and implementing a reforestation action. The reforestation program began on the cleared land surrounding the homestead site with the planting of Virginia Pine in 1953. Further plantings were added in 1966 and 1968, more Virginia Pine and shortleaf pine, that left only a rectangular section open on what is now Lot 14. The 1953 plantings disappeared but remnants of the plantings in the late 1960s can be seen on the edge of Lot 17 and partially into Lot 15. An aerial photograph flown April 16, 1959 (#127 Fluvanna County Courthouse) displays an almost totally wooded landscape, but another flown October 2, 1972 (#96 Fluvanna County Courthouse) indicates that Omohundro cleared for pasture a rectangular shaped area of about 10 acres that begins on the south side of Rt. 616. This parcel includes much of Lot 22 and a

portion of Lot 23.

Apparently, relations between Omohundro and the owners of the adjoining “Michie Land” deteriorated in the early 1960s. The culmination of the dispute occurred when the right of way, in use by Omohundro and the Marshall family over a period of 100 years, was blocked at both ends by gates, locks and felled trees. The barricades would have been placed where the right of way entered Lot 23, and at the lower end in the vicinity of Lot 11. Omohundro initially cut a roadway along the edge of the Burgoo Creek as a temporary necessity but sued the adjoining owner in Fluvanna Circuit Court. A decree was entered on 1/2/1964 (Deed Book 64, page 43, (Flu.) whereby the court held that Omohundro had acquired an easement or right of way through continual use for more than 20 years and the right to maintain it. The owners were enjoined from blocking the easement forever, to remove the obstructions and to pay Omohundro’s costs. [It must be a sheer coincidence that the current owners of Lots 23 are embroiled in litigation for obstructing an easement on their property.]

As a final comment on the “Marshall Farm” as a separate parcel, the 1960 Land Book in Fluvanna shows an area of 295 acres, with no improvements, to be assessed for \$1,570, an average of 5.30 per acre. In 1970 Carl B. and Mary Omohundro sold the “Marshall Farm” and their other holdings on the opposite side of Rt. 616 to Knox Turnbull but retained the 18 acres acquired from heirs of Avis Mitchell. (Deed Book 77,

page 355, Fluvanna)

Knox Turnbull's purchase of the "Marshall Farm" preceded his almost immediate purchase of the adjoining "Michie Land", bringing into one tract the future South Keswick development.

The Michie Land

A search of records related to the "Michie Land" starts in 1796. In that year a Land Office Grant was obtained by John Miller (Patent #35, Book 1795-1796 page 645). Because a grant of 439 acres was most uncommon in the last decade of the 18th century, it is suggested that the grant was a re-issue by the Commonwealth of Virginia, of lands confiscated 16 years earlier from British Royalists. The area of 439 acres started on the north bank of the Rivanna, crossed Mr. Adams Road (now Route 616) and included about 125 acres on the east side of the road.

A series of short term ownerships followed when John Miller sold the land to Amos and William Williams (Deed Book 4 (o.s.) page 274 Fluvanna 8/7/1801) for \$248. In turn, the land was sold to Pleasant Carpenter (Deed Book 4 (o.s.) page 431 Fluvanna 2/16/1805) for \$500. Carpenter's wife who also resided in Charlottesville pleaded the

inconvenience of travel to Palmyra to sign the deed. Instead, two witnesses were sent to her residence where she acknowledged her agreement to the sale. In turn, the land was sold to David Michie (Deed Book 5 (o.s.) page 362 Fluvanna 12/23/1809) for \$1,200. The preceding transactions were probably between absentee landlords for a speculative purpose. There is no evidence of building improvements or agricultural use but the woodlands may have yielded timber during at least one ownership.

From 1809 to 1889 no recorded change of ownership appeared in the Fluvanna deed books. But evidence exists of occupancy by other than Michie. The description of the “Marshall Farm” purchase in 1867 includes the reference “running down the river to lands of W. R. Reynolds (formerly Michie’s)” It is likely that W. R. Reynolds occupied the land either under the terms of an unrecorded deed or and unrecorded lease. There was also a sale of 30 acres from the tract to J. Bosthead. The small farm, with a rectangle shape, was taken from the corner of Route 616 and Oakland School Inc. Records of this deed were not uncovered but details can be found in Deed Book 26 (o.s.) page 103 Fluvanna. There is no evidence today of any building improvements on that part of the land lying between Route 616 and the Rivanna. There was a dwelling on the smaller 125 acre portion, erected before 1875, as the Land Book for that year assessed a dwelling for \$300.

