

More from the Burroughs Diary

December one hundred and fifty years ago - John William Burroughs' December 1863 diary is not quite as fulsome as in previous months. Without his plantation overseer, details of plantation management take more of his time, and he also has to deal with family illnesses. The diary does, however, give us a picture of the regular operations, such as ice supply and hog slaughter, as well as special expenses and activities at Christmastime during the Civil War.

Tuesday Dec. 1st 1863

Clear & very cold ice one inch thick - Hands getting in corn - Rode to Marlboro' this afternoon

To Medley¹ - board self & horse during Court \$14.00

Wednesday Dec. 2nd 1863

Moderated very much - Ella, Susie & Carrie² in bed sick - it is really distressing to have them sick so much - Chills cannot be stopped it seems. Dr. here to see them

To Emanuel (Carpenter)³ \$1.00

Thursday Dec. 3rd 1863

Clear and pleasant. Ella well again, Susie better, Carrie still has fever. Dr Maccubbin⁴ has not been here to day, he has really neglected the children very much.

Friday & Sat. Dec 4th & 5th 1863

Dr. Mac. Came again and children all well again

To Mollie⁵ \$4.00

Sunday Dec 6th 1863

Clear - I have been quite unwell myself for a day or two sore throat & general debility - took last night blue mass.⁶

Mr Gordon⁷ here to night, Willie⁸ quite sick

¹ James Medley and Daniel Dyer in 1858 had opened a tavern/ hotel in the venerable Marlborough House, which had previously served as the Planters' Bank House in Upper Marlborough. The "Medley" Hotel became a popular gathering and dining place in the County Seat.

² The Burroughs' three eldest daughters were Ella (b. 1853), Susan (b. 1857), and Caroline (b. 1859).

³ Emanuel, the carpenter, has not yet been identified, but I'm working on it . . .

⁴ Dr. John M.S. Maccubbin lived in Nottingham, and served as the family doctor for many Croom families.

⁵ Mary Ellen Posey Burroughs, wife of John William Burroughs

⁶ A popular medication, used for many ailments during the 19th century, composed of licorice, honey, and dangerously high amounts of mercury.

⁷ Samuel Gordon was the Rector at the Burroughs' church, St. Thomas' at Croom. He often visited and stayed with the Burroughs family at Waverly.

⁸ John William, always called Willie, was born in 1861.

Burroughs diary - cont

(2)

Monday Dec 7th 1863 Willie was very ill all night had four convulsions from something he has eaten. Sent for Dr Mac in the night. He bled him this morning. Mr Gordon left after breakfast - Dr came 2nd time to day -

Tues. Wed. Thurs. Frid. 8th. 9th. 10th. 11th 1863

Willie still quite sick. Dr comes every day, I have not had my clothes off since he was taken Sunday afternoon

To William \$1.00

Tuesday 15th Dec. 1863

Clear & warm - Willie has been very sick, indeed ill, all the week. Dr to see him every day except yesterday he was here to day - Willie is better to day.⁹ Kate¹⁰ came down to day to spend Christmas with us.

To Mollie the other day \$5.00

Frank .50

Thursday, Dec. 17th 1863

Rain all day, Killed my hogs this morning & had a very bad day. Pa's hands came over finished by day break. Killed 31, brought them to the house & gutted them here -

Pa's Charles tobacco .50

Dorsett's Len .50 Jim .50 help to kill hogs

Friday Dec. 18th 1863

Cloudy and cooler, prospect of clear weather - Cut up and salted away my hogs.

Saturday, Dec 19th 1863

Very cold to night. I think the coldest night we have had - Put up the field horses first night

Sunday Dec 27th 1863

Christmas day has passed and gone again with many joys and sorrows. Children had a beautiful Christmas tree. Christmas day I and Dick¹¹ went to Church. Mr Gordon's cold & and cold church prevented him from having full service. Filled in ice house yesterday.

Since last day noted - To Mollie for Christmas things \$25.00

To Hands Christmas eve \$5.00

To Hands getting ice yesterday \$25.00

Wednesday Dec 30th 1863

We have had a thaw & rain. Clear & warm to day. I am so busy having no overseer, when I come in at night am so tired I find it impossible to keep up my journal with regularity. Kate left us yesterday after a visit of two weeks. To Mollie \$10.00

⁹ Willie apparently recovered from this illness, but died within the next year, before reaching the age of 4.

¹⁰ Probably Catherine Posey Busey, Mollie Burroughs' sister

¹¹ Richard, second child of John and Mary Burroughs, was born in 1855.