

George Stuart Fitzhugh's 1908 attempt to marry ten year old Lulu Virginia Frazier

Jenny Smith, February 2024

Introduction: In August 1908, 67-year old Reverend George Stuart Hayward Fitzhugh attempted to marry a 10-year old girl, Lulu Virginia Frazier. Shortly after receiving a marriage license to wed the child, George had a heart attack, and a frantic search to determine whether he'd married the child ensued. The press reported the series of events dramatically all over the United States, while staking out George's home – even interviewing the child while she played outside and harassing the minister's children who'd left school and work about the area to come in and help.

Fitzhugh family members dubbed the minister "Crazy George" because of the incident. While collecting newspaper clippings on the event, I discovered far more than had been shared in family stories. The newly uncovered information does not excuse George's actions, but it does explain George's motivations. It is important to note that while the facts seem to show that George Fitzhugh wanted to use Lulu for his own gain (care in his old age), nothing seems to indicate that George was motivated by perversion or sexual deviancy.

The story is a dramatic one that starts with a heroic female missionary, an embarrassing revelation about the General Robert E. Lee family, a trip to one of the first sanitariums in the United States, and ends with a tragic murder.

The People

According to one contemporary press report, the Reverend Doctor George Stuart Hayward Fitzhugh (1844-1925) was "a man of culture and has had some prominent charges in the thirty-seven years he has been a minister. He was born in Port Royal, Virginia, and is a son of George Fitzhugh¹, who was a well-known writer. In his youth he was a brilliant scholar. After finishing at the Episcopal Seminary at Alexandria, Virginia, he took a three-year course at the Hartford Theological Seminary. He had several prominent charges in southern Florida where he owns a large plantation."² George was living on Church Street³ in Curtis Bay, Maryland, with his daughter Angelina "Lena" Fitzhugh in 1908 at the "pretty ivy-covered brick parsonage"⁴ ...

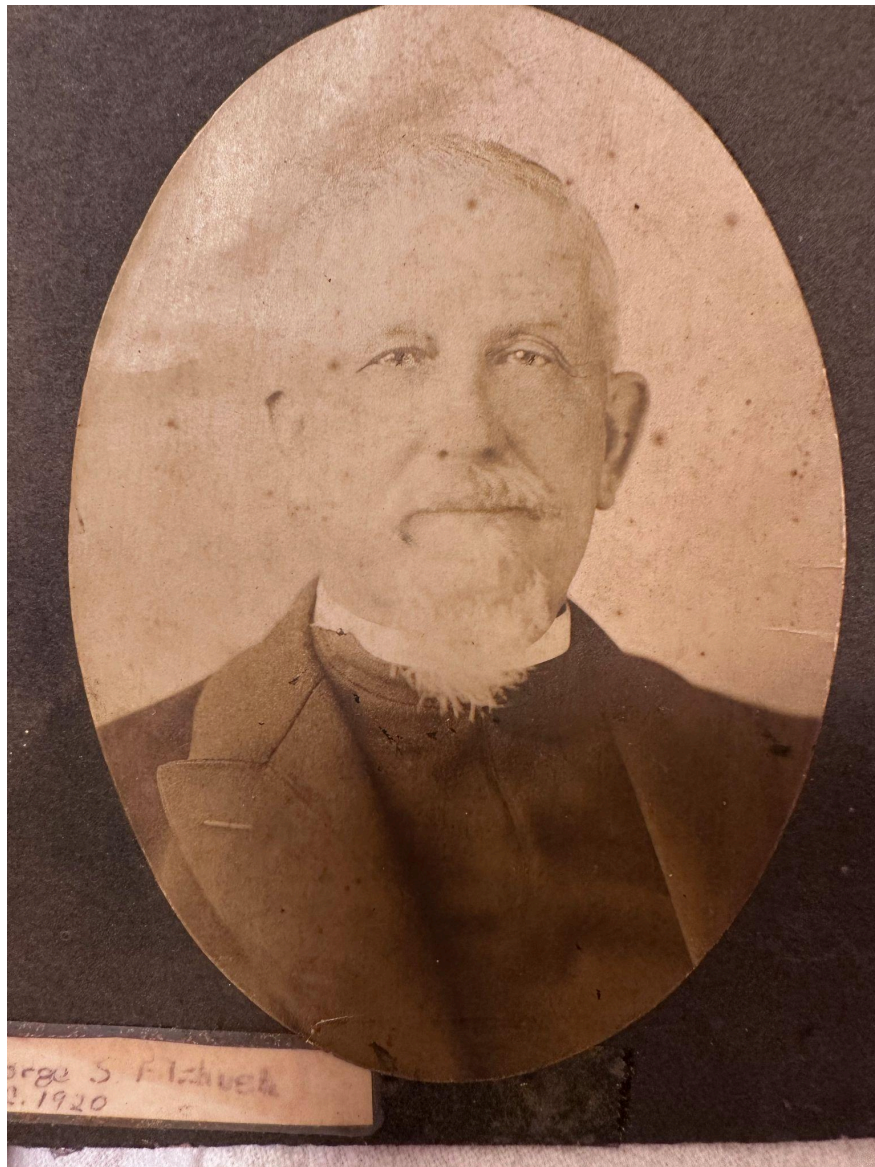
¹ George Fitzhugh (1806-1881) was the first American sociologist, and was the first person to use the word 'sociology' in a book title. His most famous work, *Sociology of the South*, was an attempt to justify slavery using science and logical argument. George's wife – George's mother – was Mary Brockenbrough Fitzhugh (1806-1877).

² Dying Minister Would Wed Child: Dr Fitzhugh explains his queer plans, *Burlington Daily News*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 2

³ Would Marry Child, *Evening star*, Washington, District of Columbia, Aug 21, 1908, Page 15

⁴ St Barnabas Episcopal, Curtis Bay, Maryland

overlooking the Patapsco River”⁵. George’s wife, Angeline Purnell Fitzhugh, had died three years earlier in 1905.