Ownership by Michie did not end well for the heirs. A Commissioner appointed

by Fluvanna County sold the land for delinquent taxes (Deed Book 26 (o.s.) page 103, (Flu.) 5/11/1889) and the deed was given to Mary L Reigart. At that time, a survey was prepared that showed an area of 493 acres. That figure remained unchanged for another 80 years possibly because the 30 acres sale was not deducted until 1970.

During her ownership, Mary Reigart leased that part of the “Michie Land” lying on the east side of Route 616, supposed to contain 125 acres. The lease, initially for 2 years then extended for one year to C.B. McKinnie, was for the purpose of mining and quarrying operation. (Deed Book 30 (o.s.) page 23 and Deed Book 30 (o.s.) page 119, 3/20/1901, Fluvanna)

The mining and quarrying operation was to extract milky white vein quartz, a hard durable material exhibiting considerable resistance to weathering. It has been quarried for use as a flux in steel furnaces and has been marketed as exposed aggregate material used in cast concrete products and as a decorative ground stone cover in gardens. The early operation may have been to extract silica as a 1985 analysis noted the silica content to be 99.05% with a very low iron content. There are half a dozen locations of vein quartz in Fluvanna, but none currently operating. [Virginia minerals, Division of Mineral Resources, Vol. 45, August 1999]. The area was quarried and a shaft was drilled through the quartz. An estimated 1,000,000 tons is believed to remain in the quarry to this day but without any currently recognized commercial value.

After 17 years of ownership the property was resold to Hattie McDonald and Annette V. Brooks. The deed recognized an area of 493 acres. (Deed Book 3, page 9 Fluvanna 7/23/1907). At some point between 1907 and 1923, title became vested in EAV Brooks and W. D. McDonald (presumably heir to Hattie McDonald). This transfer became evident in 1923 when a portion of the land, a rectangular parcel of almost 20 acres was sold to Avis Mitchell (Deed Book 14, page 264 Fluvanna 9/11/1923) The same parcel now subdivided into 4 residential lots, was later sold to Carl B. Omohundro (Deed Book 47, page 29 Fluvanna 7/31/52) who, as noted earlier, attached it to his earlier acquisition of the “Marshall Farm”.

The next transfer of the “Michie Land” took an interesting turn in 1935. W. D. McDonald, now the sole owner, drew up a will in Philadelphia, dated 8/15/35, that was witnessed by Frank and Mabel Edison, who were also named as beneficiaries of the estate. W.D. McDonald died on December 14, 1935. The estate included personal property and the “Michie Land”. The will was produced in Fluvanna to permit the Edisons to obtain the deed. It is noted that for purpose of probate, the “Michie Land” was identified as a “Lot in Virginia” with an estimated value of \$500. The deed actually conveyed a tract of 456 acres. [Will Book 4, page 399 Fluvanna]

It appears that soon after acquiring ownership, the Edisons arranged for a

intensive logging program for saw timber. In 1950, a report from Forestry to Edisons stated that “the land was heavily cut over in 1936 for saw timber and that no cutting should be done for at least 10 years”. Trees counted for future cutting included :

177 Northern Pine

86 Red Oak

54 White Oak

9 Hickory

3 Miscellaneous

Maple, Poplar or Beech were not identified, those types customarily found in lower moist areas. The Forestry Department submitted its next report to the Edisons in 1962, The report included such comments as “better for pine than hardwoods” and “soils not of the type to produce good hardwoods”; and “only small to medium hardwoods with very slow growth and “ a few acres of pines in two tracts”. Despite the somewhat negative report, Mabel Edison (now the sole owner of the “Michie Land”, following her divorce) entered into a timber cutting lease with the Walton Lumber Company (Deed Book 63, page 9 Fluvanna 5/28/62) reserving only the timber around the residence site, but the lease was amended less than one month later to exclude timber cutting on that part of the land lying between Route 616 and the Rivanna. The comment about the “residence site” raised the question as to what happened to the dwelling on the “Michie Land”.

There may have been a crude, simple structure suitable for occupancy but from the date

Mary Reigart acquired the land (1894) until the Edisons sold it (1970), the Land Book of Fluvanna County did not include an assessment for any building improvements.

