

The Carrolls and Summer Resorts in the 19th Century

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William Calderhead in his history of DACOR Bacon House states that the Carrolls used to “escape each summer to Maryland’s Eastern Shore.” His source is a private conversation he had with an officer of the Supreme Court.¹ The tale he was told was that a justice of the Court once spotted the Carrolls’ carriage in front of “a fashionable beachfront social club.” When told it belonged to William Carroll, he reportedly said, “Perhaps I should change jobs with him; he obviously earns more money than I do.” As far as my research can determine, the Carrolls never had a home on the eastern shore, but they often summered outside Washington during the months of June to September and may well have spent time at one of the resorts along Maryland’s Chesapeake coast, but they more likely ventured to other fashionable resorts in the mountains of Maryland and beyond.

Berkeley Springs, Virginia, 1852

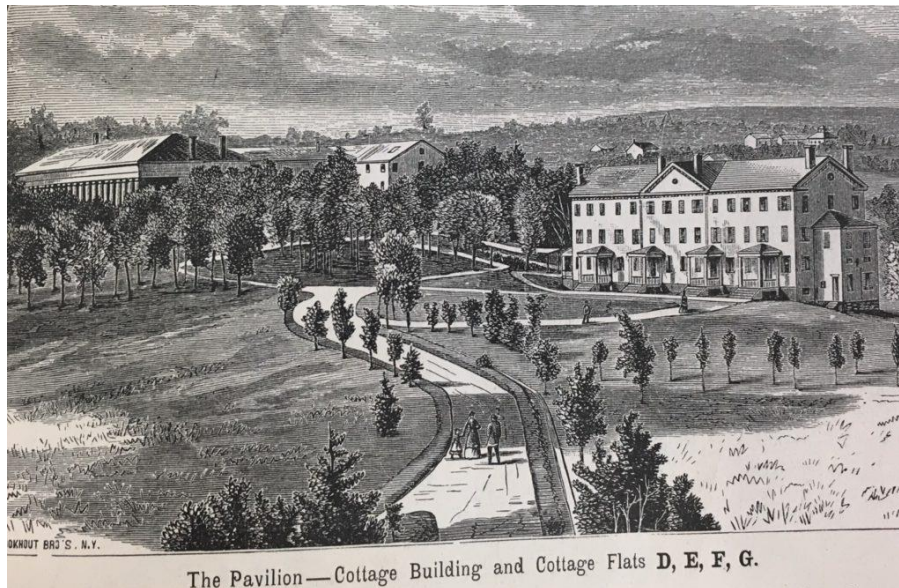
During the pre-Civil War period – during the life of William Thomas Carroll who died in 1863 – the Carrolls were known to have spent time during the summer in Berkeley Springs, Virginia. In 1852, they accompanied their friends President and Mrs. Millard Fillmore to Berkeley Springs, a resort in the panhandle area of western Virginia that had been popular since the eighteenth century.² Sally enjoyed the facilities there and returned to them in her old age.³

St Catherine’s, Ontario, 1860

William may have benefited from the mineral springs of Berkeley Springs for his bodily ailments. He also sought treatment for illness – which has not yet been identified – at other resorts with mineral waters. One was St. Catherine’s near Niagara Falls, which he went to in 1860 while the family was visiting their son Sprigg at West Point.⁴ It, too, had waters that were considered restorative. In a letter to his father at this time, Sprigg wrote, “We all hope that St. Catherine’s is fulfilling your most sanguine expectations and that its effects will prevent any attack during the coming year.”⁵

Sharon Springs, New York, 1863

Also known for its springs with high concentrations of sulfur, magnesia and salt irons, which was said to be excellent for diseases of the respiratory organs, the family may have gone there in 1863 for William’s health, but in fact he could not make it and stayed behind in Washington.



Source: Fugitive Leaves, a blog of the Historical Medical Library of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia:
<https://histmed.collegeofphysicians.org/travel-tuesday-10/>

They were still there on July 13, when William, at home, unexpectedly died. They family rushed back to Washington for his funeral and subsequent interment in the Carroll family mausoleum in Oak Hill Cemetery. His sons and son-in-law, posted on various fronts during the Civil War, were given leave to return for the services.

Newport, Rhode Island, 1848, 1867

By the 1840s, Newport had already emerged as a resort for the privileged classes.⁶ The Carrolls went there to stay in a cottage, hotel or with friends in 1848,⁷ probably going by train to New



Lithograph of the U. S. S. Metropolis, one of the steamships plying the route between New York City and Boston via Newport in 1848.⁸

York and from there by boat to Newport. The Fall River Line began in 1847 to take wealthy visitors from Manhattan to Newport on three steamers in service.⁹ After William's death, Sally Carroll returned to Newport in the summer and fall of 1867, and stayed at one of Mrs. DeBlois' cottages on Catherine Street, according to a newspaper report.¹⁰ It was there that her daughter Sally Griffin joined her after the sudden and traumatic death of her husband and young son to yellow fever in September 1867.¹¹ Sally Carroll made life long friends from her visits to Newport. Among them were Mrs. William Lamont Wheeler, once a leading literary figure in Newport, and later an author of several novels, including one that was set in Washington, DC, which she visited often, staying with Mrs. Carroll or with another great friend, Sue Field, the wife of Associate Justice Stephen Field, and another great Washington hostess.¹²

Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1882

Mrs. Carroll's son, Gen. S. Sprigg Carroll, and his family went to Atlantic City for the summer in 1882, and Mrs. Carroll joined them, staying at the famous Brighton Hotel.¹³ Later that summer she continued her summer sojourn outside Washington by staying for shorter periods at Bedford Springs, in Pennsylvania, before continuing closer to Washington with what might have been a nostalgic stay at Berkeley Springs.¹⁴ Bedford Springs has hosted many notables, including presidents, from Washington.