Reverend George S Fitzhugh, about 1920, family photo, Jenny Smith

Lulu Virginia Frazier (1898-1931) was a 10 year old girl living with her mother Martha⁶ Frazier at or near Mission Home, Virginia, Albemarle County, perhaps on what was then called Frazier

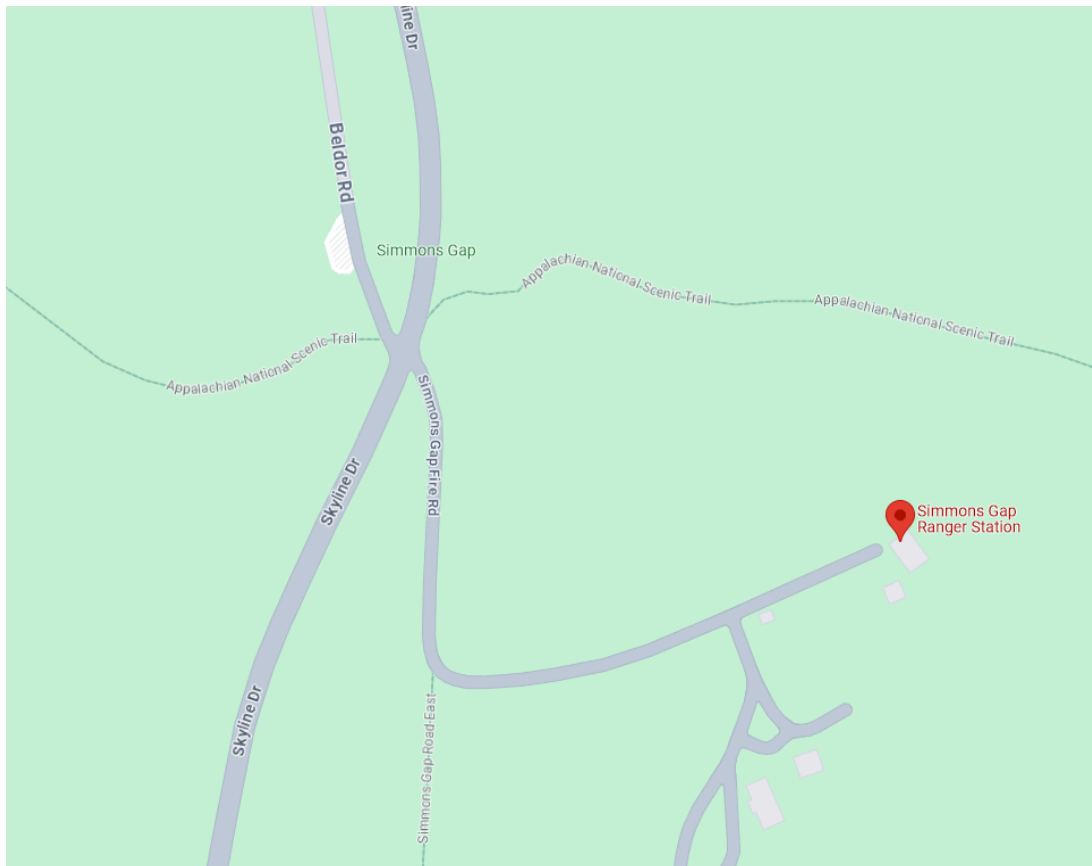
⁵ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁶ No father is mentioned in any reporting about this incident, but a stepfather is mentioned in one article. Lulu later became part of the Shifflett family when she married Thomas V. Shifflett. Their genealogy reports Lulu’s father was a Noah Herring and that Noah never married Martha Frazier.
https://www.shifflett-klein.com/Lula_Shifflett_murder.htm

Mountain⁷. Lulu's father was dead, and her illiterate mother was trying to raise her family of eleven children in difficult circumstances in the Shenandoah mountains.⁸

The Stage

Beginning about 1890, an Episcopalian minister, Archdeacon Neve⁹, began working in the area around Albemarle County and was informed by locals of a severely disadvantaged area. This area, Simmons Gap (later Mission Home), is near Shifflett's Hollow and Frazier Mountain high up in what is now Shenandoah National Park on the Greene-Rockingham County line, about 3 miles north of the Albemarle County line.