It may be indicative of the “Michie Land”’s lack of agricultural value when a comparison is made with the “Marshall Farm”. The comparative assessments for 1895 are as follows:

Mary L. Reigart (Michie Land) 493 acres @ \$2.60/acre

Trustees for John Marshall (Marshall Farm) 313 acres @ \$3.00/acre

On the other hand, a smaller tract is often valued at higher unit (per acre) price than a larger tract.

By 1962, Frank Edison Jr. was managing the “Michie Land” under a power of attorney from Mabel Edison. In November of 1962, in an application for a loan from a California bank, he asserted he was the owner and valued the land at \$678,000. In 1964, as the owner of the Palmyra Stone Company, he estimated reserves at the white vein quartz quarry to be 500,000 tons, valued at \$38.00 per ton and further noted to the reporting geologist that he had orders for 500 tons from one purchaser and 800 tons from another but that he did not have the capacity to fill these orders.

Frank Edison Jr. filed for bankruptcy on October 6, 1964 in California. A hearing was held in California on April 5, 1966. The bankruptcy trustee filed suit to obtain the

title from Frank Edison Jr. but was thwarted when it discovered that Frank Edison Jr. did not own the “Michie Land” although he could claim a beneficial interest when his mother died. However, following her death, he learned he had only a 25% interest (copy of proceedings in Deed Book 85, page 585, Fluvanna). The use of property not owned by the borrower to secure a loan is universally frowned upon, so one may only speculate about what happened when Frank Edison Jr. reappeared in the U.S. District Court Southern District of California, Central Division.

The Combined Tracts

On June 22, 1970, heirs of Mabel Edison (Harriet 50%, Frank Jr. 25%, William 25%) sold the “Michie Land” to Knox Turnbull (Deed Book 78, page 620, Fluvanna). The land was described as covering 456.14 acres according to a resurvey by Thomas D. Blue dated 8/3/1970. By this action, Knox Turnbull now owned both the “Michie Land” and the “Marshall Farm” but his ownership proved short-lived. Knox Turnbull was an astute businessman, well respected in the Charlottesville area. He had purchased Keswick Hall, then by degrees he acquired perhaps as many as 2000 additional acres stretching south from Keswick Hall, across I64 and Route 250, south along both sides of Route 616 to Cumber and west to the north bank of the Rivanna. He had a large vision of a community centered on Exit 129 of I64, to be financed initially by cash flow from

Keswick Hall and other owned businesses, and later by sales of the acquired land. Adverse economic conditions and an enormous debt owed to his primary banker, the Fidelity Corporation, finally overwhelmed his plans. Knox Turnbull died tragically on September 8, 1971, after being forced into bankruptcy. One year later the Fidelity Corporation was given title to all the tracts of land in the original acquisitions both in Albemarle & Fluvanna counties including the “Marshall Farm” and “Michie Tract” (Deed Book 90 page 533, Fluvanna 9/28/1972). The Fidelity Corporation, liking nothing less than owning non-income producing real estate, still took almost two years to find a suitable buyer.

On July 12, 1974, William Burruss Jr. purchased nearly 2000 acres from the Fidelity Corporation, the deed of conveyance describing amongst other land, the “Michie Land” and the “Marshall Farm.” William Burruss Jr., a huge land speculator, may own as much as 100,000 acres at any given time. Thus the purchase of 2000 acres was considered “small change.” He simply held the land for resale at a profit. Thus the next transaction was for a portion of the 2000 acres. Following a conveyance from individual Burruss to corporate Burruss Land & Lumber Co. (Deed book 120 page 453, Fluvanna 8/22/1974), the corporate entity sold the “Marshall Farm” and “Michie Land” (excluding 124.25 acres on the east side of Route 616 and separated from the main tract) to Walton Lumber Co. (Deed Book 120 page 661, Fluvanna 12/16/1976). By a separate deed (Book 120 page 659) the small (1.64 acres) still held by individual Burruss was also conveyed to

Walton Lumber Co., whose ownership now covered 633.69 acres, all of which, with the exception of 13.92 acres in Albemarle, lies within Fluvanna County.

Walton Lumber Co. proceeded with a timber cutting and milling operation for the next two years. They performed what is best described as a clear cutting operation. Less charitable neighbors described the company as ravaging the land. The wide, boundary-to-boundary cutting is graphically illustrated in an aerial photograph flown in 1980 by the Forestry Department. Several small tracts of pines were untouched around the site of the original dwelling, scattered on Lots 13, 14, 15 and 17. Despite attacks by Pine Bark Beetles in the early 1990's that decimated later self-sown pines, several of the early plantings, now at least 40 years old, can be seen from South Keswick Drive.

