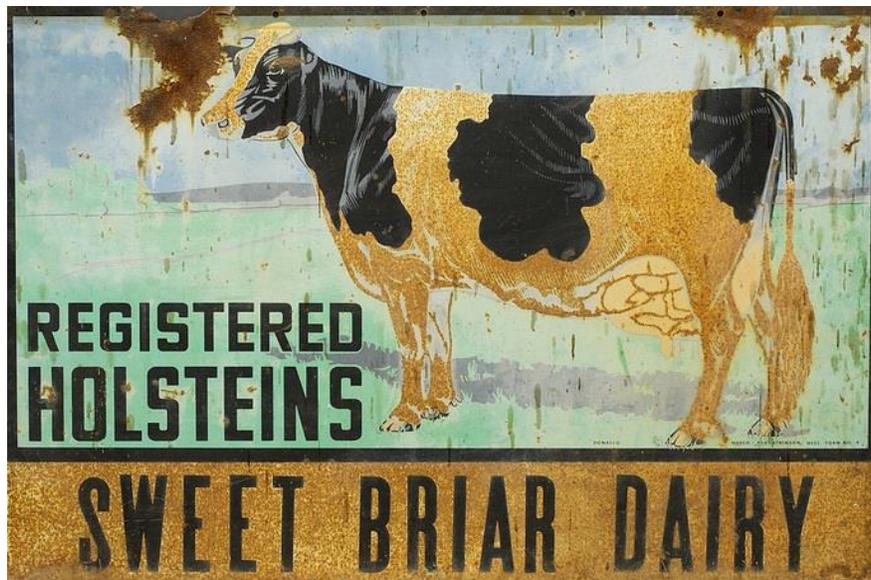


“I have lately bought me a Plantation”:
A Brief History of Farming and Land Use
at Sweet Briar



Whitley Gallery
Sweet Briar Museum
March 2013-April 2014

Acknowledgements

The rural campus of Sweet Briar College measures over 3,000 acres—most still pasture and woodland—that encompass two lakes and a mountain. It has been acknowledged as one of the most beautiful college campuses in the nation and the tenet “A Landscape for Learning” is a pillar of the school’s current strategic plan. The lovely campus and College vision of today are potent reminders of Sweet Briar’s long life as a working farm and its inhabitants’ keen awareness of the native environment. It is poignantly apparent from her letters and diaries that Daisy Williams, the girl in whose memory the school was established, loved this place. Those who came after her have too: a nature sanctuary was established here as early as 1936 and Sweet Briar has been and continues to be the home base of a number of noted biologists and environmental scientists. Current students regularly fan across campus to tag butterflies, count salamanders, analyze the atmosphere, and monitor fragile wetlands. This exhibition touches briefly on some of this complex story, demonstrating via documents, maps, and artifacts some of the highlights of this historic landscape.

This exhibition had its beginnings in an internship undertaken by Sweet Briar College history major Sarah O’Brien ’13 in June 2012. She assisted in moving, cataloging, cleaning, and storing over 300 farm tools and artifacts such as horseshoes, milk bottles, and antique fly traps which comprised the “farm tool museum” accumulated by Sweet Briar Museum director Ann Marshall Whitley ’47 in the 1980s and 1990s. This wide-ranging collection had for many years been displayed in the rustic cabin—thought to have been a slave cabin—behind Sweet Briar House. An in-depth study and reinterpretation of the cabin as an historic structure necessitated the removal of the “farm tool museum” to storage and this move allowed for a comprehensive inventory in early summer 2012. Ms. O’Brien’s study of this material transitioned to an Arts Management practicum in the fall semester of 2012 devoted to preparations for the current exhibition.

Ann Marshall Whitley’s indefatigable efforts to collect and preserve remnants of Sweet Briar’s agricultural history deserve special mention, as without her hard work today’s students and professors might have few tangible reminders of the generations of farm workers who toiled here or of the orchards and dairy that fed campus residents for decades.

For their advice and research assistance, and for their willingness to lend documents and artifacts to the exhibition, thanks are due to Rebecca Ambers, associate professor, Environmental Studies; Keith Adams, adjunct instructor of archaeology and co-director of the Archaeological Materials Laboratory, Anthropology Department; Mike Hayslett, naturalist-in-residence, Biology Department; Lynn Rainville, director, Tusculum Institute; and Lisa Johnston, associate director, Cochran Library. Acknowledgement is due too to the College’s photographer, Meridith De Avila Khan, for her assistance documenting artifacts. The staff notes with particular appreciation the helpful information about dairy operations provided by Cynthia and Roy Massie of Amherst. During the summer of 2012 Bill Morris of Amherst also provided welcome help during cataloging of the “farm tool museum” artifacts. Nancy McDearmon, registrar and all-around collection manager and exhibition preparator, deserves recognition for her thoughtful and careful installation of a wide variety of objects and documents. Her commentary and suggestions on the artifacts and documents to include have been invaluable. She was ably supported by assistant Ashley Rust ’13.

It has been a challenge and a pleasure to assemble this exhibition and to write the introduction and checklist notes that accompany it. Any errors or omissions are mine.

Karol Lawson
Director, Sweet Briar College Art Collection and Galleries and the Sweet Briar Museum

Introduction Sweet Briar 1830-1860

"I have lately bought me a Plantation which Maria talks of settling and spending her summers at. You may perhaps remember it. It lies this side of Amherst Court House, about 12 miles from here [Lynchburg], with a large brick house on it, containing about 1000 acres of pretty good land. It cost about \$7000."
Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher [his brother], 29 March 1831

With this brief comment schoolteacher-turned-businessman-turned-gentleman farmer Elijah Fletcher signaled his acquisition of the Amherst County estate that decades later would form the core of Sweet Briar College. The original house was built in the late 18th century by Joseph Crews and was known as Locust Ridge. Elijah purchased the plantation at a bankruptcy sale 22 December 1830 from Thomas Crews, a relative of his wife.¹ The land is only briefly described in the deed: "...Eight to nine hundred acres, lying on both sides of Lynches [sic] road, being the place on which said Crews lived for many years." Elijah's observation in the letter quoted above that "You may perhaps remember it," suggests that he had taken his brother to Locust Ridge during a Lynchburg visit Calvin made in 1829. By extension this may suggest that Elijah was in the habit of visiting Locust Ridge himself, but neither his extant letters nor his brother's collected papers provide further clues. Whether Elijah was motivated by family sentiment or business acumen or simply a desire to have a country home, the property must have made an attractive purchase. The 1830 sale notice for the land reads in part: "It is fertile in its quality, lies well, is well adapted to the produce of tobacco, corn, wheat etc. and is in every respect a most valuable plantation....[it includes a] barn with wheat threshing machine...and is under good fencing."² Over the next several years, Elijah purchased several contiguous parcels of land, enlarging his original holdings to

¹ Amherst County, VA, Book of Deeds, vol. T, p. 455. Thomas's wife, Sarah Penn Crews, was a maternal aunt of Elijah's wife, Maria Antoinette Crawford. There is no obvious explanation for the discrepancy in the acreage Elijah states in the letter to Calvin and that given in the deed. See Martha von Briesen, "Elijah Fletcher: Citizen of Lynchburg," *Lynchburg Historical Society Museum* vol. 7, no. 2 (1970), n.p.; *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, Martha von Briesen, ed. (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1965), p. 106, 107 n. 1, and 123 n. 2. The sale price is approximately equivalent to \$180,000.00 in 2012 dollars. See www.measuringworth.com.

² Advertisement in *The Lynchburg Virginian*, 20 December 1830. The advertisement also gives the estimate of eight or nine hundred acres.

encompass most of the acreage that comprises the modern campus.³ He became so fond of the property that he later told his children, “It is an interesting place to me and I have no wandering notions and never shall be induced to leave it.”⁴

Renamed “Sweetbrier” for the abundance of wild roses on the property,⁵ the estate became the summer home for the Fletchers and their four children, Sidney, Lucien, Indiana, and Elizabeth. In 1841 the family made it their permanent residence. Following Elijah Fletcher’s death in 1858, his daughter Indiana inherited Sweetbrier, eventually renaming it “Sweet Briar.”⁶ In 1865, Indiana married a New York clergyman, James Henry Williams. Though the couple split their year between New York City and Sweet Briar, they considered this to be their home. Indiana and James Henry raised their only child, Maria Georgiana (“Daisy”), at Sweet Briar and taught her to love their rural retreat.

Despite his early career teaching school, as a young married man Elijah Fletcher demonstrated a genuine talent for managing and improving his in-laws’ estate, called Tusculum, located at the village of New Glasgow just north of Amherst Court House. From 1824 onwards he began acquiring farmland in the area and eventually bought Tusculum from his brother-in-law and widowed mother-in-law in 1837.⁷ Despite this interest in land, Elijah and his wife moved from New Glasgow to the city of Lynchburg in about 1818 or 1819.⁸ It may well be that that their move was prompted by the serious economic crisis that struck the nation about this time and that devastated Virginia’s agricultural economy.⁹

³ Information courtesy of Associate Professor Rebecca Ambers. Also see Amherst County, VA, General Index to Deeds 1815-1843.