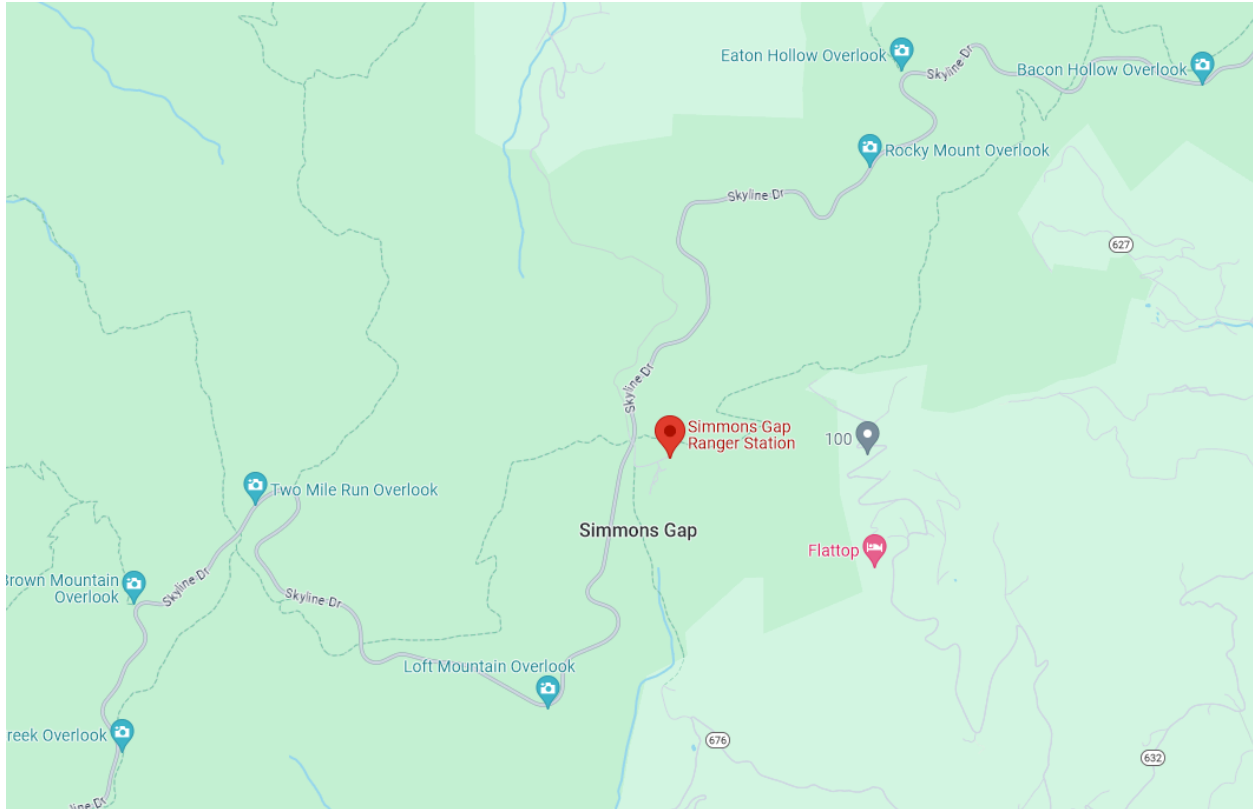


The pin marked "Simmons Gap Ranger Station" is site where the Episcopalian mission was. Today's Simmons Gap Ranger Station is the schoolhouse built in 1925. Google Maps

⁷ Also called Lost Mountain, and now called Loft Mountain

⁸ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁹ Archdeacon Neve, came to the United States from his native England shortly after his graduation from Oxford and his ordination as an Episcopal priest. Expressing a desire to do his work perhaps in Canada or some other locale outside of England, Neve had been made aware of a request for a rector that had been sent to his superiors in England from a tiny church in Ivy, Virginia. Neve applied, and was accepted.



Simmons Gap Ranger Station is located between Rocky Mount Overlook and Loft Mountain Overlook, across from a parking area on Beldor Road, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail Trailhead Parking Area. Google Maps

Approximately 175 people lived in this area, known for “moonshine operations, backwoods justice. and suspicion towards strangers”¹⁰. Apparently only two of these mountain folk knew how to read. Neve tried to help the mountain families but he made little progress. Some locals “were pessimistic and thought it was a waste of time trying to cure sinful behaviors like drinking and licentiousness among people that they viewed as not only ignorant but also primitive and untamed.”¹¹

Undaunted, Neve envisioned bringing healthcare, education, and religion to these mountain folk, beginning with a mission to be built at Simmons Gap¹². A family offered the use of two

¹⁰ 52 Ancestors: POOR MAN Caring For the Poor; __, Wendy; *Jollet, etc Blogspot.com*; Tuesday, November 12, 2019; <https://jollettetc.blogspot.com/2019/11/52-ancestors-poor-man-caring-for-poor.html>

¹¹ 52 Ancestors: POOR MAN Caring For the Poor; __, Wendy; *Jollet, etc Blogspot.com*; Tuesday, November 12, 2019; <https://jollettetc.blogspot.com/2019/11/52-ancestors-poor-man-caring-for-poor.html>

¹² Secrets of the Blue Ridge: Aunt America and Uncle Billy - Life in Simmons Gap; *Crozette Gazette*, August 7, 2014, <https://www.crozetgazette.com/2014/08/07/secrets-of-the-blue-ridge-aunt-america-uncle-billy-and-life-in-simmons-gap/>

empty cabins, one for a school and the other to house a teacher¹³, and so Neve began the hunt for a suitable teacher in 1900. Neve advertised in *The Southern Churchman*, providing full disclosure about the isolation and lack of amenities. He expected men to apply for the strenuous mission. Instead 15 women came forward. From these, 25-year old Angeline “Lena” Fitzhugh (1875-1947), daughter of the Reverend George S. Fitzhugh of Maryland, was selected, becoming the first of many women and men who taught disadvantaged mountain children at Neve’s mission schools.¹⁴



Angeline “Lena” Fitzhugh, undated family photo, Jenny Smith

In November 1900, Neve presented Lena to his congregation at Ivy, and then the two traveled to Simmons Gap to assess the situation. Lena soon discovered there was no building in which to teach the previously unschooled mountain children, and her housing was to be a decrepit log cabin with missing chinking and no ready wood supply.¹⁵

¹³ 52 Ancestors: POOR MAN Caring For the Poor; __, Wendy; *Jollet, etc Blogspot.com*; Tuesday, November 12, 2019; <https://jollettetc.blogspot.com/2019/11/52-ancestors-poor-man-caring-for-poor.html>

¹⁴ 52 Ancestors: POOR MAN Caring For the Poor; __, Wendy; *Jollet, etc Blogspot.com*; Tuesday, November 12, 2019; <https://jollettetc.blogspot.com/2019/11/52-ancestors-poor-man-caring-for-poor.html>

¹⁵ Secrets of the Blue Ridge: Children’s Day at the Mountain Mission, Phil James. *Crozet Gazette*, December 7, 2013, <https://www.crozetgazette.com/2013/12/07/secrets-of-the-blue-ridge-childrens-day-at-the-mountain-mission/>

Determined to help the disadvantaged children, Lena bravely chose to stay. Neve later wrote that he “felt like he had just been to a funeral when he left [Lena] there by herself.”¹⁶

Locals America and Billy Garrison learned that the Archdeacon left Lena alone on the cold mountain. They went to check on Lena and found her struggling to start a fire on the cold stone hearth of the decrepit cabin. The couple directed her to gather her few belongings and return home with them.¹⁷ Money was raised, and a multipurpose building was erected at Simmon’s Gap. Lena taught school in this frame building, and a sturdy stone schoolhouse was built later in 1925¹⁸.

