

CASTLE CARBERRY

(Verdant Acres)



Bruce Macdonald



Castle Carberry, c. 1885. Note the black woman, rear left, hanging out the wash.

HISTORY

Castle Carberry (now Verdant Acres), is located on an original Borden grant of 231 acres to Charles Dohany in 1742. In 1782, Andrew Kinnear sold a 316-acre tract to Reverend John Brown, the minister at New Providence Presbyterian Church. When Brown resigned in 1795 and moved away, the tract was conveyed to Dr. Alexander Humphreys, a noted physician in Staunton who ran a medical school. His students included future U.S. President William Henry Harrison. Humphreys died in 1802 and the land was sold at auction in 1812 to John Withrow Sr. Withrow and his family had been living at Sleepy Hollow, and it is not certain when they moved to Castle Carberry, but it was probably by 1820, when the number of enslaved people he owned increased significantly. John Withrow Sr. sold Sleepy Hollow and surrounding land to his son William Withrow in 1833. He died in 1844 and willed

the 317-acre farm to his son, John Withrow Jr. The original brick dwelling, and the slave house, were both constructed in the 1840s.

OCCUPANTS

John Withrow Sr., a native of Ireland, and his wife, Sarah, moved to Rockbridge County from Adams County, Pennsylvania in the early 1790s. Their children were Jane Withrow Beard (1797–1868); William Withrow (1798–1878); Samuel Withrow (1799–1844), who purchased from his father 329 acres northeast of Castle Carberry in 1833; Sally Withrow Jones (1801–69), who was married to Henry Boswell Jones, owner of Whitehall; John Withrow Jr. (1804–78); Ann Eliza Withrow, married to Andrew Patterson; and Andrew Withrow (1806–60), who owned the Alexander-Withrow House in Lexington. John Withrow Jr. and his wife, Sarah Wright Withrow, lived at Castle Carberry from 1844 until their deaths in 1878 and 1891 respectively.

SLAVERY AT CASTLE CARBERRY

John Withrow Sr. owned three enslaved people by 1795, 15 by 1820, 17 in 1830, and 11 in 1840. Some lived at Sleepy Hollow,



The slave dwelling at Castle Carberry. Repair work is under way; in the meantime, it is a store that sells the farm's produce.

others at Castle Carberry, and some at both sites. He named 14 enslaved people in his will: Aaron, Bolen (later Bolen Watson), Nick, Ben, Reuben, Adam, Charles, Tobias (later Tobias Hays), Fayette (probably Lafayette Lewis), Dinah, Lewis, Lacy, Milly and Isaac. The will divided them among his children, and John Jr. was given Charles, Tobias, Fayette, Dinah, Lewis, Lacy and Milly. Isaac was given to John Jr. and his brother Andrew Withrow. In the 1860 census John Jr. reported seven enslaved people by gender and age: Males, 55, 45, 28 and 2, and females, 65, 48 and 17.

Bolen Watson, born about 1805, was a communicant at New Providence Presbyterian Church, and he married Lavinia, who was owned by James Willson of Mulberry Grove. Their children were Letitia, Charlotte, Samuel, Bolen, Maria and Charles. Watson died in 1874 and left a will describing a house he owned on Main Street in Brownsburg. William Withrow witnessed the will. Tobias Hays was born about 1814, and his marriage to Eliza Jones was recorded by the Freedmen's Bureau after the war; they had been a couple since 1836. They lived with John Withrow Jr. at the time of the 1870 census, and Tobias was a farm laborer. He died

in February 1872 of consumption, and John Withrow Jr. reported his death.

EXISTING SLAVE HOUSE

This slave house has been repurposed as a sales shop for the produce from the present owners and has been renamed Verdant Acres. Work is in progress, funded by a grant from Historic Lexington Foundation, to replace the roof and repair some structural damage. There are two rooms, each with access doors and a fireplace. No access to the loft is provided and there is no evidence of a front porch. Like the other slave houses, it utilizes rough sawn or hand-hewn timber for the frame section.

By Larry Spurgeon and Paul Hahn, with the assistance of John and Mary Pedersen, current owners of Verdant Acres.



The former slave dwelling at Castle Carberry, now Verdant Acres, is used for sales of the farm's produce.