⁴ Elijah Fletcher, Sweet Briar, to Sidney, Indiana, and Elizabeth Fletcher [unidentified location], 21 August 1846. This and all subsequent excerpts from his letters are taken from Von Briesen’s annotated collection, *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*.

⁵ *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, p. 173 n. 3.

⁶ Elijah devised upon Indiana and her sister “my sweetbrier [sic] Plantation” in his 1852 will. See Amherst County, VA, Book of Wills, vol. 14, entry 527. Also see *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, p. 273 n. 2.

⁷ Elijah’s earliest purchases were also from Crawford family relatives of his wife. See Amherst County, VA, General Index to Deeds 1815-1843, p. 225; Amherst County, VA, Book of Deeds, vol. W, p. 178; *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, p. 173 n. 2.

⁸ *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, p. 89 n. 1.

⁹ See Clyde A. Haulman, *Virginia and The Panic of 1819: The First Great Depression and the Commonwealth* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), pp. 58-66.

After he established himself in town, Elijah became the publisher of *The Lynchburg Virginian* newspaper (1825-1841) and made extensive use of it as a platform for advocating agricultural improvements. This interest in the latest farming, livestock and land management innovations coincided with his acquisition of various parcels of land in Amherst County—from his initial purchases in the middle 1820s to his acquisition of Sweet Briar in 1830 and Tusculum in 1837. He and his partner, Richard H. Toler, advised their readers at the outset that “. . .we shall occupy a portion of our columns with Agricultural essays of a practical nature, derived from the best sources of information that may be within our reach.”¹⁰ A general review of the newspaper’s issues from the spring of 1831—just after Elijah bought Sweet Briar—reveals articles, excerpts, and letters of remarkable scope and variety: the importance of pruning; how best to manage timber; bee keeping; planning kitchen gardens; improving fencing; controlling weevils and lice; cultivating hemp; raising poultry, sheep and dairy cows; feeding livestock on carrots; growing pumpkins; experimenting with new types of grass; and using leaves as manure (e.g. compost). The newspaper sampled such progressive and widely distributed publications as *The American Farmer*, *The New York Farmer*, and *The Genesee Farmer*.¹¹

A scholar faced with running a plantation might well be expected to turn to literature and science as guides to profitable farming and to look askance at those neighbors who did not. It is interesting to note that the day before Elijah wrote to his brother, as quoted above, to announce his purchase of Sweet Briar, *The Lynchburg Virginian* published a front page essay titled “The Fortune of the Agriculturist,” signed with the simple pseudonym “Amherst.” It is tempting to think that Elijah may have been the correspondent or that he may have been acquainted with the otherwise anonymous author.¹² The short piece emphasizes the crucial need for the landowner to keep himself informed and involved and to be aware of a larger context, “Amherst” noting that:

¹⁰ The editorial, which appeared 21 January 1825, is transcribed in *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, p. 285.

¹¹ Summary based on a survey of *The Lynchburg Virginian* on microfilm, held at Jones Memorial Library, Lynchburg, VA. For an overview of such publications see George F. Lemmer, “Early Agricultural Editors and Their Farm Philosophies,” *Agricultural History* vol. 31, no. 4 (October 1957), pp. 3-22.

¹² For example, on 28 October 1830 *The Lynchburg Virginian* published an essay on hemp written by a David Garland on behalf of a group called the Amherst Triune Society. Elijah would have been very well acquainted with David S. Garland, a wealthy landowner and prominent civic leader in Amherst County. See *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, p. 34 n. 4.

...as practiced in this section of country, agriculture is not only a simple but a foolish business; but to profit by it the agriculturist must not only be a man of sense and industry but he must understand something of the operations of nature.¹³

In addition to the comprehensive reading he must have done to select pieces for his newspaper, Elijah also held a personal subscription to Edmund Ruffin's influential Virginia periodical, *The Farmers' Register*.¹⁴ In 1835 that journal published a letter to the editor from "An Amherst Farmer," in which the anonymous author expressed a similar disdain for those who continued to farm in outdated ways:

I am sorry you have so few subscribers from this section [Amherst County], lying under the mountain [sic], to contribute to fill its valuable columns. The desire to improve is confined to a few, and they [are] pretty much scattered through the county—and unless a different spirit should pervade the cultivators of the soil, the west must still continue to be the final home for many of them.¹⁵

One must imagine that Elijah sympathized with the correspondent's viewpoint. As early as 1811, well before he had started buying land in Virginia, he had noted to his father with a faint touch of youthful smugness:

The plantations in this country, as I have before told you, are large & extensive. They cultivate a great deal without ever manuring it which renders it soon poor & barren. On their fresh land they cultivate tobacco. It requires the strongest and best land to raise this weed & it soon destroys the land... Many begin to raise clover for the improvement of the land—cut one crop & let the next grow and rest on the land. It is an excellent plan and the only way to redeem their desolate fields and make them fertile. It is impossible to manure so great a quantity of land as they cultivate & it consequently soon becomes barren. If the

¹³ "For the Virginian: The Fortune of the Agriculturist," *The Lynchburg Virginian*, 28 March 1831.

¹⁴ Five volumes of *The Farmers' Register*, several inscribed "E. Fletcher," are held in the rare book collection of Cochran Library. While Ruffin's infamous political views are disturbing to modern sensibilities, his writings on agriculture are nevertheless recognized as important. See Edmund Ruffin, *Nature's Management: Writings on Landscape and Reform, 1822-1859*, Jack Temple Kirby, ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000).

¹⁵ Letter to the editor, *The Farmers' Register* vol. 3, no. 2 (June 1835), p. 104. Here "the west" refers to the migration of Virginians to places such as Kentucky in search of land that had not been exhausted. Indeed, Elijah's in-laws did just that in the 1830s. See *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, pp. 163, 165, 173, 173 n. 2. Also see a similar letter to the editor about Amherst County, signed "P," in *The Farmers' Register* vol. 5, no. 8 (December 1837), p. 460. For a modern perspective see John Majewski and Viken Tchakerian, "The Environmental Origins of Shifting Cultivation: Climate, Soils, and Disease in the Nineteenth-Century US South," *Agricultural History* vol. 81, no. 4 (Fall 2007), pp. 522-549.

land was more equally distributed and each man would, like the New England farmer, cultivate a little and cultivate it well, this would be a far happier & better country.¹⁶

In addition to reading widely on agriculture, as a mature man of property Elijah likely exchanged ideas with other progressive landowners in a more immediate and personal fashion through agricultural organizations. These societies were part of a larger effort across the state—a focal point was Albemarle County just to the north of Amherst—to improve agricultural education and promote new practices.¹⁷ He would certainly have been aware of The Agricultural Society of Amherst County, established sometime around 1834, as its members requested that *The Lynchburg Virginian* publish its proceedings.¹⁸ He took part in Lynchburg's Central Agricultural Society and Mechanic Institute, the broad goals of which included the improvement of farmland and livestock and the elevation of the profession of farming. He was elected first vice president at the group's annual meetings in 1836 and 1837 and hosted its executive committee. He also won prizes at the Society's 1836 fair for best Devon bull, best ram, and best ewe.¹⁹ In this apparent investment in improved livestock, too, Elijah was part of a broader movement.²⁰

It seems likely that Elijah was the author of an 1837 editorial praising the far-sighted efforts of the Central Agricultural Society on the occasion of its annual fair. The editorial also makes a clear connection between the Society's work and wider social concerns of the day. The Society's edifying displays, the author wrote, were calculated "...to excite a feeling of pride and gratification at the spirit of improvement which has of late years diffused among the agricultural class of our community...." Broadening his assessment, the author further hoped that the agricultural improvements undertaken in central Virginia would mean that "...we shall not find so many of our

¹⁶ Elijah Fletcher, New Glasgow, VA, to Jesse Fletcher, Ludlow, VT, 29 November 1811. My thanks to Associate Professor Rebecca Ambers for sharing her digest of agricultural references in the collected letters.

¹⁷ See H.G. Good, "Early Attempts to Teach Agriculture in Old Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* vol. 48, no. 4 (October 1940), pp. 341-351.

¹⁸ "Amherst Agricultural Society," *The Farmers' Register* vol. 2, no. 5 (October 1834), pp. 297-298.

¹⁹ "Central Agricultural Society and Mechanics' Institute," *The Lynchburg Virginian*, 3 November 1836; Achilles Johnson, "Report of the Secretary of the Central Agricultural Society and Mechanic Institute," *The Farmers' Register* vol. 5, no. 10 (October 1837), p. 614-616; "Notice of meeting," *The Lynchburg Virginia*, 6 November 1837.

