My dear Maria,
You express yourself pleased with my reminiscences of dear "old Molly" and her anecdotes of by gone days, and you wish me to send you more of them. I have already stated she entered the family of my grandmother during her widowhood. After her marriage in 1751, Molly went with the bride to the house of the groom in Front street between Chestnut and Walnut, and soon became much attached to the four children of her new master, but the birth of the first-born of her mistress, Betsy (my dear mother) in 1752, was one of the happiest events of her life. I have often heard her describe with much animation, her walks up Chestnut street into the country and through the State House yard, then the cow pasture of my parents, to Walnut street, followed by all the joyous little inmates of the family.

Philadelphia was so small in those days, my grandfather used to say he not only knew every gentleman in town, but every gentleman's black servant and dog, and Molly often spoke of a circumstance that looked well for the morals of the young city. My grandfather, during the Summer evenings, was in the habit of sitting on the porch at the street door, with a large silver tankard of punch standing on the lower part of the porch and a friend or two smoking and enjoying the punch. One evening when the old gentleman had retired the tankard was forgotten, but the next morning, when Molly opened the window, there it stood in the old place. You, my dear girl, have probably partaken of
hot whisky punch from the same tankard at my cottage, where I have often prepared it for my friends after a cold sleigh ride. But all were not honest even in those “good old days,” for one morning, on going to the stable, Alexis, or “Lex” as he was called, found one of the horses stolen; rewards were offered, but Dreadnaught could not be heard of and Daredevil long whinnied to call his mate in vain. Years after, as Lex was walking among the market wagons in Second street, a horse neighed by his side. The sound was familiar to him, he turned and joyfully beheld his old favorite Dreadnaught. Many were the caresses of affection that were exchanged between the horse and his old driver, to the great astonishment of the countrymen who were lookers on, but the present master was far from partaking of the general feeling, as Lex firmly declared that to be the animal stolen from his master. At length Lex proposed the horse should be turned loose, and if he did not go to his master’s stable, he would own himself mistaken. The horse was set at liberty, Lex gave the command as formerly, “To the stable,” and gayly did he canter to his well remembered home.

The great journey of our great domestic’s life was her ride to Magnolia (7¼ measured miles from Market and Front streets). The motion made her deadly sick and she was almost lifeless when lifted from the carriage to her bed. She never after could stand even for an instant on the step of any kind of carriage without becoming giddy and faint.

At the time of my grandfather’s removal into the country, the family was very large, consisting of my grandparents, Polly, Dolly, James, Betsy, Rebecca, Thomas, Mary, Fanny and George, and for many years Mary Gordon, the daughter of a younger brother of my grandfather, who died in the West Indies before he had attained his twentieth year. Mrs. Drake, the govern-
ess, also resided in the family, making thirteen in the parlor, and there were a goodly number of domestics in the kitchen. Hired English and bought Africans, many of whom were dead and gone before my time, but of Daddy Caesar, I have a vivid recollection. He was a prince in his native country and as a mark of that distinction his forehead and cheeks were deeply slashed with lines. He was low of stature, bandy-legged, his skin very black, his wool tightly knotted, his nose flat, lips thick, mouth wide, but his teeth wide and even. In his dialect there was as much African as English, and when a child I liked to hear his talk as he sat in the old fashioned chimney corner; and no Italian music is now so sweet to my ears as were then his African songs. Whether his manners were princely or not I cannot determine, as he was the only member of royalty I have ever seen, but this I do know—that there was a gentleness, a tenderness, and I think I may say, a delicacy in his manner that made me greatly prefer him to Daddy Jack, Samuel, Manuel or any of the colored population of the kitchen. Yet Mammy Katy, a little hump-backed mulato Cook was also a great favorite. I loved to sit in her lap as she ate her breakfast and get a sip of her strong coffee from her blue dragon cup and saucer. I liked the smoke too of her old pipe, until one evening, as I sat on her knee, she dropped asleep and her short pipe with its fiery contents fell into my bosom; from that time I have never liked tobacco in any form. But this accident did not cool my love for Mammy Katy, for when I was being weaned, nothing could console me the first night of mother’s absence, until Molly carried me into her chamber, where the kind little woman and her son changed my cries of distress into merry laughter by exerting their skill in alternately blowing out a lighted candle and “blowing it in” again, and to crown all, Manny put a lighted candle into his mouth, the light shining curiously through his black cheeks.
By the time Molly became free, her father was dead, and she heir of a Walnut street house and whatever property he had to leave, she being his only child. She felt no inclination, however, to leave her old friends and continued in their service, a highly valued domestic. She had an Aunt Mary who lived in London some years after the Revolution, who sent her a handsome Bible with silver clasps and the initials of her name "M. H." on the back in gilt letters. Our Aunt Edwards says she remembered the day it was brought to Magnolia by a little boy who was afterwards our good Dr. James, his father living at that time at Chalkly Hall.