The woodland of South Keswick, thoroughly cut over in 1978 and 1979 is now 21 years old. Perhaps another 21 years will pass before some maturity is evident. For comparative purposes, consider that the re-growth at Cumber, the property lying south of Lots 42 to 47 is now 43 years old. In 1958 the owners entered into a timber lease with McGhee Bros. for cutting 379 acres [Deed Book 53 Page 367, Fluvanna, 2/6/1958]. The land was completely cut-over by 1959 although trees close to the barbed wire boundary fence were spared. [1959 Aerial Photograph DVO 8W #127 Fluvanna County]

The later aerial photograph of 1980 displays other evidence of the Walton Lumber

Company's activities in South Keswick. The main access to the site was moved to its present location at the existing entrance to South Keswick Drive. Four sawmill sites can be identified, including the principal one at the intersection of Beaver Pond Ridge and Meadow Lane, well remembered by early lot buyers because of the monumental piles of sawdust.

Three sawmills were variously located at the corner of Marshall Road and South Keswick Drive, in the area covered by parts of Lots 24, 29 and 30, and on part of Lot 17. Having virtually cleared the whole tract apart from a few trees along the boundary, beside the Burgoo Creek and in one or two steep or inaccessible areas, the company ceased operations at South Keswick. Reluctant to sell the land outright, the Walton Lumber Company effected a tax-based exchange through which the final purchaser of the combined parcels obtained title.

The J. & W. Partnership acquired the land from Walton Lumber Co. Inc. on December 5, 1979 (Deed Book 137 Page 818 etc. Fluvanna) in a deed describing the "Michie Land" of 331.89 acres as shown on a plat by Thomas D. Blue, the "Marshall Farm" of 295.60 acres as shown on a plat by A. R. Sweet and Associates and the 1.64 acres (ex Bernie Hearn) as shown on a plat by O. R. Randolph.

Beginning a sub-division of land, the Developer pushed through scrub, bush and

discarded trees from the entrance at Route 616, using much of an existing logging road, but straightening curves between Marshall Road and the foot of South Keswick Drive, followed soon after by rough forming Marshall Road and Thurman Road. Work began on the creation of a lake initially expected to cover about seven (7) acres. When it was learned that such an area would require a dam more than 25 feet high, the project was scaled back to avoid costly engineering studies and government approvals. At its stabilized level, the lake now covers between 3 and 3.25 acres. Nevertheless, the lake and surrounding lake easement together enclose almost 7 acres.

By the mid 1980's, South Keswick Drive was established and preliminary surveys were performed to lay out individual lots. Initially five (5) acre lots were considered but tests for percolation showed that many such lots of South Keswick would not be suitable for septic disposal with the smaller area. Twenty lots were surveyed along South Keswick Drive containing approximately 10 acres each (Lot 1 to 20) although Lot 3 became 15 acres when half of Lot 1 was added and the remainder of Lot 1 was excluded from South Keswick. The other sizable departure from the 10 acres size occurred when Lot 16 was surveyed for 15+ acres, an acknowledgment that probably 50% of Lot 16 lay within the lake or lake easement.

The first Lot sale in South Keswick (Lot 8, Deed Book 179 page 559, Fluvanna 7/24/1987) followed almost immediately the filing of the initial Declaration of

Restrictions Covenants and Conditions (DRCC) which were imposed to enhance and protect the value and desirability of the real property in South Keswick, but within months it was revoked in its entirety and an Amended and Restated Declaration was filed. [Deed Book 185 Page 182, Fluvanna, 11/16/1987] The re-filing is considered to have occurred because the contract for Lot 8 predated the original filing. To bring Lot 8 under the umbrella of the DRCC required some concessions from the Declarant, including the absence of the 20 foot recreational easement along three sides of Lot 8.

By the end of 1988, contracts for lots within South Keswick had been signed, including Lot 1 on which a “Model” dwelling had been constructed by the Developer.

A news story appeared in January 1988 detailing the development of perhaps as many as 60 homes in South Keswick, in the \$150,000 to \$200,000 range. The story said that the lots were selling for \$34,500 and that six lots including the model home, had been sold. [Charlottesville Daily Progress, January 23, 1988] It may have surprised the developer that the first Lot sold in South Keswick was about to be improved with a \$300,000 dwelling.