²⁰ On livestock, see George F. Lemmer, "The Spread of Improved Cattle Through the Eastern United States to 1850," *Agricultural History* vol. 21, no. 2 (April 1947), pp. 79-93.

best citizens sundering. . . ties of kindred to seek their fortunes, and to find their graves, in the great Southwestern charnel-house, and the 'solitary spaces' of the Old Dominion shall be made glad by the comfort and contentment of her people."²¹ Like many of his contemporaries, particularly those identifying politically with the Whigs, Elijah equated responsible agricultural improvements not only with financial security but with long-term social stability.²²

Though the opinions of his Amherst neighbors on Elijah's agricultural endeavors are unknown, decades later he would be lionized in a national publication for his agricultural acumen:

He introduced deep plowing, drained the wet land, leveled the gullies and ravines which the washing rains had been so long forming and deepening in a soil which was destitute of sod or vegetable matter to keep it together, and to sow clover and plaster [lime?]. This process acted like a charm upon these lands, and they immediately began to repay the labor and outlay by giving bountiful and remunerating crops. Mr. F. did not stop at this, but as soon as he got his farm in a situation to support stock, he began to import the best improved breeds of cattle, sheep and hogs, paying no attention to the fine blooded race-horse, which had been the only animal of cost and care in the country. His early efforts in agricultural pursuits were looked upon by many as the visionary theory of a book farmer, but the practical results were so striking that all who saw were convinced, and one after another of his neighbors began to follow his example, and a general spirit of improvement was infused which has produced favorable changes in this part of the country.²³

While he was recognized for following the latest innovations, Elijah's improvements were grounded in a genuine sense of responsibility and even love. Indeed, Elijah's abiding affection for

²¹ "Editorial," *The Lynchburg Virginian*, 30 October 1837. It is interesting to note that this is the same year that Elijah bought Tusculum so that his brother-in-law and mother-in-law could move to Kentucky. See note 15, above.

²² The movement of Virginians to the Deep South and still further afield in search of prosperity was a common and much remarked-upon population shift at the time. See James David Miller, *South by Southwest: Planter Emigration and Identity in the Slave South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press in association with the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University, 2002), pp. 18-59, and Steven Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), pp. 13-66.

²³ John Livingston, *Portraits of Eminent Americans Now Living: With Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Their Lives and Actions*, vol. 3 (New York and London, 1853-1854), p. 17. For views on the state of Virginia agriculture in the early 19th century, see Avery O. Craven, "The Agricultural Reformers of the Ante-Bellum South," *The American Historical Review* vol. 33, no. 2 (January 1928), pp. 302-314; James C. Bonner, "Advancing Trends in Southern Agriculture, 1840-1860," *Agricultural History* vol. 22, no. 4 (October 1948), pp. 248-259; Charles W. Turner, "Virginia Agricultural Reform 1815-1860," *Agricultural History* vol. 26, no. 3 (July 1952), pp. 80-89; and Joan Cashin, "Landscape and Memory in Antebellum Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* vol. 102, no. 4 (October 1994), pp. 477-500.

rural life at his Amherst retreat—a tangible expression of his devotion to responsible stewardship—was so genuine that his daughter Indiana referred to it when reflecting on his death. Writing to her uncle Calvin Fletcher about Elijah’s demise, Indiana noted that she was glad that he had been able to spend his last days at Sweet Briar since, even when weakened by illness, “he was so anxious to be once more at this loved spot,” and she reflected that “this lovely home, these fields & groves so loved and cared for by him” would long be bittersweet reminders of her father.²⁴

Indiana and her sister Elizabeth inherited Sweet Briar jointly and it is clear from Elijah’s will that their father wanted them to keep the property unified and to manage their inheritance together.²⁵ It is interesting to note here Elijah’s matter-of-fact assumption that his daughters would be interested in and capable of running the estate. He undoubtedly sought to provide for the women’s financial welfare in the years to come and hoped that his children would maintain strong ties to the Sweet Briar land he had come to care for so much. After dispositions to his wife (who would actually predecease him), Elijah wrote:

...I give to my Daughters Indiana & Elizabeth my sweetbrier [sic] Plantation...I likewise give to them the stock and Plantation utensils on the sweetbrier [sic] Plantation...All my other Property of every kind [,] nature and description I give to my son Sidney and my Daughters Indiana & Elizabeth desiring that the same be kept together and managed by them jointly for twenty years....²⁶

²⁴ Indiana Fletcher, Sweet Briar, to Calvin Fletcher, Indianapolis, 15 March 1858. See *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, pp. 271-272.

²⁵ That Elijah gave his daughters the property outright, rather than establishing a trust for their benefit, would have been quite unusual according to Alfred L. Brophy, Judge John J. Parker Distinguished Professor of Law, University of North Carolina School of Law. I am indebted to Professor Brophy for his help in parsing the meaning and import of this and the following legal documents.

²⁶ Amherst County, VA, Book of Wills, vol. 14, entry 527. The will is dated 30 July 1852. It was written at Sweet Briar and witnessed by men from Amherst. It was probated 19 April 1858, a few months after Elijah’s death. His son Sidney was the executor. In mid July 1852 Elijah, Indiana, and Elizabeth had attended a family reunion in Ludlow, VT. Perhaps the visit prompted some reflection on Elijah’s part about his children’s future welfare and motivated him to compose the will upon their return home. His wife died the following year. See *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, pp. 234-238, and *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, Gayle Thornbrough, Dorothy L. Riker, and Paula Cooper, eds. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), vol. 4, pp. 456. 471. Here the phrase “All my other Property of every kind [,] nature and description” appears to mean land and dwellings as well as stocks, bonds, and all other assets.

This scenario of family unity, however, was not to be. In anticipation of her up-coming marriage, on 30 September 1859 Elizabeth deeded her half of Sweet Briar in trust to her soon-to-be husband, William Hamilton Mosby. The document reads in part:

...the said Elizabeth Fletcher doth grant & convey to the said William H [sic] Mosby her undivided moiety in the estate known & called the Sweet Briar estate lying in the County of Amherst & which was devised to her & her sister Indiana Fletcher by their father the late Elijah Fletcher....²⁷

This action on Elizabeth's part—which named Mosby as the trustee of her interest in half of the entire Sweet Briar estate—was ostensibly meant to protect her interests as a married woman. It, or perhaps simply the fact of the marriage itself, apparently caused her sister Indiana alarm, however, and thus set into motion a traumatic division of the Sweet Briar property.²⁸

Extant letters from a maternal uncle, William S. Crawford, written in October and November 1859 advising Indiana to sever all legal and financial ties with her sister at this juncture suggest that Mosby's control of the property was cause for serious concern. The specific reasons for that worry remain unclear. Replying to a now-lost letter from Indiana in which she apparently lamented her sister's course of action, her uncle referred to "the ills & perplexities which so seriously assail you at this time" and sympathized with her "disquietude of mind."²⁹ After reading a copy of Elijah's will, Crawford, a lawyer himself, offered advice:

...I should deem it very desirable [,] indeed indispensable [,] under existing circumstances that the pecuniary interests of yourself and Betty should be severed as far as practicable in order to expect any degree of harmony. I had supposed that great difficulty would occur in an attempt to divide the Sweetbrier [sic] Estate [.] [I]t will therefore be necessary for one or the other to purchase out the entire Estate....Doubtless your Father contemplated a

²⁷ Amherst County, VA, Book of Deeds, vol. EE, p. 302. They were issued a marriage license in Amherst County the same day and married in Lynchburg a few days later, 3 October 1859. See Amherst County Marriage Bonds, 1859.

²⁸ Southern states in particular used trusts as well as statutes on "feme sole" and "feme covert" conveyances to protect women's financial interests. See Marylynn Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 14-40. It is worth noting that there is no evidence in the Amherst County deed indices that when Indiana herself married (in 1865) she conveyed her inherited property in trust to her new husband. See Amherst County, VA, General Index to Deeds 1844-1885.

²⁹ William S. Crawford, Washington, DC, to Indiana Fletcher, Sweet Briar, 17 October 1859, Cochran Library Archives. This letter is dated only two weeks after Elizabeth married, so it would seem that Indiana reacted very quickly to this event, apparently writing almost immediately to Crawford for advice.

continuance of the estate in the family. . . . [If you] cannot agree upon the terms, a public sale would be necessary so as to afford either party an opportunity of becoming entire owner.”³⁰

In the same letter Crawford noted that it would be virtually impossible for a woman to run such a large plantation and observed that Indiana’s brother Sidney would surely be able and willing to help her. He urged her to consider whether she would prefer to live elsewhere and gave advice on consolidating her financial assets.

