

The Rambler Writes of David Burnes' Kindred

THE major part of the Rambler's narrative last week dealt with the tomb of Marcia Burnes-Van Ness in Oak Hill cemetery. The Oak Hill records recite that among the remains which rest in that dark vault are those of Marcia Burnes-Van Ness, Gen. John P. Van Ness, Elbertina Van Ness-Middleton, A. E. Middleton, G. P. Van Ness and G. W. Montgomery, which were removed from Washington in 1873. Marcia Burnes was the only child of David Burnes, owner of a farm which became a part of the site of the Washington city. As the Rambler has previously written, the north line of that farm coincided nearly with the present line of New York avenue, its south line ran about where B street southwest runs now, the east line was close to 1st street west, and the west line was between 15th and 19th streets. Pennsylvania avenue, F, G and H, 7th, 9th, 11th, 14th and 15th streets along a part of their course cross the farm, and the White House, Treasury, State, War and Navy building, the Smithsonian, old and new National Museum buildings, Post Office Department, Agricultural Department, Washington Monument, Star office, Pan-American building, Continental Hall, Red Cross building, Corcoran Art Gallery and pension office are among the great and important structures which stand on David Burnes' farm. Gen. John P. Van Ness was the husband of Marcia Burnes. Albertina Van Ness was their daughter and Arthur E. Middleton was her husband.

When Elbertina Middleton died in 1834 she was buried in the Burnes' family burying ground, in the square now bounded by 9th, 10th, G and H streets. The site of that old burying ground is now inclosed by Grant place, H, 9th and 10th streets, but it was nearer 10th than 9th street. The fair presumption is that David Burnes and his wife were buried there and that David's father and mother, who lived in a small frame house which stood in

of their veneration for departed worth dedicated this plate to the memory of Marcia Van Ness, the excellent consort of John P. Van Ness. If piety, charity, high principle and exalted worth could have averted the shafts of fate she would still have remained among us as a bright example of every virtue. The hand of death has removed her to a purer and happier state of existence, and while we lament her loss let us endeavor to emulate her virtues.

It is related in old chronicles that "just as the procession was prepared to follow her to the grave, the affected husband received from a committee of the citizens of Washington, who attended as mourners, a silver plate with an appropriate inscription engraved thereon." The committee in presenting the plate also presented to Gen. Van Ness the following resolution:

At a large and respectable meeting of the citizens of Washington held at Western Town House on the evening of the 9th instant in consequence of the lamented demise of Mrs. Marcia Van Ness, the meeting was called to order by John H. Houston, esq., and on motion, John N. Moulder, esq., was called to the chair, and James Gooch appointed secretary. The chairman in a most feeling and pertinent address commented on the various and distinguished virtues and merits of the deceased, after which the following preamble and resolution, offered by John Wells, jr., esq., were unanimously adopted.

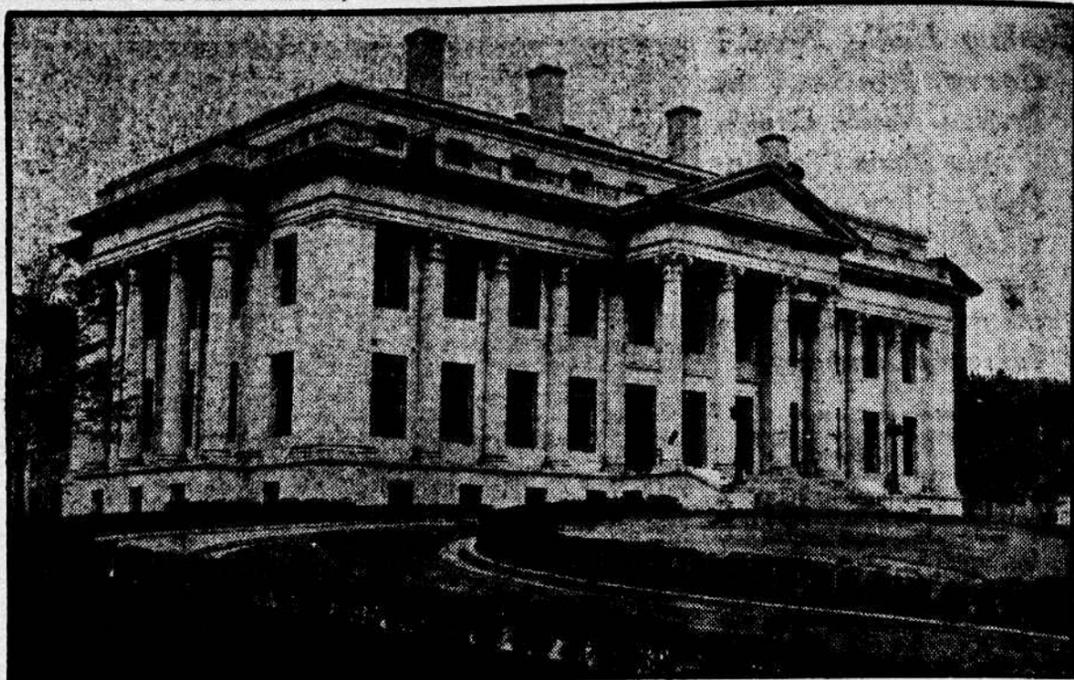
The series of paragraphs beginning "Whereas" was very long, but at last it was "Resolved, That we consider the death of Marcia Van Ness a public misfortune, extending its influence from the immediate circle of her family, relatives and friends throughout all the ramifications of society. The poor, to whom she was a constant and liberal benefactress, feel her loss; the sick and afflicted, to whom she was a consoling visitor, will deplore her absence; the orphans, to whom she was a mother, will again feel parentless, and the friends of true religion most lament the loss of one who by precept and example was an ornament to her sex and profession." The committee appointed to present the resolutions and the silver plate comprised John Wells, jr.; John H. Houston, G. W. Dashiell, H. C. Williams, John Williams, S. Parker, William Gordon, Gideon Pearce, F. C. Shelton, W. Randolph Spalding, G. Cosens and William Hunter.