Years rolled on, the children of the family became men and women. My mother married my father, who was a widower with one little girl, Peggy, and was at that time a lumber merchant, in Front Street. At the commencement of the War, my mother with her husband and little daughter Maria (your grandmother), came to Magnolia to reside with her mother, again a widow, my grandfather having died in 1777. My grandmother’s health was then declining and in 1777 she died. After her death, my father became proprietor of the place and from that time it became their happy home, and Molly gladly remained with them. The little Peggy was brought from her Aunt Canby’s where she had lived after her mother’s death. I must stop for the present but next week will continue my narrative if you wish it.

My dear Maria:

We have now arrived at another epoch in the life of our faithful Molly. She had become the domestic of one she had nursed in infancy, directed in childhood and whose parents she had seen united; but her manner was ever respectful, not only to my parents, but to all the younger branches of the family. At the time
of my grandmother's death only the three youngest children were living at home, beside my father's family. Henry Bainbridge had long been in Europe; Alexander had died in Lisbon; and the beautiful Rebecca whose portrait, with that of my dear mother is now hanging before me died soon after this picture was painted. Mary had married an English gentleman, Mr. Thomson, and lived for some time at Atsion and afterwards on a farm at Byberry. She became a widow and returned to Magnolia, where she died. Dolly married Laurence Saltar, my father's brother; they also lived at Atsion Ironworks and died without leaving children. Thomas Gordon (that handsome boy who stands in the great family picture with a paroquet) was a wild blade, full of life and fun. He had entered the British Navy when young, through the influence of his mother, and receiving prize-money, had spent it profusely when on shore in England with his fellow mid-shipmen. Some of these were sons of noblemen, who took him to their fathers' country-seats, where his tastes for luxury and expensive amusements were probably first formed, which in after life gave much uneasiness to his fond mother and friends. At the commencement of the Revolution he was on board the Roebuck Man-of-war, which sailed up the Delaware to Bordentown and burnt Kirkbride's house. Afterwards, when in the prison-ship off Rhode Island, he, on a dark night, with one of the prisoners, took the ship's long-boat and escaped to the shore, where he exchanged his gay uniform for a laborer's dress. Pushing his way at night and on foot and sometimes begging a meal's victuals, until ragged, dirty, and half starved, he reached Magnolia without being recognized by anyone who had once known the dashing young British officer. But health and spirits soon returned and he became the devoted admirer of our Cousin Peggy Bickley, then a very beautiful young girl. But at that time he was idle and extravagant in
his habits and the good judgment of the young girl made her decline those attentions, which perhaps, had his conduct been different, would have been the sunshine of her existence. At the close of the War he regained his property which had been confiscated, by proving that he had been placed in the British Navy by his mother, but that he had deserted rather than remain and be instrumental in making prisoners of his suffering countrymen. About the year 1788, he married Miss Margaret Huston and purchased a farm near Newtown, Pa.; but did not long enjoy the comforts of his new home, for on returning one evening from a ride, he was thrown from his horse during a thunder-storm and killed. He left one son, Dr. John Huston Gordon, formerly of the U. S. Navy, who married Miss H. McCrea; they are now residing on the place with their son, the young doctor and their daughter Elizabeth. There was an old gentleman who lived some years in the family, by the name of Clark. He was uncle to my grandmother and came over to this country in a vessel with Penn, to whom he was much attached. He was also an uncle of our Cousin Bickley’s at whose house he died while on a visit. My grandmother’s name before her marriage was Clark; she was born in Pennswich, Gloucestershire. Aunt Edwards, when in England, visited Pennswich, but owing to some circumstance, did not get to see Clark Hall, the old family dwelling, nor did she enter the church-yard where the family lie, although she saw, in passing, the beautiful evergreens so often described by her mother. The Clarks belonged to the Society of Friends, but the Gordons were Episcopalians and had a family pew in the south aisle of Christ Church, opposite the second window. It was chosen by my grandfather, when the church was enlarged, on account of its being over the grave of his mother who died in her eighteenth year, in giving him birth; she was a sister of our worthy Bishop Hobart’s
grandmother. From the time of my Aunt McMurtries' marriage, her family occupied the pew, until within a few years. Her daughter, Mrs. B. Tilghman and her family now occupy one in the middle aisle. My grandparents lie in Christ Church burying-ground near the front gate, on the left hand side; their daughter, Nancy McMurtrie and family near them; also Dolly Saltar and her husband; Mary Thomson, her husband and James are on the left side.