Apparently, Indiana took much of Crawford’s advice to heart and she quite clearly made a conscious decision to retain Sweet Briar as her home and the source of her financial security. Within weeks of Crawford’s last extant letter (above), the whole plantation was surveyed in mid December 1859. By the turn of the year, only three months after her sister’s marriage, Indiana had negotiated a division of the plantation. She took about 1,300 acres (of the total 2,347 acres) and paid Elizabeth and her husband \$10,535.13 to “equalize the foregoing partition” of the property.³¹ The deed, dated 6 January 1860 and notarized 10 January 1860, reads in part:

...The said Indiana Fletcher shall have and hereafter hold in severally separate and divided from the part or portion of the said William H Mosby and wife for her (the said Indiana) part and portion of the said land thirteen hundred and ½ acres the same being the northern portion of the large tract called and known as the Sweetbrier [sic] place and separated from the balance of the tract by a new dividing line and the said parties of the first part do grant to the said Indiana Fletcher all the right and title being one moiety to the land assigned as her portion as above set forth. . . .³²

Indiana may have also followed Crawford’s advice in another aspect of the transaction, for on the same day that the January 1860 deed was drawn up, the whole Sweet Briar estate was advertised for sale in the Lynchburg newspaper. Unlike advertisements for other farming property at the same time, which were usually placed in multiple issues of the newspaper over a span of weeks or even months, the Sweet Briar notice was printed only once. The notice provides the name

³⁰ William S. Crawford, Washington DC, to Indiana Fletcher, Sweet Briar, 1 November 1859, Cochran Library Archives.

³¹ The approximate equivalent is \$299,000.00 in 2012 dollars. See www.measuringworth.com.

³² Amherst County, VA, Book of Deeds, vol. EE, p. 339-344. The surveyor’s plat, dated 17 December 1859, is bound with the deed. Elizabeth took possession of the parcel that is now the home of the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, where she and her husband built a villa they called Mt. St. Angelo. Von Briesen notes only that Elijah’s estate was equitably divided amongst Sidney, Indiana, and Elizabeth. See *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*, p. 273 n. 2.

of Robert Tinsley, an Amherst lawyer, as one of two contacts for inquiries. A respected and prominent member of the Amherst community, Tinsley was Indiana's lawyer and would assist her with dividing other assets from Elizabeth's well into the spring of 1860.³³ One might surmise that the timing and placement of this advertisement was somehow to Indiana's advantage or for her protection.³⁴ Perhaps one of the parties involved sought some advantage in the transaction. It may be that the advertisement was some kind of bargaining step or that the parties had anticipated that they would not be able to work out a mutually agreeable division of the estate. Whatever the particular reason for announcing the property's availability, the advertisement gives a glimpse of Sweet Briar less than two years after Elijah's death, even as Indiana negotiated its partition:

...[the plantation is] heavily timbered, newly enclosed, and well watered and in a high state of cultivation. The soil is of very superior quality and highly productive...The extensive orchards abounds [sic] in fruits of the most choice varieties, and of every description. This Estate lies in the Piedmont region, and commands a view of beautiful and picturesque mountain scenery; and is unsurpassed for healthfulness of location.³⁵

Writing to her paternal uncle Calvin Fletcher a few weeks later, in order to keep him abreast of her business and to seek comfort in family ties, Indiana summarized the unhappy state of affairs:

...Since I last wrote, we have been occupied in the division of the Estate since Mrs. Mosby's [her sister Elizabeth] marriage [.] I regret it could not have been accomplished before the event, as my lamented Father always desired, as well as to have evaded the unpleasant intercourse with Mr. M. [her brother-in-law William Hamilton Mosby] who has proved himself as distasteful to us as to my esteemed Father. But there are many things beyond my control & we are obliged to yield continually to the caprice of others however reluctant we may be. I hope you will excuse my frankness in thus speaking of an event which has caused many regrets and important changes in my welfare. Fortunately in the

³³See Robert Tinsley, Amherst Court House, to Indiana Fletcher [unidentified location], 10 April 1860, Cochran Library Archives. This letter makes clear that the sisters divided not just the Sweet Briar plantation but also Elijah's library and furniture, stocks and bonds, and parcels of land elsewhere in the county. Tinsley's name appears in countless Amherst County deeds and wills of this period. The siblings' division of Elijah's estate is also articulated in a document dated 19 January 1860 and recorded in Amherst County, VA, Book of Wills, vol. 16, pp. 524-529.

³⁴A 1992 biography of Indiana by Ann Marshall Whitley, written for the Sweet Briar Museum, merely suggests that she sought to sell Sweet Briar because her father's death and sister's marriage had left her bereft and adrift. This interpretation misses the fact that the advertisement actually played some part in Indiana's fight to save Sweet Briar.

³⁵Advertisement in *The Lynchburg Daily Virginian*, 6 January 1860.

division of this Plantation, the Sweet Briar part fell to me, the Residence & all improvements with the best portion of land. . . . [Yet] I felt the responsibility of such a home, with its dependants [,] could not be carried on, as it should be, with even my utmost vigilance and assiduity and I disposed of it to Sidney, retaining my people with [the] understanding [of] making it always my home. He can do it far greater justice than I ever could. . . .³⁶

Here her phrase “I disposed of it to Sidney” seems not to mean that Indiana gave or sold her brother the Sweet Briar plantation, but that she turned over its management to him. Amherst County records show no transfer of Sweet Briar lands between Indiana and Sidney. In this, too, she may have been following Crawford’s advice that the property would be difficult, if not impossible, for a woman to run. While it is clear that Indiana was upset and lonely at this time, the letters and deeds indicate that she nevertheless acted with vigor and determination to preserve her father’s plantation and secure her own interests in it.

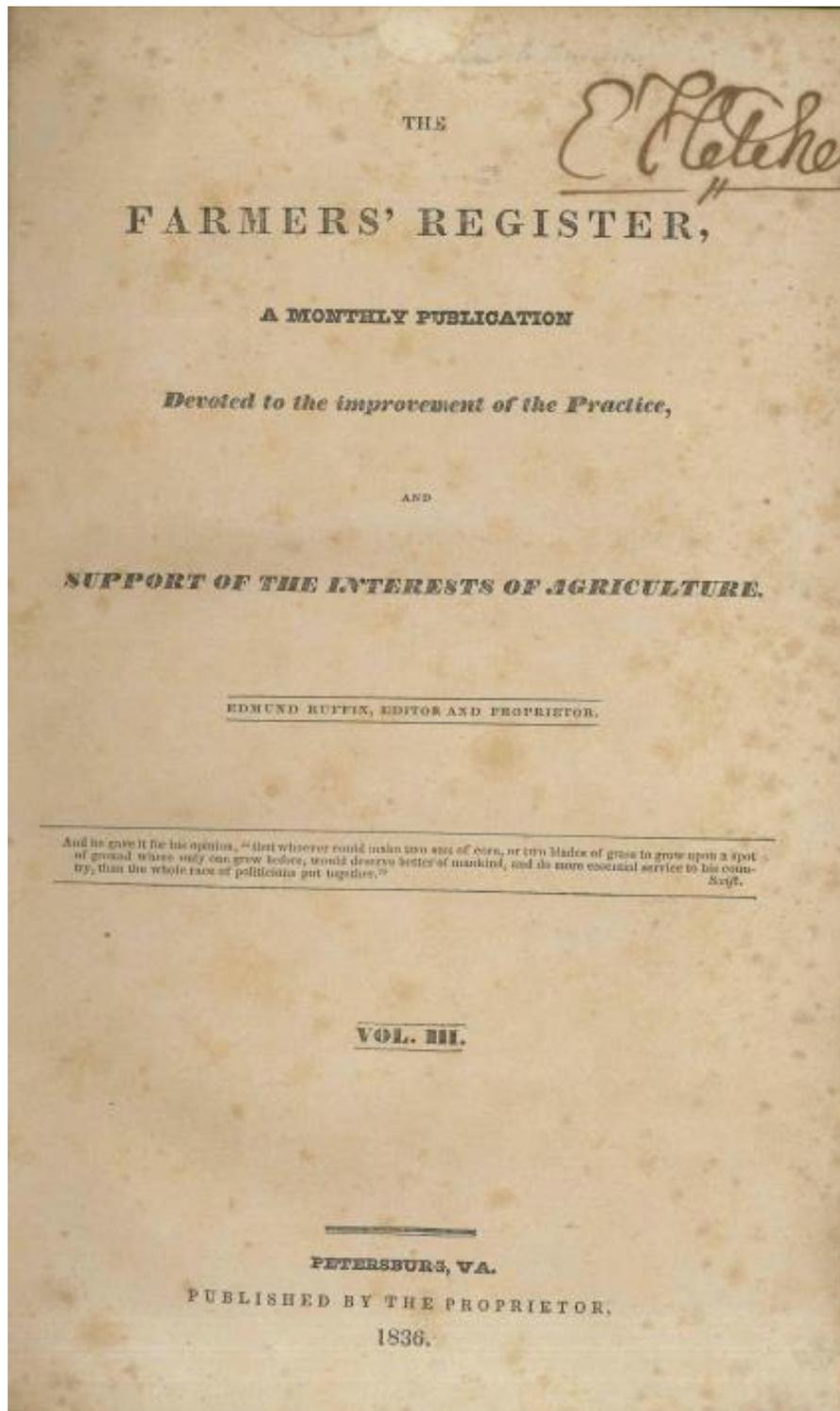
Indiana Fletcher—a 31-year-old single woman—emerged from this exhausting episode as the sole owner of Sweet Briar. At this juncture, as she sought to make sense of her new place in the world, her lawyer noted at the close of a business letter that his wife, “. . . was gratified to learn that you expect to return to Virginia and hopes that the birds and the flowers will delight you as much as in by gone [sic] days.”³⁷ Far from having the leisure to enjoy Sweet Briar’s beauty, however, a year later Indiana would face the challenge of safeguarding her father’s legacy during the Civil War.³⁸

