

# Memories of Maymont

By Benjamin Gayle

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My mother might deny it, but I'll swear that I grew up in Maymont Park. My father would take me there when I visited my grandparents in Bottoms Bridge. It took nearly an hour to get there by car, so I never could remember which way we went. The tall dark statues of General Lee and Stonewall Jackson seemed to move as the car bounced over the uneven cobblestones of Monument Avenue. It seemed that for every entrance the park had, there were a hundred or more things to do. The mansion on top of the hill was a castle – my home – and I was an intrepid explorer commissioned to scout through the surrounding areas. The woods were filled with life, not caged but running free. I watched the deer and the buffalo, chased squirrels and rabbits, and hid in the shadows so the bear I was observing wouldn't see me. The large grassy fields rippled in the breeze. They covered many acres and I frequently had to check on the farmers and report on their progress. I climbed the hills, scaled the rocks on the side of a waterfall, scurried up trees to scan the horizon, and sometimes just sat by the river, watching it slip slowly silently away into another day. This was my land, I belonged here, and yet no one could understand that I was homesick when away from

here.

It was different when I returned there just before starting my freshman year in college. The castle was not a castle, and it was not mine. The hills were smaller, trees were only trees, animals did not run through the woods, and nothing which once was enormous or so very important was anymore. So, I sat on a rock by the river, in the shade of the oaks and willows, and watched the water slip slowly silently away while my imagination swam through memories of childhood.