Virginia Land Company brochures began to appear in Realtors offices “promising owners an outstanding environment in which to live as well as low property taxes, easy access to Charlottesville and the Interstate freeway system, a seven acres clearwater lake

and miles of partially wooded common areas ---- a wonderful place for a family life and recreation”.

By March 1990, the Declarant, then still owning eight (8) Lots in Phase 1, filed a supplementary DRCC, bringing into the plan and operation fourteen (14) Lots in Phase II, for which Marshall and Thurman Roads were roughly formed. [Supplementary Declaration to Amended and Re-stated Declaration of Restrictions, Covenants and Conditions, Deed Book 210, Page 254, Fluvanna, March 29, 1990]

A second supplementary declaration was filed in 1993, bringing Phase III into the plan and operation with all the restrictions, covenants and conditions of the Amended Declaration included by reference. [Second Supplementary Declaration to Amended and Restated Declaration of Restrictions, Covenants and Conditions, Deed Book 249 page 138, Fluvanna, May 12, 1993]

Lot sales slowed in 1993 and 1994 as the available supply diminished, coming to a standstill in 1995 and 1996 when no sales were recorded, despite five lots remaining unsold in Phase I and Phase II. Asking prices steadily increased, but the sales pace accelerated when the 23 lots in Phase III became available, resulting in all but one lot changing hands by the middle of 2001. In the overall history of Lot sales in South Keswick, beginning in 1987 and ending in 2001 57 Lots had been sold and prices for the

unimproved lots had risen from \$32,500 to \$79,500, an increased of 145% at an annual average compounded rate of 6.6%. [See link for Lot Sales by J. & W. Partnership]

Since the first sales, dwellings have been built both for owner occupancy and for re-sale and profit by builder/contractors, the first being the dwelling on Lot 18, constructed by the J. & W. Partnership and sold for \$170,000.

Dwelling sales and resales were analyzed. The following data emerged.

Number of sales (1990 through 2001)	19
Sold once	7
Sold twice	3
Sold three times	2
Lowest price	\$170,000
Highest price	\$440,000
Average price	\$296,315
Median price	\$315,000

[See link for History of Sales and Resales in South Keswick]

The construction of dwellings within South Keswick is regulated by the

Architectural Control Board (ACB). Wide latitude is given to the ACB and improvements now include a variety of prices, styles and size according to individual preferences with a predominance of custom-built housing.

Early purchasers were concerned that South Keswick would become a retirement or semi-retirement community but by 1994 or 1995 it was clear that South Keswick was also attracting families with young children. A recent survey (October 2001) revealed that children under the age of 18 now account for 25% of the resident population. Thirty-nine dwellings are occupied and share an average occupancy rate of 2.82 persons, slightly higher than the national average. Four dwellings are under construction. An unofficial survey of the animal population includes 24 horses, 10 cattle, 60 dogs and numerous but uncounted cats. Also uncounted, but seemingly everywhere in South Keswick is the deer population, whose numbers are rapidly expanding within the safety of the no hunting, no shooting prohibition. The economic cost of sustaining the deer is high; electric fences are required for vegetable gardens but plants, shrubs and flower gardens may be decimated overnight. On the other hand, the equine population is encouragingly growing given extensive bridle paths maintained along the recreational easements within South Keswick.

Reliance on public documents cannot provide all the details of past owners and occupants of what is now South Keswick, even when supplemented by the sometimes

imprecise memories of contemporary descendants. Although this history focuses on property ownership, the perusal of older, handwritten deeds occasionally uncovers personal information of owners' activities. Much information resides in the public domain and family histories of past owners and occupants will undoubtedly come to light for future researchers.

Lot Sales by J. & W. Partnership

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Price Range</u>
1987	2	\$32,500 to 34,500
1988	4	32,500 to 37,950
1989	6	34,500 to 35,500
1990	5	37,950 to 43,500
1991	5	41,000 to 43,500
1992	5	35,000 to 46,000
1993	1	46,000
1994	2	45,000 to 51,000
1995	No Sales	
1996	No Sales	
1997	5	52,500 to 58,000
1998	3	51,500 to 58,000

1999	3	60,000
2000	7	65,000 to 72,000
2001	7	72,000 to 79,500

=====

55 Lot sales

Notes to above:

1. Lot 3 excluded from price range. A 15 acre lot, it sold for \$45,000
2. Lot 21 excluded from price range, presold for \$25,000 but not recorded until 1989
3. Lot 1 is excluded from South Keswick
4. Lot 18 excluded; sold as improved lot by partnership
5. Lot 26 unsold as of October 2001