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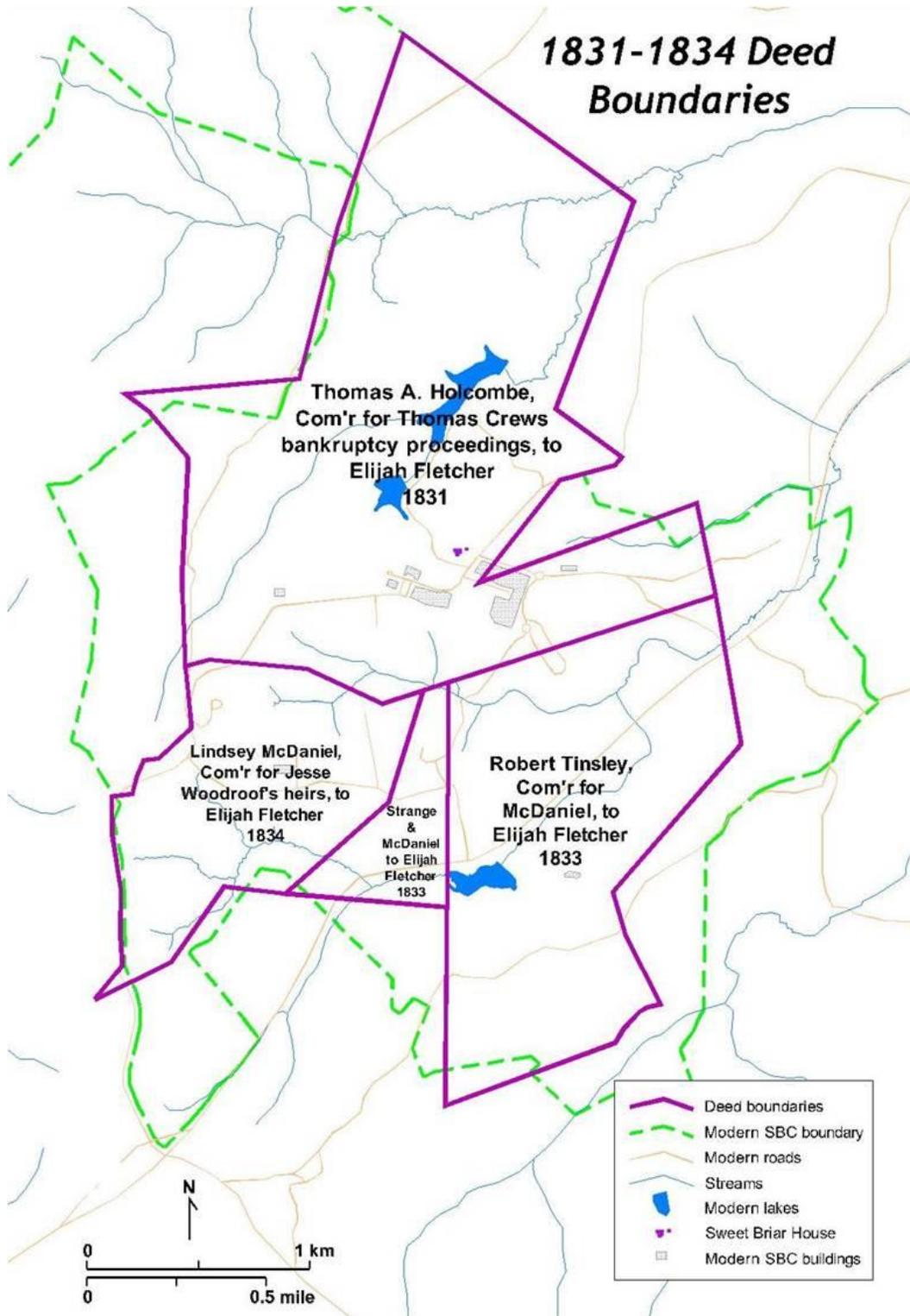
³⁶ Indiana Fletcher, Sweet Briar, to Calvin Fletcher, Indianapolis, 28 January 1860, Indiana Historical Society, Calvin Fletcher Papers. Calvin observed in his diary that “she seems to lament the marriage of her sister Betta [Elizabeth] to Mr. Mosby.” See *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, vol. 6, p. 490.

³⁷ Robert Tinsley, Amherst Court House, to Indiana Fletcher [unidentified location], 10 April 1860, Cochran Library Archives. Judging from several letters written to Calvin Fletcher she spent the winter and spring of 1860 with the Crawford family in Washington, D.C., and with her uncle Timothy Fletcher at her father’s family farm in Ludlow, VT.

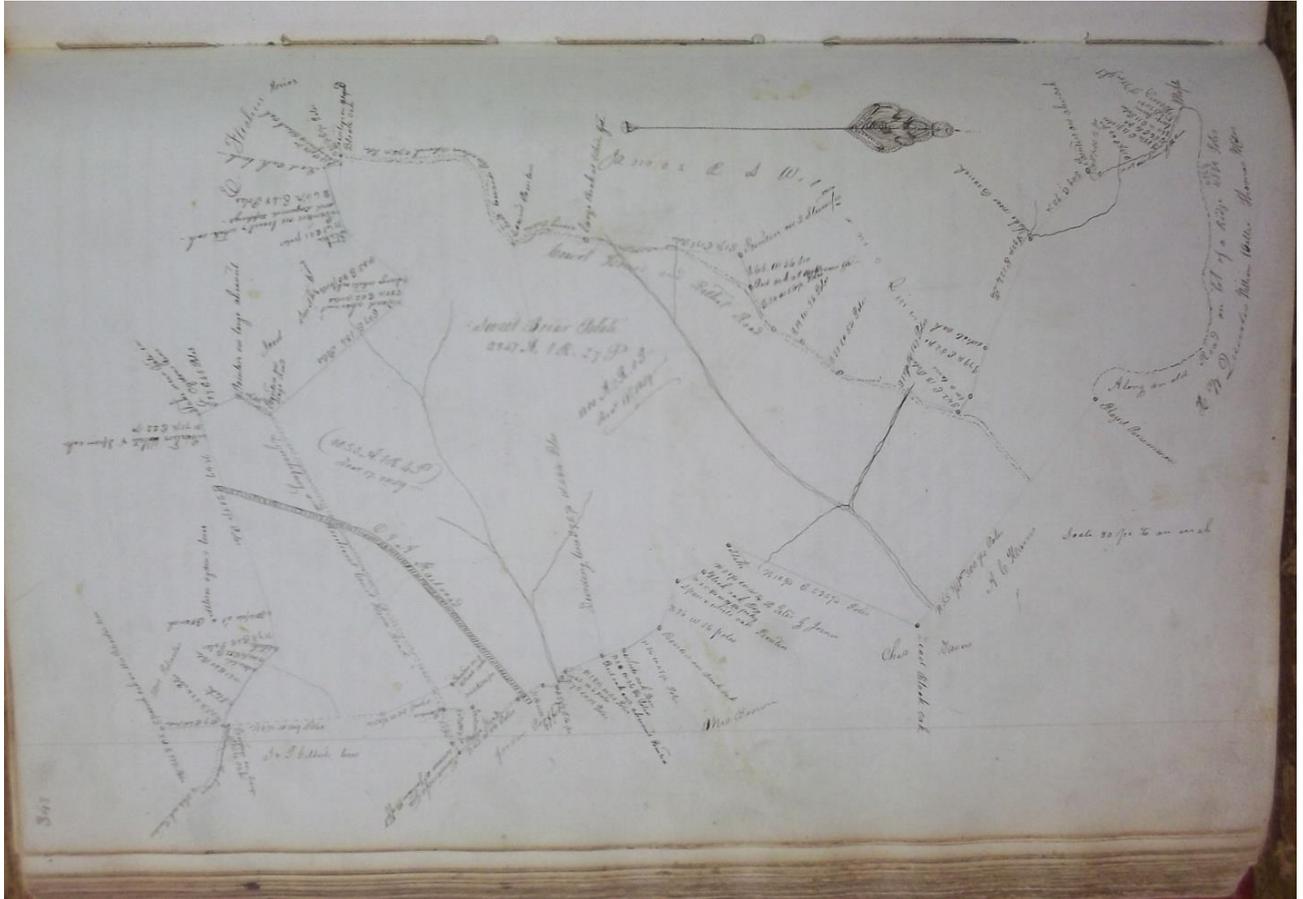
³⁸ In her last extant letter to Calvin Fletcher, Indiana wrote: “It was my intention to have extended my stay in New York, but the unsettled state of affairs of the country, and not knowing what would be the result of the present national crisis, I thought it best to turn my steps homeward, at least for the present. We feel deeply here the impending gloom, which now seems to [pervade all classes]. Business of almost every description is for the present suspended [we scarcely know] in what direction to turn [our] energies, & [are] afraid to embark on any new enterprise.” Indiana Fletcher, Sweet Briar, to Calvin Fletcher, Indianapolis, 24 December 1860, Indiana Historical Society, Calvin Fletcher Papers. The crisis she refers to, of course, is the election of Abraham Lincoln and the subsequent secession of the South Carolina.