The Rambler has read that "The

well as a just sense and good feeling of a community upon which her unostentatious benevolence could make such an impression. Mrs. Van Ness had buried her daughter many years ago and on the spot where she entombed her only child she sought comfort under the bereavement by the erection of an asylum for the nurture and education of female orphans. To the inmates of this noble charity she became a mother, and as these doubly deprived and helpless children followed, in the garb of woe, the bier of their munificent benefactress to the scene in which they

he knew Aunt Marcia Burnes-Jones and that all the family was related to David Burnes. He did not know just what the relationship was because he had never taken much interest in that sort of thing, but he had another aunt whose maiden name was Sarah Virginia Burnes, who was pretty well posted on family affairs and would probably know all about it. And she did. She was born Sarah

other places he said he had to go and he moved along so slowly that I took the case out of his hands and I have another lawyer now who says he will push it along." Mrs. Zahn is a woman with wide acquaintance in Washington. She has conducted a number of Avenue hotels. She kept the American House after Mr. Duffy gave up its management, and she succeeded Daniel Nichols in the manage-



THE RED CROSS BUILDING.

had been so often cheered by her kindness, and there to see forever closed, within the cold vault, all that gave hope to their prospects in life, no heart could be insensible to their sorrow.

In another report the Rambler finds that there was church service at the vault, and it is known that Rev. William Hawley, the second rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, preached the discourse. The statement is also made that the orphans strewed flowers and branches of weeping willow on the casket. At the time of the death of Marcia Van Ness the orphan asylum was on a lot adjoining the mausoleum lot and faced on H street. It was erected there in 1828-29. The orphan asylum, when organized in 1815, was established in a small frame house on 10th street near Pennsylvania avenue. In 1816-17 it occupied a frame house on H street near 10th street, part of its site being that of the brick building erected in 1825-29.

In 1823 the orphanage was removed to a house on 7th street between H and I streets and remained there until it was moved to the new brick building on H street in the summer of 1829. It remained there until 1867, when the property was bought by William Galt. The orphanage next moved to one of the big brick houses in Minnesota Row, on the north side of I street near 2d street northwest. In 1866 W. W. Corcoran gave a lot containing 55,350 square feet at the corner of 14th and S streets to the orphanage, and in that year, when the new brick building on that site was nearing completion, it was taken over by Secretary of State William H. Seward for the accommodation of the State Department. That department occupied the building until November, 1875, and the Washington Orphan Asylum took possession of its building in May, 1876.

In the matter of the death of Mrs. Van Ness the Rambler copies the following paid notice which appeared in the United States Gazette of September 14, 1832:

Sir: In compliance with a resolution passed by the board of managers of the Washington City Orphan Asylum, I have the melancholy pleasure of enclosing to you a copy of one passed by them expressive of their deep and heartfelt sympathy for yourself and family under the heavy bereavement with which it has pleased Providence to visit you.