James Gordon died in 1775, and was buried with the honors of war. He belonged to the Silk-stocking Company; their captain was Bradford; their uniform, brown and buff. The first time Washington reviewed his troops, June 20th., 1775, previous to his going to Boston, the family rode down from Magnolia to see the review on the Common, back of Pennsylvania Hospital. General Washington and General Lee, mounted on fine horses, were for some time so close to the carriage that my aunts said they could have shaken hands with them. Washington was handsome and attracted all eyes. In the evening Uncle James returned home very unwell; the day had been very warm and he, much heated and over-fatigued; a violent fever ensued, of which he died. My father was at that time in the company of Captain ———; his uniform was blue and buff.

My Uncle James' portrait, my dear Maria, you have often seen at Magnolia Cottage, hanging in my chamber over the mantel. He is represented standing near the beach with a letter in his hand, the sea and a vessel in the distance. His dress is in the fashion of his day; his hair, curled at the ears and powdered; his coat, purple, lined with white silk, the cuffs wide with large gilt buttons and cambric wrist-ruffles. Often have I seen our dear old Molly's eyes fill with tears as she looked on this picture. He had resided for some time in the West Indies, where his health became improved,
but his absence caused much anxiety at home and Molly's greatest pleasure, at that time, seems to have been in preparing roast beef for him by putting it in a keg and pouring hot lard over it; in this state it was sent to him at San Domingo in cool weather. I have heard a very extraordinary circumstance related of an old woman who was in the habit of visiting my grandfather's family. During the great earthquake in the Island of Jamaica, in 1692, when the town of Port Royal sank into the ocean, this woman was swallowed with it, but cast up again to the surface, there she was taken from a fragment of roof by a vessel in which my great-grandfather sailed as captain, and was brought by him (Alexander Gordon) to Philadelphia, some years before the birth of my grandfather. This old woman became very fond of a good glass of wine and if my grandfather did not fill her glass to the brim she would say, "Plague it, the Devil take it, Tom, what is the top of the glass made for!" My Cousin L. Penington says the remains of Port Royal are still visible, lying deep beneath the clear waters of a tropical sea.

Our first American ancestor, Alexander Gordon, was born in Scotland and began the study of law in a commercial town with a gentleman to whom he was bound, as was the custom in those days. He was sent by his master, one day, to get a pot of ale; this raised the ire of the young Scotchman, who considered it too menial an office for one of his rank; he proceeded on his errand, but instead of returning, he went on board of a ship just going to sail and bound himself to the captain. His father was violent and severe in his temper and he dared not return to his home and acknowledge that he had left the place provided for him. He never saw his father again until he was lying dead, when the boy's predominant feeling was dread, lest he should open his eyes and see him.
My dear Maria:

The dark clouds of the Revolution at last passed away and the sweet sunshine of peace gladdened the heart of man and added a new charm to the face of nature. Sometimes, with the dearest companions of my heart, E. Lardner and her brothers, I sought the green meadow to gather strawberries, magnolias, sweet-williams and numberless other wild flowers which grew in great profusion round the old gum-tree, which supplied us with the mistletoe bough for our Christmas sports. Once brother George and myself prevailed on her to walk to Frankford to make a visit to our Aunt Edwards, who was the youngest daughter of my grandparents and had continued to reside at Magnolia until she married Dr. Enoch Edwards, who at that time lived on his paternal farm in Byberry. My aunt soon became a most efficient wife. She rose with the lark and "looked well after the ways of her household." The dairy and her homespun were each perfect of their kind. Those substantial buff and white striped curtains which you may remember to have seen hanging in the parlor at Magnolia Cottage, were made under her inspection and given to my mother, after my uncle sold his farm, and the windows of their new abode were hung with crimson damask. It is years since they were manufactured; they have been much used but they still look glossy and bright. You must not judge of what were my aunt's occupations by what you see now at Tacony. The state of society then was more like what it now is in our Western States. Land and provisions were plenty and the laborers married young. It was easy for the farmer to collect a dozen or twenty men for his harvest fields, but where were the women to come from, to provide for them? They had to stay with their children. Bought servants, either Dutch Redemptionists or Africans, were then all that were to be depended on; these were chiefly clad in homespun
and the mistress had much of their clothing to make with her own hands. I well remember the great banks of yarn and the big stockings that I have seen my mother knit. Sometimes it happened when one of the domestics became free, another could not immediately be procured to supply her place and the ladies then had to do their own work. On one of these occasions Colonel Burr happened to come to spend the night at our Uncle's. Early in the morning, Miss Edwards, a sister of the doctor, arose and taking a milk-pail and covering herself with an old cloak and sunbonnet, seated herself beside a cow in the barn-yard. The gay Colonel soon after entered and came up to her, walked round the cow, talked of her beauty and asked questions; but nothing could he get out of the damsel but monosyllables. As soon as he left her, she vanished into the house and when she appeared at the breakfast table, her face wreathed in smiles and her person in delicate attire, he little thought he was in company with the silent milkmaid. This lady afterwards married Mr. Mount.