¹⁶ Secrets of the Blue Ridge: Children’s Day at the Mountain Mission, Phil James. *Crozet Gazette*, December 7, 2013, <https://www.crozetgazette.com/2013/12/07/secrets-of-the-blue-ridge-childrens-day-at-the-mountain-mission/>

¹⁷ Secrets of the Blue Ridge: Aunt America, Uncle Billy and Life in Simmons Gap, Phil James, *Crozet Gazette*, August 7, 2014, <https://www.crozetgazette.com/2014/08/07/secrets-of-the-blue-ridge-aunt-america-uncle-billy-and-life-in-simmons-gap/>

¹⁸ This 1925 schoolhouse is still standing today and is currently being used as a ranger station for Shenandoah National Park. National Park Service Cultural Landscapes Inventory Simmons Gap Shenandoah National Park, 2011. <http://npshistory.com/publications/shen/cli-simmons-gap.pdf>



Figure 1. An undated image of the Simmons Gap school, constructed in the early 1900s. Angeline Fitzhugh taught local children in this schoolhouse, which was also used occasionally as a church (SHEN Archives).

Image with caption from National Park Service Cultural Landscapes Inventory Simmons Gap Shenandoah National Park, 2011. <http://npshistory.com/publications/shen/cli-simmons-gap.pdf>

Lena Fitzhugh stayed with the mission for three years until 1903¹⁹, beginning an important effort to educate the disadvantaged children of Simmon's Gap. The entire Fitzhugh family remained committed to helping the poor and stayed in contact with the Mission during subsequent years, with Lena's father, George, preaching occasionally. In fact, it was reported the tiny church, called Holy Innocents, was under the direction of Lena's brother, George's son,²⁰ in 1908. Lena's brother, Edward H. Fitzhugh (1878-1955), lived in Greene

¹⁹ Secrets of the Blue Ridge: Aunt America, Uncle Billy and Life in Simmons Gap, Phil James, *Crozet Gazette*, August 7, 2014, <https://www.crozetgazette.com/2014/08/07/secrets-of-the-blue-ridge-aunt-america-uncle-billy-and-life-in-simmons-gap/>

²⁰ Perhaps Edward Hardcastle Fitzhugh, as George Collier Fitzhugh was a lawyer in Richmond and Lee Brockenbrough Fitzhugh was in law school at UVA in 1908; I have not independently verified this information, but the 1910 census does show Edward living with his new wife and infant daughter in

County and married a mountain girl, Maggie Shifflett in 1909, showing how committed the Fitzhughs were to both loving and rescuing the mountain people.



Holy Innocent's Church, Simmons Gap, built 1906²¹ - image from <https://www.blueridgeheritageproject.com/about-3>

The work among these disadvantaged people was troubling and exhausting. It was in these circumstances, while visiting Mission Home sometime in early 1908, that the Reverend George Fitzhugh first saw the little 10-year old mountain girl, Lulu Virginia Frazier.

George Meets Lulu

Greene Co, Virginia in 1910. See Would Marry Child, *Evening star*, Washington, District of Columbia, Aug 21, 1908, Page 15.

²¹ National Park Service Cultural Landscapes Inventory Simmons Gap Shenandoah National Park, 2011. <http://npshistory.com/publications/shen/cli-simmons-gap.pdf>

Sometime in 1908, perhaps the spring time, 67-year old George Fitzhugh was the rector of St. Barnabas's Protestant Episcopal Church of Curtis Bay, Maryland²². While visit preaching²³ at Simmons Gap where his daughter and son worked so tirelessly, George noticed Lulu. He spoke with Lulu after a church service and was impressed with the girl. George approached Lulu's mother, Martha Frazier, and offered to adopt Lulu. After initially declining, Lulu's mother consented for George to take Lulu with him back to Baltimore to be adopted.²⁴

In a statement to the press describing these events, George said he "loved [Lulu] since the moment I laid eyes on her," and "thought of bringing her to my home [in Maryland] and making her my heiress". His stated plan was to "send her to school for six years and at the end of that time she could come home and take charge of my household."²⁵

George and Lulu then returned to Maryland to the rectory where he lived with his daughter Lena. George told Lena he intended to take care of the child, and so Lena accepted Lulu into the family and did everything possible for her comfort²⁶. George took especial care of Lulu, and later "it was said that [George] took more interest in the child than he did his own children."²⁷

Week of August 10, 1908

Unbeknownst to his family, George went to W. W. L. Bissel, clerk of the Common Courts in Ellicott City, Maryland, to ask for a marriage license²⁸. George explained to the clerks he was old and wanted to make the girl his heir through marriage. Bissel refused to offer the license because Lulu was so young but said he'd issue the license if George returned with written permission from the girl's parents and signatures of two reliable witnesses. George left saying he'd get the required documents.²⁹

²² December and May, *The Tennessean*, 23 Aug 1908, Page 20

²³ Would Marry Child, *Evening star*, Washington, District of Columbia, Aug 21, 1908, Page 15

²⁴ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

²⁵ Dying Minister Would Wed Child: Dr Fitzhugh explains his queer plans, *Burlington Daily News*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 2

²⁶ December and May, *The Franklin Repository*, 26 Aug 1908, Page 5

²⁷ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

²⁸ In 1908, Maryland males were required to be over age twenty one and females over sixteen This later changed to twenty one and eighteen and then eighteen and sixteen. I cannot find where there was a minimum age for marriage when parental consent had been provided. See this Historical Background Information on Marriage from Maryland.gov