Very respectfully,
A. J. LARNED, Acting Secretary.
To John P. Van Ness, Esq.

There is also a record of resolutions of condolence with Gen. Van Ness adopted at a meeting of the Association of Beneficence of Trinity Church and signed by V. M. Wiltberger, secretary.

At the close of last Sunday's story the Rambler said: "Living in Washington today are a number of blood-kindred of Marcia Burnes—collateral descendants of David Burnes. These descendants come down in a direct line from David Burnes' father, James Burnes, through one of David's brothers." An oil portrait of Marcia Burnes hangs above a square piano on the east wall of the old-fashioned parlor in the Washington City Orphan Asylum. The Rambler went there to see it. Mrs. M. S. Squires, who has been the superintendent of the orphanage for twenty-odd years, led the Rambler to it with evident pride and talked feelingly of the many fine traits of that noble woman. She said she thought Dr. William G. Schafhirt had a photograph of the painting. The Rambler has known Will Schafhirt for a long time, but could not reason out why he would have a photograph of Marcia Burnes' portrait.

That evening the Rambler called at Dr. Schafhirt's home on Wyoming avenue. Will was down the river on his motor boat and Mrs. Schafhirt did not know that he had such a picture. Perhaps his brother Frederick knew something about it, or if the Rambler would write to Will's aunt, Marcia Burnes-Jones, in Philadelphia, perhaps she would know something about what the Rambler was looking up. So, here were two suggestions that looked like clues. Will Schafhirt was not only supposed to have a picture of Marcia Burnes, but he had an aunt named Marcia Burnes-Jones. Next, the Rambler dropped in to see Frederick Schafhirt. He did not know anything about a photograph of the Marcia Burnes portrait, but

Virginia Burnes, daughter of the late John W. Burnes, who had lived on Massachusetts avenue between 6th and 7th streets, and her friends all know her now as Mrs. S. V. Zahn. And the following is written from notes the Rambler jotted down while she talked with him:

David Burnes, father of Marcia Van Ness, had a brother named Truman Burnes. Truman's children were Marcia, who married Henry Williams of Georgetown, whom the old residents there will remember as the market master of the town for many years; Anne Elizabeth, who married Richard Streets of Maryland, who was long a resident of Washington, and John W. Burnes, who married Mary Taylor of Virginia. Truman had another child named David, who in the early 19th century went west "to live among the Indians" and of whom nothing was subsequently heard.

John W. Burnes and Mary Taylor had as children Sarah Virginia, Marcia, Mary Catherine, Jessie and Robert P. Burnes. Sarah Virginia married a man named Zahn, and her children are Bertha, who married Richard Ford; Alice Cornelia, who married a man named Messer, a marine engineer; and Frederick, who remains unmarried. Alice has a daughter, Edna E. Sonne-man, who has a son, Warren W. Sonne-man.

Mary Catherine, daughter of John W. Burnes, granddaughter of Truman Burnes and grandniece of David Burnes, married Dr. Ernest F. Schafhirt, who for a long time was anatomist in the surgeon general's office and was one of the principals in the dissection of Guiteau's brain and in the autopsy on President Garfield. Their children were Dr. Jesse Schafhirt, now practicing in California, and Dr. William G. Schafhirt, Frederick Schafhirt and Ernest Schafhirt of Washington. The widow of Dr. Ernest F. Schafhirt, seventy-three years old, is in Washington.

Marcia Burnes, daughter of John W. Burnes and grandniece of David Burnes, married Frank Jones of Philadelphia. She is a widow and lives in Philadelphia. She had one daughter, who married a Dr. Miller of Norris-town, Pa.

Jessie Burnes, daughter of John W. Burnes and grandniece of David, married Frederick W. Turk, a Chicago manufacturer, and Robert P. Burnes, son of John W. and grandnephew of David, lives in California and was recently in Washington on a visit. He has three children.

Truman Burnes, brother of David, had, as already written, a daughter named Marcia, who married Henry Williams, the old Georgetown market-master. Their children were Jennie, who married Capt. Bell, who lived on H street, both deceased; and Ella, who married a man named Hoover, whose initials the Rambler cannot read from his notes. There was a son, Charles Burnes, who died long ago. Anne Elizabeth, daughter of Truman Burnes, who married Richard Streets, had as children Christopher Streets, "who went West and died among the Indians"; David Streets, who lives in Washington, and Laura Streets, whose married name is not in the Rambler's notes.