During the war, the doctor had been engaged in active service; he had been aide-de-camp to General La Fayette, whose wound he had dressed at the Battle of Brandywine. Some years after his marriage, he perceived symptoms of a pulmonary affection which induced him and my aunt to go to Europe. It was while in England that they first saw Mary Clarkson. She was a young girl in ill health, and, I believe, an orphan. My uncle and aunt soon became very much interested in her and proposed to her guardian to take her with them while travelling through Europe. Having obtained his consent, she accompanied them through England, Scotland and Holland, and by the time they returned to England, her attachment had become so strong that, when she was invited to accompany them to America, she willingly left a young brother and
sister to become their companion for life. On their arrival in America, her sprightly manners and agreeable conversation made her a welcome visitor to my aunt’s relatives and friends. I believe it is fifty years since they first met and I believe perfect harmony has ever existed between them. After my uncle’s death she appears to have become still more dear to my aunt. Of Mr. James Robertson, her husband, I have heard our aunt express the most unbound respect and confidence. Mr. Robertson was a widower with three daughters; the youngest married Robert Cruise [Croes] son of the late Bishop of New Jersey. The two eldest and a daughter of the present Mrs. Robertson are living at home, cheering with their smiles the home of my aged aunt, now in her ninetieth year, and their infirm mother, to whom Margaretta is the most tender and devoted of daughters. I have no recollection of the first time I saw my kind uncle and aunt, after their return from England, but I perfectly recollect my wonder and joy when my aunt presented me with one of the most perfect wax dolls ever formed. The statue of Napoleon’s infant son comes nearer to it than anything I have ever seen, but like a true mother, I think my own darling was the most beautiful; for my sweet baby had such sparkling black eyes and between her coral lips shone two rows of pearly teeth; her hair curled in bright ringlets and on one of her dimpled hands was a little red scratch. This of course was very interesting to me. My little nephew, Lynford Lardner was the doctor; he ordered a plaintain leaf tied round it and mixed up a dose of physic in an acorn cup for her; sometimes he would bleed her and straining a rag with currant or cherry juice, would wrap it round her arm. Her gums were often lanced and one day the doctor, the nurse (his sister) and myself had a violent dispute. He insisted that the child had a violent toothache and that the tooth must be drawn; the nurse and
myself endeavored to defend the baby; a regular fight ensued and the poor infant fell on the mantel hearth, fractured her skull and knocked out an eye. The doctor, having destroyed his patient and plunged all its relatives into the most violent grief (like some others of the profession) quietly took his departure. With many more valuable gifts my dear aunt has since presented me, for which I feel grateful, but none ever gave the wild delight I felt on receiving that beautiful doll. She has promised me the portrait of herself taken when an infant. The gift will be a lasting pleasure, one which will end only with life. My Aunt Edwards, the longest known and best beloved of all my aunts, is the only one that I have never had a likeness of. After my uncle's return, he purchased a place in Frankford of Mr. Drinker. The house was pleasantly situated at some distance from the street, but the beauty of the place consisted in the lovely view presented from the summer-house, of the pastures, streams, bridges, mills, the village, numberless roads winding through tall trees, luxuriant shade, and rising above all other objects, was seen Christ Church steeple, five miles distant. One day when Mr. Jefferson was on a visit to my uncle, they walked up to this summer-house. He looked round and said: "This is the spot on which the signers of the Declaration of Independence dined the day they signed the Declaration." Whatever my uncle possessed had an air of elegant neatness. His walks, grass, trees, shrubbery, were all in perfect order, as was his person; whether in his morning gown and slippers, lolling in his library or in his dress coat ascending his carriage; and all around him was elegantly neat. One of his favorite sayings was, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." He was fond of children and I dearly loved him.