<https://guide.msa.maryland.gov/pages/viewer.aspx?page=marriage-historical-background>

²⁹ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

George immediately contacted Lulu's mother, Martha Frazier, to seek the required documents. It "is said" the mother was initially horrified to think of the marriage of her 10-year old daughter, but she did provide written consent and the signatures of reliable witnesses.^{30 31}

It was later reported that Mr. Deupert, clerk of the Court of Common Pleas in Baltimore, Maryland, had received correspondence from George as early as April 22, 1908³², saying he was interested in the requirements for a marriage license for a man of his age and a child of age ten. Deupert told George he would not even consider such an application without affidavits from the girl's parents, and even then, he would not issue the license without an order from the judges of the Supreme Bench. George persisted, and Deupert still refused to issue a license, even when George eventually appeared in person, explaining that he wanted to marry the girl so that she might receive his pension after his death.³³

Tuesday, August 19, 1908

On Tuesday, August 19, 1908, George reached out to his friend, the Reverend Snedegar, pastor of the nearby Curtis Bay Methodist Episcopal Church, and told the Reverend he expected to marry in the morning and asked the Reverend to meet him at the courthouse at 10am to perform the ceremony without mentioning anything about the intended bride. George's friend the Reverend happily agreed to the meeting.³⁴

Early Tuesday evening, George and Lulu snuck out of their Curtis Bay home and went to Ellicott City, Maryland, where they checked into the Hotel Howard as "Rev. George Fitzhugh and Daughter"³⁵.

³⁰ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

³¹ Permit me space for a little speculation here. If Martha Frazier was indeed "horrified" by George's request to marry her 10-year old daughter, she did not remain so for long, as the paperwork was received, completed with the required signatures, sent back to Baltimore, and received in less than seven days of her receiving George's request. Multiple articles I've read this week and an interview with my father show that the backwoods people of Simmon's gap were... how to say it... not bounded by the rules of polite or pious society. Years ago my aunt Sally Lou Fitzhugh speculated that the mother may have thought as George's heir or wife, her young daughter would receive George's Sanibel Island, Florida, property. Martha may have wanted property, and George said he wanted someone to care for him. The behavior here is self-serving on all accounts, and poor little Lulu was used to serve the needs of adults around her without being able to understand the significance of these events.

³² There is a sad irony at play here. In 1898, George fought against the elopement and marriage of his daughter Mary Elizabeth Fitzhugh to William Franklin Padgett, and actually had Mary arrested for marrying Mr. Padgett. George believed then that his own daughter was too young to marry – at age 17. See Laughs at Lawyers, *The Baltimore Sun* February 19, 1898, and several similar articles in the Denton Journal about these dates. This indicates just how terribly confused he was ten years later and after the death of his wife.

³³ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

³⁴ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

³⁵ Would Marry Child, *Evening star*, Washington, District of Columbia, Aug 21, 1908, Page 15



Howard House Hotel, Ellicott City, 1919. Today the hotel has been made into luxury apartments. Image from <https://reedbrothersdodgehistory.com/2018/06/21/then-now-howard-house-hotel-ellicott-city/>

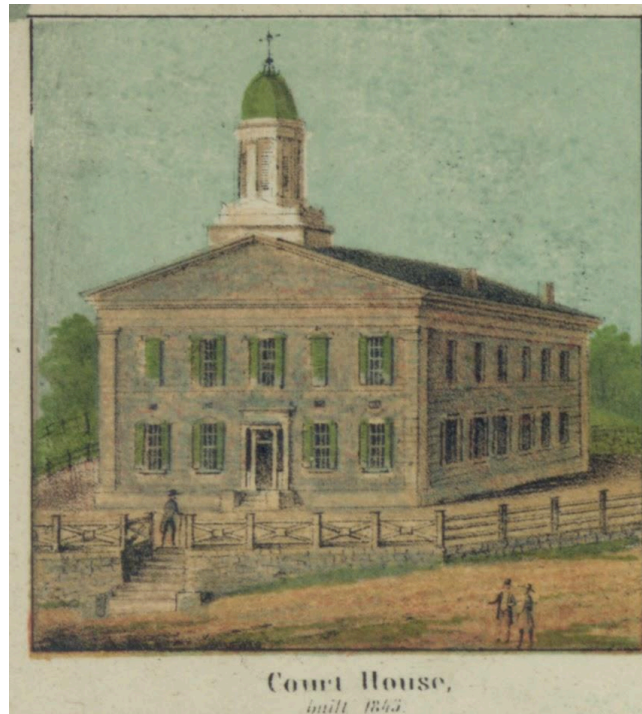
Lena Fitzhugh became alarmed that evening when she realized Lulu was missing, and she looked all over the house and yard without locating the young girl. When it became dark and Lulu wasn't home, Lena notified several neighbors, who organized a search party. There was a wood nearby and several dangerous characters in the neighborhood, and everyone was afraid for little Lulu's safety. When George also did not return that evening, Lena realized he must have taken Lulu with him.³⁶

Wednesday, August 20, 1908

Before 10am Wednesday morning, George and Lulu returned to the courthouse at Ellicott City. George presented the requested documents and was issued the marriage license, which was

³⁶ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

duly recorded. Mr Bisell, the clerk who had refused to give George and Lulu a marriage license the previous week, lived some distance from the office and was not present to stop the license from being issued³⁷.