Mrs. Zahn, born Sarah Virginia Burnes, has been more or less active for years in seeking to recover certain portions of the David Burnes lands. She claims that the reservation on which Center market stands should revert to the heirs-at-law of David Burnes and she is busy with that proposition today. She tells a long and interesting story of tribulations with various lawyers who have taken her case and who have then died or have prosecuted the case too languidly. She first put the matter in the hands of William P. Wood, whom all old Washington people will recall as a celebrated detective and in the later years of his life as a claim agent. If the Rambler's memory is working straight, he was the superintendent of the Old Capitol prison during the civil war, and for a long time lived on Maryland avenue southwest between 4½ and 6th streets, or it may have been a block or two west of that square. When Mr. Wood had put all the papers in this claim case in shape he died. Then, as Mrs. Zahn said, "I turned the papers over to Lawyer Webb and before he got very far with the case, he died." Continuing, she said: "Then another lawyer came to me to take up the case and I gave him money to go to Marlboro and

ment of the Mount Vernon. For a long time she kept a hotel on the Avenue between 6th and 7th streets which the Rambler seems to remember as the Morrow or the O'Mara House. At present she keeps the Travelers' Hotel near 10th street.

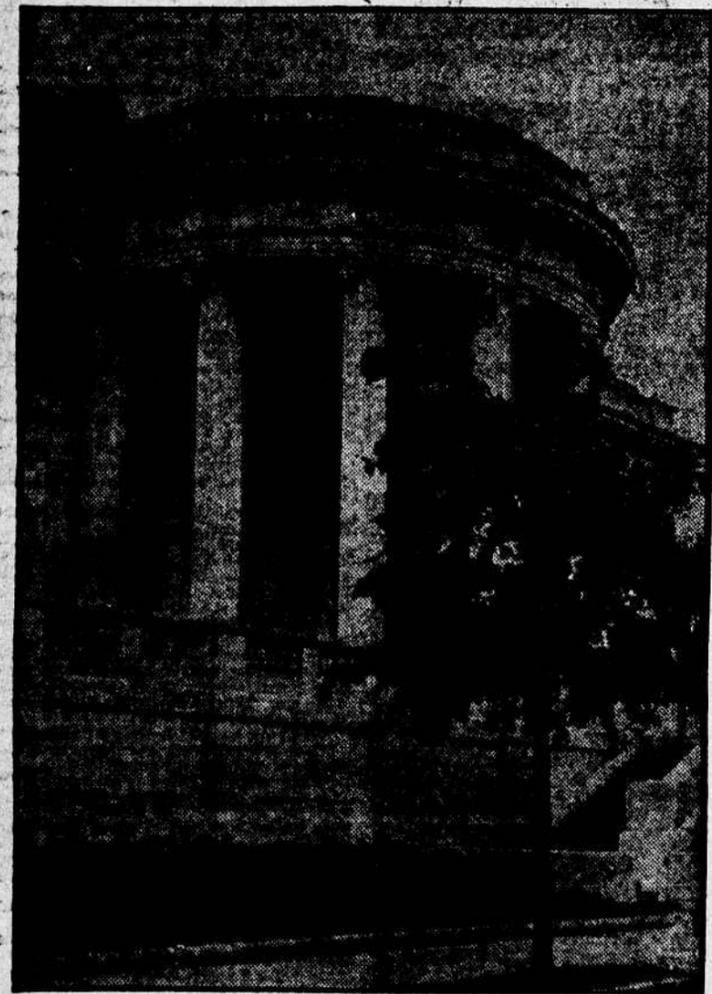
The portrait of Marcia Van Ness which hangs above the old square piano in the parlor of the Washington City Orphan Asylum shows her surrounded by little children. She was often called "the orphan's mother." It represents her as a handsome, well groomed and well dressed woman with a pleasant and intellectual face. She has those eyes which are often called "artistic." The portrait is an excellent piece of work and the painter succeeded in painting a real woman instead of merely a fancy picture. There was evidently the desire to reproduce the features and the expression of the woman. It is well worth seeing. Who the painter was and how he produced a likeness of Marcia Burnes the Rambler does not know, for that particular portrait was not painted from life. It may have been copied from a portrait that had been painted from life. The Rambler knows that the portrait in the orphanage was not painted from life, because on May 26, 1885, at the dedication of the Hall Memorial building, John C. Harkness, for many years a trustee of the orphanage, delivered an address in which he said: "January 3, 1833 (four months after Marcia's death), the board of lady managers resolved that a portrait of Mrs. Marcia Van Ness be painted at the expense of the board of managers and placed in the asylum."