Brighton Hotel, Atlantic City, where Mrs. Carroll stayed in 1882.
Her son and his family were also in Atlantic City that year.



Bedford Springs, Pa, where many presidents have stayed.
Buchanan made it his summer White House during his presidential years, 1857-1861.

Deer Park, Maryland, 1886-1894

The resort at Deer Park was developed in the 1870s, and it soon became very popular with the leisured classes in Washington and Baltimore. After Sally Griffin Esterhazy returned from Europe to live with her mother, the “countess” often spent the hot and humid summer months at Deer Park, which by then had been linked by rail to Washington. In addition to the main hotel,



Deer Park Hotel, Main House, 1892, a favorite resort of Washingtonians and Baltimoreans in the latter part of the 19th century. Grover Cleveland spent his honeymoon there. Image: Wikipedia.

wealthy patrons also built “cottages” nearby. Sally usually went with her mother, while she was alive, and/or her sister, Carrie, when she was staying with them. Their party would include her own maid and Delia Noonan, the Irish-born woman who took care of her mother and lived with them on F Street. The train trip from Washington took less than five hours. The mountain air – Deer Park is about 2,300 feet in elevation – was always refreshing.

Sally would book five rooms for the duration of their stay, usually July and August, in the old hotel to accommodate her party and the servants. As her mother became increasingly frail, Sally had to take extraordinary measures to get her out of the F Street house and up into the mountains. During a trip in 1894, as she related the tale to her sister Alida Carroll Brown, Mrs. Carroll had to be lifted out of the railway carriage and into a horse-drawn carriage to get her to the Deer Park Hotel. Meals were brought to her in her room so she didn’t have to go downstairs to the dining room, and since Mrs. Carroll’s rooms were located in the old part of the hotel, she could hear from the “piazza” the music played by the hotel band in the bandshell in the park below.¹⁵ Sally Esterhazy meanwhile maintained a full social calendar at the resort, describing in letters to Alida whom she was meeting and having dinner with.¹⁶

¹ Alexander Sevas, 17th Clerk of the Supreme Court: Calderhead, *DACOR Bacon House*, 54, and footnote 9.

² *Washington Republic*, September 9, 1852, p. 3.

³ She returned in 1882: *Sunday Herald and Washington National Intelligencer*, September 24, 1882.

⁴ St. Catherine’s as a resort: <https://stcatharinesmuseumblog.com/2021/07/29/remembering-the-welland-house/>; Maine Historical Society, John Marshall Brown Papers, Box 18A, Folder 2, Caroline Carroll to William Thomas Carroll, started August 21, posted September 6, 1860;

⁵ John Marshall Brown Papers, Box 18A, Folder 2, Lt. SS (Sprigg) Carroll to William Thomas Carroll, West Point, August 28, 1860

⁶ E. Cope Harrison and Rosemary F. Carroll, (2005) "Newport’s Summer Colony, 1830-1860," *Newport History: Journal of the Newport Historical Society*, vol. 74: 253 (2005).

⁷ John Marshall Brown Papers, Box 28A, folder 20, Charles H. Carroll to William T. Carroll, letter dated September 14, 1848.

⁸ Image: <https://oldprintshop.com/product/86806?inventoryno=47580>.

⁹ <https://www.sailsinc.org/durfee/fallriverlinebegan.pdf>.

¹⁰ “Cottages and Villas Rented for the season of 1867: Mrs. W. T. Carroll, Mrs. DeBlois’ Cottage, Catherine Street.” *Newport Mercury*, July 6, 1867, p. 2. IN 1860, Edward Shippen Willing of Philadelphia, the father of the future Mrs. John Jacob Astor IV, had stayed there in 1860, joining the very crowded summer season at Newport that year: *New York Times*, June 20, 1860, p. 10.

¹¹ (Galveston, Texas) *Flakes Bulletin*, October 16, 1867, 8.

¹² *Sunday Herald and Weekly National Intelligencer*, April 26, 1885, p. 2. Mrs. Wheeler’s book set in Washington and dedicated to Mrs. Field: *A Washington Symphony* (New York: Putnam’s, 1893).

¹³ July 16, 1882, *Sunday Herald and Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 2.

¹⁴ See source in footnote 3 above.

¹⁵ John Marshall Brown Papers, Box 26A, Folder 5, Sarah Esterhazy to Alida Brown, August 1892.

¹⁶ John Marshall Brown Papers, Box 28A, Folder 5, letter dated Deer Park, August 27th: Back from dinner with Mrs. Beale; attended the Devonne christening (Countess Divonne, daughter of Mrs. Audenreid); lunch with Mrs. MacLean.