The title page of Elijah's Fletcher copy of an issue of *The Farmers' Register*.



Property map courtesy of Associate Professor Rebecca Ambers.



Plat of the Sweet Briar estate surveyed in December 1859 in preparation for its division between Indiana Fletcher and Elizabeth Fletcher Mosby. The compass arrow points north. In the lower left quadrant are the railway and the stage road running between Amherst Court House and Lynchburg. Amherst County, VA, Books of Deeds, vol. EE, p. 343.

Guide to the Exhibition

First large covered case on the left as visitors enter the Whitley Gallery (documents listed left to right):

Selection of books belonging to the Fletcher-Williams family
Courtesy of Cochran Library, Rare Book Collection

- Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (New York, 1855)
- William Kennick, *The New American Orchardist* (Boston, 1835)
- Worthington Hooker, *The Child's Book of Nature* (New York, 1875)
- D. J. Browne, *The American Poultry Yard* (New York, 1856)

Selection of documents belonging to the Fletcher-Williams family
Courtesy of Cochran Library, Rare Book Collection

- Survey of Elijah Fletcher's tract of land on "Buffaloe Ridge" and the south branch of the Buffalo River, 1844

While the land delineated in this document was not and is not contiguous to the Sweet Briar property (it lies a bit to the northeast of campus), this hand-drawn surveyor's map shows the way in which holdings were marked out and measured in the 19th century. Note the surveyor's use of large trees and other natural landmarks, as well as degrees of latitude and longitude, to record the parcel.

- Letter from Elijah Fletcher to his children (Sidney, Indiana, and Elizabeth) travelling in Europe, 21 August 1846

Writing to his children as they finished their education by touring the great cities of Europe, Elijah kept them up-to-date on the weather, rainfall, and plowing at "Sweetbrier" and he anticipated that, "You would be much pleased with the fruit in our orchard. There are all varieties and old Mr [sic] Richardson did justice in the Selection. It would be a great amusement for Inda [Indiana] and Bettie [Elizabeth] to go from tree to tree and try the new fruit." Note in this case, the book *The New American Orchardist*. Elijah wrote further in this letter, "...our rural establishment we will make and adorn as becomes simple rural establishments. It is an interesting place to me and I have no wandering notions and never shall be induced to leave it." The following year, on 9 May 1847, Elijah wrote to his brother Calvin that his daughters were content at "Sweetbrier" and were "... fond of rambling about and riding with me among the mountains."³⁹

- Tax receipt from the 43rd Collection District of the State of Virginia, Confederate States of America, to Indiana Fletcher, 27 March 1864

This receipt is for the dollar value of in-kind taxes paid in 1864 by "Miss I. Fletcher" under section 11 of "An act to lay taxes for the common defense and carry of the government of the Confederate States." It details the tax assessor's valuation of what Sweet Briar provided in lieu of cash: 200 bushels of wheat, 1,000 bushels of corn, 130 bushels of oats, 6,000 pounds of cured hay, 6,000 pounds of cured fodder, and 30 pounds of wool. Though the immediate vicinity of Sweet Briar saw no outright action (the closest engagements were at the Tye River and Lynchburg), in managing the property during the war

³⁹This and subsequent citations from Elijah Fletcher's letters are taken from Von Briesen, ed., *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher*.

years Indiana would have had to contend with obstacles such as the interruption of supply lines, inflation, and an uncertain labor force.

- Letter from Sidney Fletcher to Indiana Fletcher Williams, 1 November 1889

Written from Tusculum, the estate north of Amherst that Indiana's brother Sidney had owned and managed since early adulthood, this letter reports on agricultural activities Sweet Briar. One of several such letters in the College's archives, it testifies to Sweet Briar's continued importance as a productive farm and documents Sidney's oversight of the property and its laborers on behalf of his widowed sister, who spent part of the year managing her real estate holdings in New York City. In this letter Sidney commented on the corn harvest, livestock sent out to pasture, recent wet weather, and plans to clear a field of pine trees to prepare it for crops. He mentioned two workers—"Bob" and "Jack".

- Sales receipt from The John Saul Nursery, Washington, D.C. to Mrs. E. F. Mosby, 11 March 1890

This receipt documents a varied group of decorative plants purchased for the Mt. St. Angelo estate (current home of the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts) by Elizabeth Fletcher Mosby, Indiana's sister. Elizabeth and Indiana had both attended excellent schools as girls and both had been sent to Europe in the 1840s to polish their education. When they returned from their travels the young women had a hand in designing the additions to Sweet Briar House—a remodeling that turned the farm house into an Italianate villa. They may have had a hand in planning the gardens. Note in this case, the book *Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, an influential text in its day.⁴⁰ The young Elizabeth's extant correspondence to her parents in the College's archives is filled with notes about plants and flowers and the Sweet Briar Museum holdings include a fragile collection of Alpine flowers that Elizabeth collected, pressed, and labeled while travelling abroad as a teenager. Her plantings at Mt. St. Angelo were legendary: over 70 varieties of trees and shrubs there survived well into the 20th century.⁴¹

- Letter from Daisy Williams to Indiana Fletcher Williams, 4 May 1883

Writing from Sweet Briar to her mother in New York City, the teenaged Daisy reports that "Ed" has weeded the flower garden and trimmed the rose bushes and that she and her companion, Martha Penn Taylor, had planted peas, tomatoes, and lettuce. While Daisy was a pampered child and was educated to be a genteel young lady, it is clear from her letters and diaries that she also reveled in nature while at Sweet Briar. She rode her pony, Bounce, across the property daily, fished, fed chickens, planted vegetables and flowers, and took regular notice of the weather. Note in this case, *The Child's Book of Nature*.

Covered case in the middle of the gallery:

- Daisy Williams's journal, open to 5 and 6 May 1880

Courtesy of Cochran Library, Rare Book Collection

This is one of two known diaries. Here, the 12-year-old Daisy recounts her activities at Sweet Briar and records admiring the flower garden, fishing with a friend, riding across pastures and a mountain, and

⁴⁰ See Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), pp. 326-330.

⁴¹ See Stohlman, *The Story of Sweet Briar College*, p. 33. Elizabeth's father planted a wide variety of trees at Sweet Briar as well. See Stohlman, *The Story of Sweet Briar College*, p. 22-23. The College community appreciated the trees from the earliest days. See for example "The Trees of Sweet Briar," *The Sweet Briar News*, 7 December 1927, p. 2.

observing the weather. In her 1882 diary (not on view) she kept a detailed list of the family's riding horses by name and included a list of "fowls" in January 1882—enumerating 33 pullets and nine turkeys among the poultry flock. Daisy's interest in poultry matched her aunt Elizabeth's at the same age. Elijah Fletcher wrote to his brother Calvin, 13 March 1842, that the 11-year-old Elizabeth "is always delighted with rural scenes, with her chickens and Ducks... She has a Henhouse at each plantation [i.e. Tusculum and Sweet Briar], managed by some faithful Servant who makes a due return of Eggs and chickens that affords her quite a smart Revenue."

- Daisy Williams's sketchbook, open to 10 December 1882
Sweet Briar Museum collection

A well educated young lady like Daisy Williams would have had regular art and music lessons. This 1882 sketchbook, which is filled with pages of pencil drawings of flowers, is evidence of her dutiful practice. This page shows a strawberry plant.