Ellicott City Courthouse, about 1845,

<http://historichomeshowardcounty.blogspot.com/2018/02/jail-and-courthouse-underground.html>

Reverend A. R. Snedegar appeared at the courthouse at 10am as agreed to wed George to his unknown bride³⁸. When he saw the girl, an amazed Snedegar wisely refused to perform the marriage³⁹, despite the license and letter showing consent of the girl's mother and stepfather.⁴⁰

Reverend Snedegar said George became indignant at his refusal and offered to pay Snedegar to perform the marriage out in the country in a carriage instead of at the courthouse. Snedegar refused. Snedegar told the press later he understood that George had asked other ministers to perform the ceremony but they also refused.⁴¹

George and Lulu remained away from the parsonage all afternoon, while Lena and the neighbors frantically searched for them. They finally arrived home about 6pm. It's unclear what discussion took place, but somehow Lena discovered that George had procured a marriage

³⁷ Later Bissel (or Cissel) said he told his office not to give the minister a license to marry the child if George returned to the office, but the clerks did not follow his instructions. To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

³⁸ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

³⁹ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁴⁰ Has Not Wed Girl of Ten, *Evening star*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 5

⁴¹ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

license to wed the child Lulu. George obstinately refused to say whether or not he'd married Lulu. Lena, "almost hysterical", asked her father why he'd be so foolish to marry a child, but George "only smiled and pressed the curls of the little girl who clung to his knee."⁴²

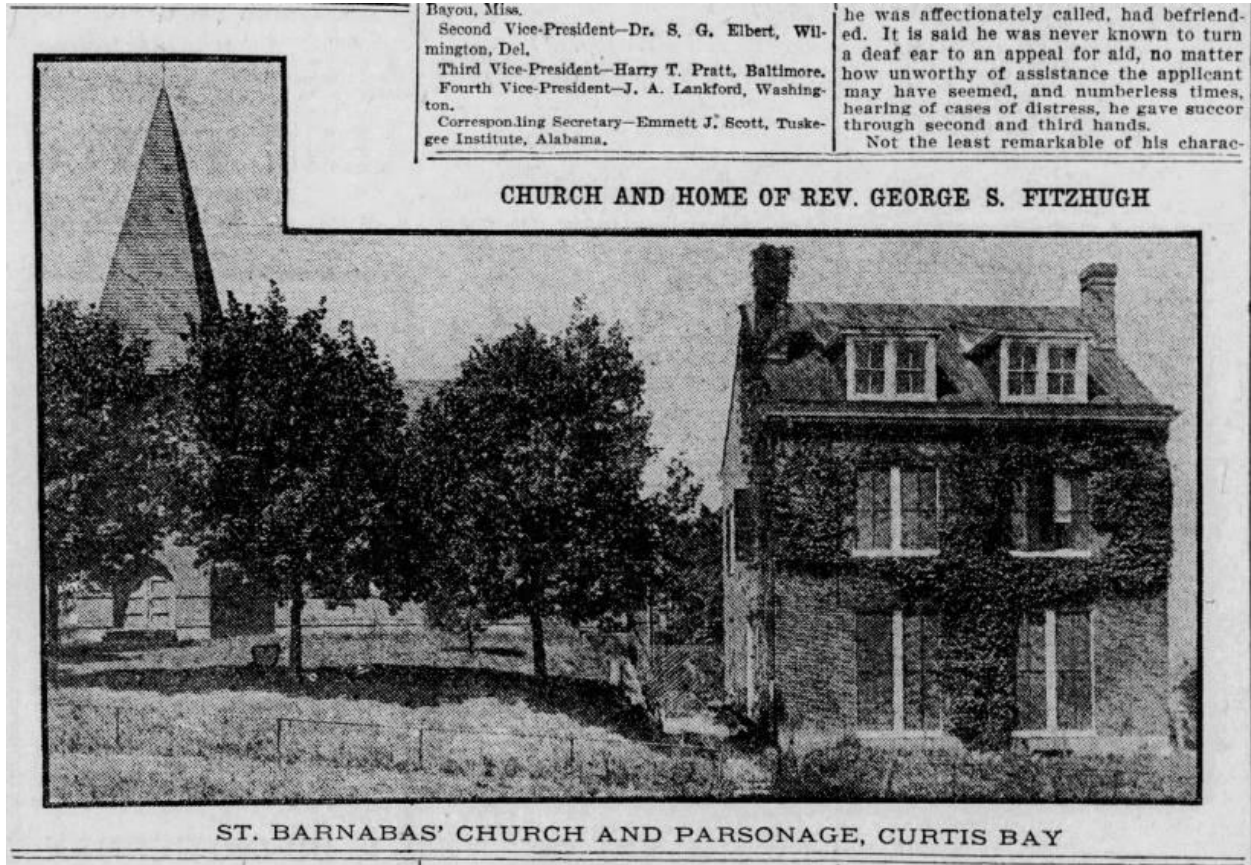


Image of St. Barnabas Church and Parsonage, Curtis Bay, MD, from *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 7

⁴² To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12 - Some of the reporting here seems to me like artistic license.



St Barnabas and George's home are still standing. They are now known as St Peter & Paul's Ukranian Church located at 1506 Church Street, Curtis Bay, Baltimore, Maryland. Google Street View

Just moments later, George began to shake, grew pale, and his head fell to his chest. When Lena returned from going to get her father some water, he was unconscious,⁴³ and Lena still did not know if her father had married the child!⁴⁴

Lena immediately contacted Doctor Thomas B. Horton, "one of the most popular and trusted men of Curtis Bay"⁴⁵ who administered to the now insensate George. Everyone feared George would die at any moment.⁴⁶

Frantic inquiries were made⁴⁷, but nobody knew for certain whether George had married Lulu for several days.

Thursday, August 20, 1908

George's son, George Collier Fitzhugh (1876-1921), arrived Thursday on a visit to his father and discovered to his shock that his father was attempting to marry a child and his sister was distraught⁴⁸.

⁴³ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁴⁴ Would Marry Child, *Evening star*, Washington, District of Columbia, Aug 21, 1908, Page 15

⁴⁵ Curtis Bay Once Aspired to Put Baltimore Out of Business, *The Baltimore Sun*, March 7, 1909, Page 15

⁴⁶ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁴⁷ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁴⁸ It's not clear whether George Collier was in Curtis Bay on a regular visit or if Lena had contacted him for help.