Many Golden Rods.

THOUGH the middle of summer has been passed but a short time, golden rod gives a yellow glow to the landscape, especially in the fields and along the road sides in the neighborhood of Washington. Golden rod was blooming before midsummer came. In some manner many persons have come to associate golden rod with autumn. Perhaps this is because it persists in blooming late in the season and is one of the last of the flowers to yield to the touch of approaching winter. There are many other flowers, however, which do not put on their blossoms until late in the summer and early autumn and which carry their flowers as far into the frost period as the golden rod. Those are really the autumn flowers.

To most persons golden rod is merely golden rod and that is all, yet if any one happens to be interested in the subject he will learn that there are many kinds or species of golden rod and that quite a number of them grow around Washington. The golden rods of the genus "solidago" comprise more than eighty species. There is one which is not yellow, but white or cream-colored. It is called silver rod or white golden rod. It blooms during August and September on dry ground, frequently along roadsides or the edges of woods from New Brunswick to Minnesota and southward to the Gulf. Then there is a variety called the blue-stemmed golden rod, which blooms during September and October. The heads are generally larger than those of most of the other golden rods and have from three to five comparatively long golden rays surrounding the tubular florets. One of the commonest golden rods is that which is called the early golden rod, and which may be found in flower in this part of the country sometimes in June and always in July. The golden flowers have eight to ten rays and the plant is found in dry places from New Brunswick to Saskatchewan and southward.

It is said by many persons that the handsomest of the rods is that which is called Canada golden rod. The flower cluster is very large and plumelike. Next to it is that plant which is called the showy golden rod. It is brighter yellow than many of the species and the flower cluster is plume-like. The lance-leaved golden rod is so different from many other common species that a person can hardly fail to notice it. The flowers are crowded together, are small and dull yellow.



SOUTH PORTICO OF CONTINENTAL HALL.

what is now the intersection of 10th and I streets, were also laid to rest there.

No mention is made of the final disposition of the remains of those people in any record which the Rambler has found up to this writing, but the inference is that soon after the subdivision of "Mausoleum square" into building lots the remains of the members of the Burnes family were gathered together, placed in the mausoleum, which the parents of Elbertina Middleton had erected as a sepulchre and in which Marcia was buried in 1832, and with the mausoleum were removed to Oak Hill in the spring of 1873.

No record which the Rambler has thus far found contains the name of David Burnes' wife or mother. Pages of matter have been written, printed, stamped and reprinted concerning the "stubbornness," eccentricities, etc., of David Burnes, "the original proprietor" of a large part of the site of Washington, but it would seem that nobody has found when this Burnes family came from Scotland, what part of Scotland they came from, where they settled in America, when they came to Beall's Levels, which was the name of their farm as patented to Ninian Beall in 1703, or with what families they intermarried. The Rambler hopes that in some way he may be able to solve these difficulties.

Very near the close of last Sunday's narrative the Rambler told of a silver plate that was put upon Marcia Burnes-Van Ness' casket. The inscription on the plate was this: The citizens of Washington in testimony

mahogany coffin, inclosing a leaden one, in which she lay in death, was neatly made but not ostentatious—it was covered with black velvet without those gaudy decorations which rather disfigure than add to the agreeableness of so sad and melancholy an object; and on the breast was affixed a silver plate on which was engraved her name, the day of her birth, marriage and death."

A day or so ago the Rambler received the following letter from a lady bearing an old and honored Washington name:

I have just read with much interest your article on the Burnes family, and remember reading, I do not remember where or in what, that Marcia Burnes—Mrs. Van Ness—was the only woman ever laid in state in the Capitol. As you did not mention this I am wondering if it was true.

No account of the death or funeral of Marcia Burnes contains anything to the effect that she laid in state in the Capitol. Such a fact, as that would certainly not have been omitted by the contemporary chroniclers.

The plate on Marcia Burnes' casket is inscribed: "Born 9th May, 1782, Married 9th May, 1802, Died 9th September, 1832."

She was therefore fifty years of age at the time of her death. There seem to have been two funeral services, one at the great house which stood close by David Burnes' cottage, where the Pan-American building stands, and the other at the vault in Mausoleum Square, between 9th, 10th, G and H streets. The following is taken from the Washington Globe of September 11, 1832, the day following the funeral:

The large concourse of citizens that attended the funeral of Mrs. Van Ness during the season of alarm and distress, which tends to confine the sympathies of each individual under his own roof, evidenced the great worth of the object of these last marks of regard, as