- Woven wool blanket, ca. 1880s
Sweet Briar Museum collection

This blanket is thought to have been used for Daisy's pony, Bounce. Her diaries and letters are filled with references to riding Bounce across the Sweet Briar fields.

On the wall:

- Framed selection of business receipts documents belonging to the Fletcher-Williams family
Sweet Briar Museum collection

This selection of receipts from businesses in Amherst and Lynchburg demonstrates the variety of Sweet Briar's agricultural products. For example, there are receipts for wool, corn, and chickens. One, for a purchase of salt, is made out to Logan Anderson, Indiana's long-time plantation overseer.⁴²

- Framed letter from Gibbs and Hancock Wholesale Grocers, Lynchburg, to Mrs. E. F. Mosby,
28 May 1890

This letter from a Lynchburg business to Indiana's sister, Elizabeth Fletcher Mosby, who lived across the road at Mt. St. Angelo, outlines their prices for buying wool from her.

Covered case, corner of left wall:

- Receipt from J. E. Camden, Amherst, Virginia, to J. Henry Williams, July 1883
Sweet Briar Museum collection

This receipt, for "furnishing and laying 35 feet of terra cotta pipe," is made out to Indiana's husband, James Henry Williams. The pipe, also called "tile," was used to drain excess water from farm fields.⁴³

⁴² Per Lynn Rainville, Anderson is recorded in the 1880 U. S. Census as black but may have been African American and Monacan (Native American). Rainville's research on the African American community at Sweet Briar has revealed that he likely lived in the former slave cabin behind Sweet Briar House.

⁴³ See Thomas R. Biebighauser, *Wetland Drainage, Restoration, and Repair* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

- Section of a hexagonal clay drainage pipe, 1800s

Courtesy of the Archaeological Materials Laboratory, Anthropology Department
Hundred-year-old clay tiles—such as this example—are found embedded in the ground by College faculty and students working on surveys and experiments in various campus pastures. This example is thought to have been found in the fields down slope from the current museum building and between Sweet Briar House and the lakes—an area of campus known to have been tilled and planted with crops well into the 20th century.⁴⁴



Nineteenth-century drainage tile *in situ*. Photo courtesy of Mike Hayslett.

- Copy of Henry Flagg French, *Farm Drainage: The Principles, Processes, and Effects of Draining Land* (New York, 1865)

Courtesy of Cochran Library, Rare Book Collection

This book, an influential text in its day, is from the Fletcher-Williams family library now housed at the College's Cochran Library. That they owned a copy indicates that Indiana and her husband at Sweet Briar, her sister and brother-in-law at neighboring Mt. St. Angelo, and her brother at nearby Tusculum were keeping up-to-date with the latest land management practices.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Observations on the drainage tiles found on campus courtesy of Mike Hayslett.

⁴⁵ At the time this book was published, French was president of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, now the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Covered case, back wall:

- Holstein cattle pedigree registry book, Sweet Briar Dairy, ca. 1918-1919
- Selection of early neck tags for the Sweet Briar herd of registered Holsteins, ca. 1920s-1950s
- Photograph from an early “view book” of Sweet Briar College, ca. 1910s-1920s
Sweet Briar Museum collection

The College’s first board of directors advertised the school’s natural resources along with its buildings: “A large and fertile farm, well stocked with cattle and in charge of an experienced superintendent, a kitchen garden, orchards, a cold storage and creamery, ice-house and steam laundry, will render the institute independent and self-supporting.”⁴⁶ Similarly, the College’s earliest printed catalogue touts the campus’s wholesome offerings for prospective students and their parents: “In connection with the school a farm is maintained which supplies fruits and vegetables; and a dairy furnishes rich milk, cream and other dairy products.”⁴⁷



Selection of milk and cream bottles from the Sweet Briar dairy.

Along the back wall:

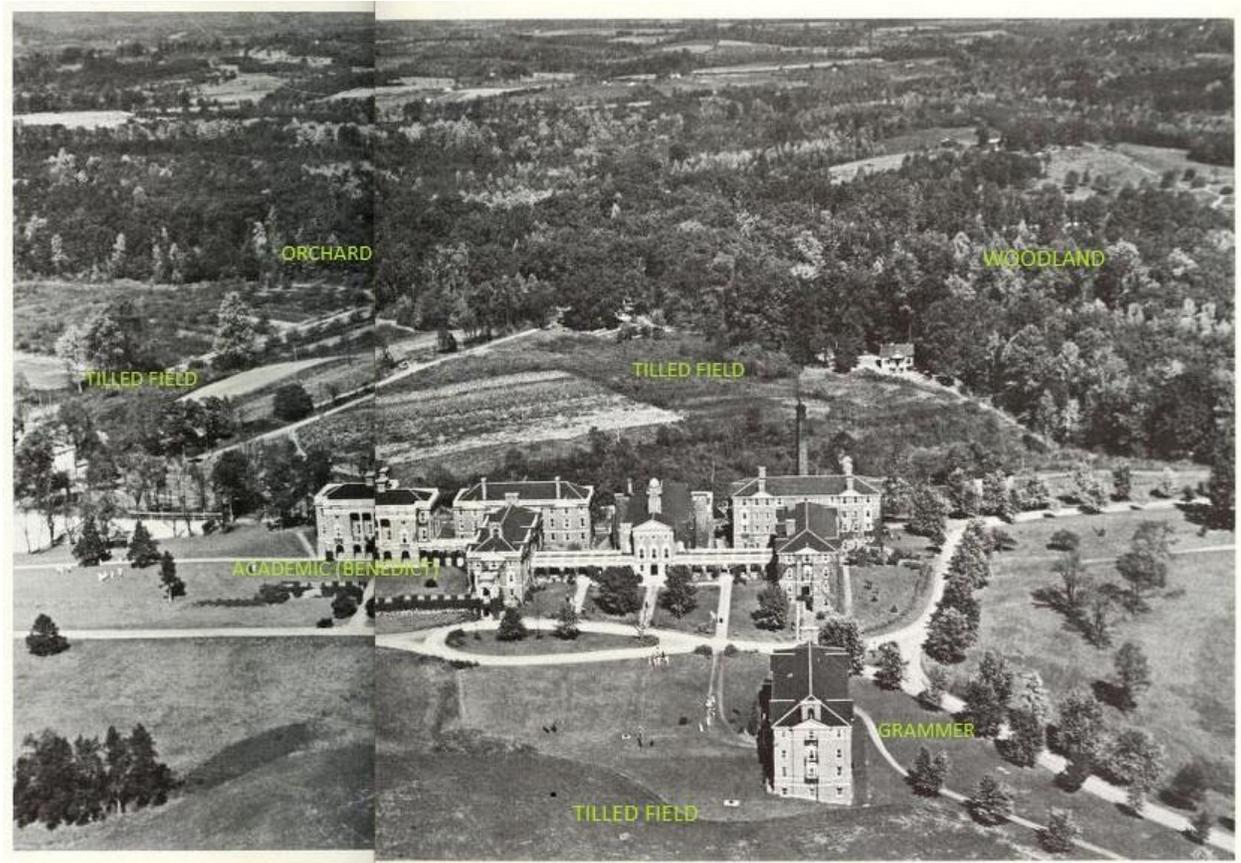
- Framed map of the Sweet Briar College campus, 1928
Sweet Briar Museum collection

This map delineates woodland, open fields, and orchards a few decades after the school opened. The campus was still very much an agricultural operation. The College’s earliest farm manager was Ross Martindale, who came to Sweet Briar in 1908. He was succeeded by W.C. Blackwell and, in the mid 1930s, by J.E. Dinwiddie. Martindale supervised the dairy, orchards, crop and timber lands, and livestock

⁴⁶ *Sweet Briar Institute* (1904), p. 11.

⁴⁷ *The First Year Book of Sweet Briar Institute* (1906-1907), p.12. Information on the farm and dairy recurs consistently throughout subsequent annual catalogues.

(hogs and sheep), and also oversaw the equestrian program.⁴⁸ The College's first horse barn was built under Blackwell's supervision and was constructed of lumber "cut on Sweet Briar property and prepared at Sweet Briar's own saw mill."⁴⁹



Aerial view of campus in 1923, from Martha von Briesen, *Sweet Briar College: Seven Decades, 1907-1971*. There is an orchard in the upper left and there are tilled fields close to most buildings.

- Framed report, "Financial Statement on Profit and Loss and Capital Expenditure of the Sweet Briar Farm, 1907-1967," 1967-1968
Sweet Briar Museum Collection

This report was prepared for the College's board of directors by Jan Osinga, who managed the dairy for over 30 years. Despite the impressive scope of the farm operation, over a span of 70 years it had yielded a net loss of almost a quarter of a million dollars.