On Thursday, while delirious or “unconscious”, George “spoke feelingly of the girl”. George thought he would die soon, and his voice was faint. He repeatedly “asked that should he die the girl be looked after with the kindest care and respect”.⁴⁹ George’s concern over Lulu’s financial well-being continued throughout his convalescence.

Lulu reportedly took special interest in George’s illness and “hovered” near him.⁵⁰ Lulu wept most of the day, despite Lena’s efforts to comfort her⁵¹. Although Lulu was aware that Georgewas near death, she did not fully grasp what was happening around her⁵².

The family still didn’t know if George had married Lulu, so they contacted virtually all of the ministers in Ellicott City to find out if one had performed the ceremony. The responses were all negative⁵³.

George remained “unconscious” until the late hours of the night. He was not expected to recover⁵⁴.

Friday, August 21, 1908

George remained so ill that no one dared interrogate him heavily about his actions⁵⁵.

At some point on Friday George began regaining consciousness for brief moments⁵⁶. He issued a statement to the public explaining his actions. He said he “loved [Lulu] since the moment I laid eyes on her,” and “thought of bringing her to my home [in Maryland] and making her my heiress”. He stated that his plan was to “send her to school for six years and at the end of that time she could come home and take charge of my household.”⁵⁷

George explained he believed that his marriage license meant only the virtual adoption of the girl, and justified his actions by making the embarrassing but true claim that “the old William Fitzhugh, of Virginia, married Miss [Tucker], aged 11, and then sent her to school until she was

⁴⁹ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁵⁰ Wanted to Wed 10-year old; Goes to Asylum, *Arkansas Democrat*, 23 Aug 1908

⁵¹ Would Marry Child, *Evening star*, Washington, District of Columbia, Aug 21, 1908, Page 15

⁵² Would Marry Child, *Evening star*, Washington, District of Columbia, Aug 21, 1908, Page 15

⁵³ Would Marry Child, *Evening star*, Washington, District of Columbia, Aug 21, 1908, Page 15

⁵⁴ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁵⁵ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁵⁶ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁵⁷ Dying Minister Would Wed Child: Dr Fitzhugh explains his queer plans, *Burlington Daily News*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 2

18⁵⁸.” He explained that from this marriage all the Lees, including Robert E. Lee, are descended.⁵⁹

Another paper reported the statement thus:

“My procuring a license means only virtually an adoption of a very small child. By a technical marriage her state is greatly promoted, and she becomes my heir at my death.”

“Old William Fitzhugh of Eagle’s Nest, Virginia, married a Miss Tucker before she had completed her eleventh year, and kept her at school until she was sixteen years of age, and then she became his actual wife and the heir of his house.”

“From her are descended all of Gen. R. E. Lee’s children.”

While Mr Fitzhugh was writing his statement little Miss Frazier stood at the head of the bed and gently fanned him. The little girl seemed much interested in what was going on and Fitzhugh paused in his writing now and then to murmur that in case he should die he wanted the little one well cared for.

The clergyman’s friends are at a loss to account for his strange conduct. He was highly esteemed in the parish, was very charitable and did much to relieve the sufferings of poor people.⁶⁰

After explaining his actions, George gasped and lost consciousness again. Restoratives could not rouse him for any length of time, and Doctor Horton again told the press he believed George would not recover.⁶¹

Some of the clergymen and people may have initially demanded George be punished for his actions.⁶² but it seems that church leaders determined George was not in control of his faculties and did not try to punish him. Son George Collier tried to visit Bishop Paret today in regards to George’s actions, but the bishop was out of town. By this date George Collier already wanted his father placed in a hospital or sanitarium.⁶³

George Collier Fitzhugh was interviewed by the press some time Friday. He said:

⁵⁸ This is a factual incident. William Fitzhugh (1651-1701) did marry Sarah Tucker when she was 11 years old, and his best friend married her widowed mother. Both arrangements seem to have been for money. Historian Henry Fitzhugh has done extensive research to determine if little Sarah was ever “sent away” for school and has found none. See *The History of the Fitzhugh Family: In Two Volumes*, January 16, 2007, self published, by Dr Henry A. Fitzhugh.

⁵⁹ Preacher Shocks Them, Public Opinion, 22 Aug 1908, Page 6

⁶⁰ Has Not Wed Girl of Ten, *Evening Star*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 5

⁶¹ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁶² Preacher Shocks Them, Public Opinion, 22 Aug 1908, Page 6

⁶³ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

“My father has always been interested in children and he has made his home a regular orphanage.” he said. “From what I understand, all the children in the village congregate here and spend most of their time. They all seem to enjoy themselves playing around him and seem delighted in the interest he takes in them.”

“I could not conceive of his marrying one until I was told of it upon my arrival yesterday. It has certainly upset me, and my sister is almost at the point of breaking down. The strain on her, as well as upon myself, has been almost unbearable, and I am afraid it is going to result seriously. I hardly know what to do. I am needed at my business in Richmond, but I cannot leave my father in the condition he is in now.”

“I think the best place for the little girl is with her mother in Virginia. If it were possible I would take her there myself, but I cannot leave my sister here alone with my father under the present circumstances.”

“The case of the little girl is also an unfortunate one. Her father is dead and her mother, who cannot read nor write, lives in a little hut in a lonely part of Albemarle County. Her father was a poor mountaineer and when he died his family was left almost penniless. The mother was a hard working woman and often attended church where my father frequented at different times.”

“It was on one of his visits to the little church that he met the child and asked the mother to let him adopt her. He told about the advantages offered in a city and all the good it would do for her. The mother, thinking it was the best thing possible, consented, and that same evening she packed up her few clothes and left the little home.”