⁴⁸ Stephen Harding, Indian Fletcher's plantation manager (and, as noted in her will, "my friend"), was her executor and was named in her will as one of three original trustees of the Sweet Briar Institute. The will is available in a printed pamphlet in Cochran Library Archives. See *The Story of Sweet Briar College*, pp. 44-45, 56-57; Randy Harlow, "The Good Ole Days at Sweet Briar [sic] Farm: Memories of William Lamb," *Amherst County Magazine* vol. 1, no. 2 (December 1978-January 1979), p. 11-15.

⁴⁹ Harlow, p. 12.

- Dorothy Carnine Scott (1903-1993), *Cow Hill, Sweet Briar*, 1937, oil on canvas, 29 x 24 inches
Gift of Eugenie M. Morenus, Professor of Mathematics and Latin 1909-1946
Sweet Briar College Art Collection and Galleries ACG.1973.055.a

The artist's husband, Ewing C. Scott, was a Professor of Chemistry at Sweet Briar 1927-1944. She did not begin painting in earnest until her family settled at Sweet Briar, studying with Elizabeth Hunt Barrett, a professional painter who was a close neighbor of the campus. While in Virginia, Scott exhibited with the Lynchburg Art Club as well as farther afield. Indeed, *Cow Hill* was shown in Washington, DC, at the Corcoran Gallery of Art biennial exhibition of contemporary painting in the mid 1930s. This view is noteworthy in that it captures a treeless campus hillside pockmarked by "wallows"—severely eroded depressions—caused by the livestock.⁵⁰



President Anne Gary Pannell in the school's apple orchard with farm manager Joseph Gilchrist, ca. 1950.

- Apple crate, ca. 1950s

Sweet Briar Museum collection

It is clear from Elijah Fletcher's letters that he planted and maintained an apple orchard at Sweet Briar. Likewise, the College planted trees and harvested fruit for several decades. There were several locations, notably along the road to Monument Hill and in the sloping fields between Sweet Briar

⁵⁰ The observation of erosion courtesy of Associate Professor Rebecca Ambers.

House and the lake. Three hundred apple trees were planted in anticipation of the school's needs in 1903; 1,200 were planted in 1906, the year the College welcomed its first students. In 1928 the school's treasurer reported that the orchards produced 2,100 bushels, but while three quarters of these were sold through brokers (the rest were consumed on campus) this was considered underperforming in financial terms.⁵¹ In an issue of the 1952 alumnae magazine, farm manager Joseph Gilchrist explained that the College had decided to remove most of the trees and return the land to use for crops and pasture. He cited the fact the College had realized a profit from the orchard in only three of the preceding 10 years.⁵²

On the wall to the right:

- Framed certificates for "The Virginia 100 Bushel Corn Club," from the Virginia Extension Service, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, to Sweet Briar College, 1949, 1952, 1955
Sweet Briar Museum collection

These certificates recognize the College's admirable success in yielding at least 100 bushels of grain per acre. An article published in the alumnae magazine in 1950 reports that at this time the College maintained a dairy herd of 60 registered Holstein cows and two bulls, raised beef cattle (Aberdeen Angus), and ran 120 hogs (Landrace). In the early 1950s the fields were planted in alfalfa, clover (Ladino), wheat, barley, and corn, with 300 acres in active cultivation and 300 in pasture, orchard, and woodland. At the time, the Sweet Briar dairy sold \$1,500 worth of milk to Lynchburg each month and was the top producing dairy in the immediate area. Twenty-five men ran the farm and dairy operation.⁵³

- Painted metal sign for The Sweet Briar Dairy, advertising the Holstein herd, ca. 1950s-1980s
Sweet Briar Museum collection
- Framed U.S. Geological Service map of the Sweet Briar College campus, 1963
Sweet Briar Museum collection

The map bears handwritten notations (see the key in the right side margin) marking out "natural areas" (presumably tracts left uncultivated) on campus as well as the dairy-use pastures and "timber farm." The College has maintained uncultivated natural areas throughout its history. For example, the Carry Nature Sanctuary, established in 1936 by the parents of Peggy Carry Durland '35, was meant to provide an outdoor laboratory for students of biology and ornithology and was intended to encourage the study of conservation. In announcing the gift, the College noted, "The interest of Daisy's mother, Mrs. [Indiana Fletcher] Williams, in conservation, has left Sweet Briar a rich heritage in the largest track of primeval forest in the state of Virginia."⁵⁴ Indeed, at the school's very inception, trustees had noted in a promotional booklet that "At least six hundred acres will be set apart for parks, lawns and

⁵¹ "The Orchard," *The Sweet Briar News*, 31 October 1928, p. 2, Cochran Library Archives.

⁵² Joseph A. Gilchrist, Jr. "To the Editor: the Story of the Orchard," *Alumnae News Sweet Briar College* vol. 21, no. 4 (March 1952), p. 5.

⁵³ Edna Lee Cox Gilchrist, "Bringing You Up-to-Date On the Sweet Briar Farm," *Alumnae News Sweet Briar College* vol. 19, no. 2 (February 1950), pp. 9-11.

⁵⁴ "A Wild-Life Sanctuary—Gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Carry of Chicago," *Alumnae News Sweet Briar College* vol. 6, no. 2 (December 1936), p. 15-16. Indiana stipulated in her will that, "No part of the said Sweet Briar Plantation and the two tracts of land adjoining...shall at any time be sold or alienated by the corporation..."

recreation grounds. On all sides, within easy reach, are virgin forests of oak, hickory, poplar and pine, affording opportunity for pleasant retired walks and for the undisturbed study of nature.”⁵⁵

In cases and on the floor along the right side wall:

- Report of the farm committee to the board of overseers, Sweet Briar College, 18 October 1949
Sweet Briar Museum Collection

Business discussed in this memo includes the horse stables, dairy, hogs, and beef cattle. Notable are the mention of a major power line, to be erected by Appalachian Electric Power Company, which was scheduled to cross a corner of the College property and a scheme to cure and market Sweet Briar hams as a profit-making business.

- Minutes of the farm committee, Sweet Briar College, 26 April 1963
Sweet Briar Museum Collection

Notable in this document are the mention of dairyman Jan Osinga’s new endeavor to make and market Dutch-style yoghurt at the Sweet Briar dairy and the discussion of clearing dead and aged trees from the “primeval forest” near campus buildings.

- Ten gallon milk can, Sweet Briar Dairy, ca. 1950s-1990s
Sweet Briar Museum collection

In the glass case, top to bottom shelves:

- Selection of milk and cream bottles from the Sweet Briar dairy and from the Mt. St. Angelo dairy (privately owned), ca. 1950s-1990s
- Selection of memorabilia from the Sweet Briar dairy under the management of Jan Osinga, including yoghurt containers, individual cow ID tags from the herd, the 1994 “dairy dispersal” auction catalogue, and a t-shirt and doll commemorating the dairy’s closure
- Eight quart milk can, Sweet Briar dairy, ca. 1950s-1990s
- Small milk can for a campus household, Sweet Briar dairy, ca. 1980s-1990s
Sweet Briar Museum collection

College administrators and trustees made the bittersweet decision to close the dairy, the last vestige of Sweet Briar’s history as an active agricultural operation, in 1994. The decision was fundamentally necessitated by rising costs related to environmental protection laws.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Sweet Briar Institute* (1904), p. 12.

⁵⁶See Barbara A. Hill, “Dairy To Become Beef Farm,” *The Sweet Briar News*, 28 April 1994, pp. 3-4; Hill, “Open memo to the Sweet Briar community,” *Sweet Briar College Alumnae Magazine* vol. 64, no. 2 (summer 1994), inside front cover; Nicole File, “Dairy To Be Auctioned In October,” *The Sweet Briar News*, 15 September 1994, p. 1; Sandra Tan, “Dairy’s era closes at auction sale, Sweet Briar College bids farewell to historic tradition,” *The News and Advance* (Lynchburg, VA), 8 October 1994, sec. A, pp. 4-5; Jan Y. Osinga, “Dairy: a great loss to the community,” *The Sweet Briar News*, 13 October 1994, p. 3.



Sweet Briar dairy eight quart milk can

Suggested Reading

Daisy Williams: A Memorial Published by Sweet Briar College. Sweet Briar, VA: Sweet Briar College, 1934.

Stohlman, Martha Lou Lemon. *The Story of Sweet Briar College.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press for the Sweet Briar Alumnae Association, 1956.

Von Briesen, Martha, ed. *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher.* Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1965.

Von Briesen, Martha. "Elijah Fletcher: Citizen of Lynchburg," *Lynchburg Historical Society Museum* vol. 7, no. 2 (1970), n.p.

Whitley, Ann Marshall, *Indiana Fletcher Williams of Sweet Briar College.* Sweet Briar, VA: Sweet Briar Museum, 1992.