“To get to the nearest railroad station required a drive of about 20 miles across the mountains. Then several hour’s ride on the train and she was in Baltimore. The sights of the big city almost bewildered her at first and she was delighted with her new home. My father thinks there is nothing in the world like her, and his constant thought of her, with the other children, has caused him to become mentally unbalanced on the subject.”⁶⁴

Some time Friday evening, the family did not allow Lulu to be interviewed by the press, saying she’d already gone to bed, and informed reporters George might still die at any minute.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁶⁵ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

Saturday, August 22, 1908

On August 22, George's youngest son, Lee Brockenborough Fitzhugh (1884-1936) arrived from school at UVA and took the marriage license from George. The family told the press they would return the license to the issuing office in Ellicott City.⁶⁶

It appears that Friday or Saturday, reporters approached the house and found Lulu outside. These reporters said Lulu was playing in the yard, romping about and hiding from inquisitive strangers while sticking her tongue out and making faces at them playfully "like the little mountaineer that she is." She played with a little white cat and some children in the neighborhood.⁶⁷ When asked if she'd like to marry George, she "saucily" replied, "I don't care." Reporters wrote Lulu plainly had no idea how close she'd come to being married, nor did she under the significance of marriage.⁶⁸

When asked if she knew that she was going to become Dr Fitzhugh's wife, Lulu reportedly said, "All I know is that I went with him and had a good time. I want to go with him again because it is so nice riding on the street cars so far out in the country. He treated me so nice, too, and I would love to go with him again."⁶⁹

Also on Saturday, the Rev. G. Mosley Murray, a general missionary of the diocese, consulted with the family. During the absence of the bishop, Murray was over George's church, St. Barnabas.⁷⁰ Members of the family said they "believe that hard work for his parish temporarily unhinged" George's mind.⁷¹



⁶⁶ Old Man Would Marry a Child, *The Billings Gazette*, 23 Aug 1908, Page 1; Adding a bit of content, immediately following the front page news about George, the Billings Gazette noted that Wilbur Wright was unable to continue a flight to Billings because of high wind.

⁶⁷ Asylum for Rector, *The Baltimore Sun*, Aug 23, 1908, Page 12

⁶⁸ Intended Bride At Play, *The Baltimore Sun*, 22 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁶⁹ To Marry Girl of Ten, *The Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁷⁰ Minister Taken to Asylum, *The Baltimore Sun*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁷¹ December and May, *The Tennessean*, 23 Aug 1908, Page 20

Reverend George Mosely Murray (1853-1919) image from
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60237189/george-mosley-murray>

Sometime today George Collier Fitzhugh told the press “the future of his father has been arranged and that the idea of marriage had vanished from his parent’s mind.”⁷² This, however, proved to be wishful thinking.

Doctor Horton consulted with Doctor Frederick T. Robinson for two hours Saturday before determining that George should be sent to an asylum.⁷³

Sunday, August 23, 1908

No church services were held at the little church of St Barnabas while its rector, George, was incapacitated.⁷⁴ The church remained closed for some time until a new rector could be appointed.

The family remained distraught over George’s condition. George’s daughter Mary Padgett was very concerned over her father’s illness and the sensation created. Dr Horton declared that “Rev. Mr. Fitzhugh is a complete wreck physically and mentally, and that because of his age he will be fortunate if he recovers.”⁷⁵

The plan developed by the family and doctors was to transfer George to Spring Grove Sanitorium Sunday at 10:00 am⁷⁶ by ambulance. Despite George’s resistance, eventually Doctor Horton was able to persuade George to recuperate at storied Spring Grove Sanitorium, which is the second oldest psychiatric hospital in the United States.⁷⁷ Lee Fitzhugh, who was a law student at the University of Virginia⁷⁸, and George’s eldest son, George Collier, escorted the “tottering old man”⁷⁹ to Spring Grove⁸⁰ to be treated for “mental derangement”⁸¹.

⁷² Wanted to Wed 10-year old; Goes to Asylum, *Arkansas Democrat*, 23 Aug 1908

⁷³ Asylum for Rector, *The Baltimore Sun*, Aug 23, 1908, Page 12

⁷⁴ The St Barnabas Episcopal Church was still without a rector as late as March 1909, when a layperson was acting as reader. See Curtis Bay Once Aspired to Put Baltimore Out of Business, *The Baltimore Sun*, March 7, 1909, Page 15. See also Minister Taken to Asylum, *The Baltimore Sun*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁷⁵ Minister Taken to Asylum, *The Baltimore Sun*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁷⁶ Asylum for Rector, *The Baltimore Sun*, Aug 23, 1908, Page 12

⁷⁷ Dying Minister Would Wed Child: Dr Fitzhugh explains his queer plans, *Burlington Daily News*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 2

⁷⁸ Dying Minister Would Wed Child: Dr Fitzhugh explains his queer plans, *Burlington Daily News*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 2

⁷⁹ Fitzhugh Taken to Asylum, *Evening star*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁸⁰ Minister Taken to Asylum, *The Baltimore Sun*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁸¹ Aged Man Won’t Marry Young Girl; Deranged, *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 1

The scene as the “feeble and barely able to walk”⁸² George was taken to the sanitarium was described by the newspaper thus:

Looking years older than he did last week before his attack of heart trouble, and fully realizing that he was on his way to an asylum, the clergyman nearly collapsed from weakness as he was being helped into the ambulance.

Many of the neighbors had gathered when the ambulance approached the house, and by the time the old man was brought out there was a large crowd. When young Lee Fitzhugh raised his father up for a last look, hats were doffed. The scene was pathetic, as he had endeared himself to many in the little village by his acts of charity.

During the whole scene little Virginia Frazier was conspicuous by her absence. But her sobs could be heard through an open window as Miss Lena Fitzhugh tried to comfort her little charge.

When the proposition to go to an asylum was first broached to Fitzhugh by his physician, he violently opposed the idea and insisted he would not go, but the physician finally persuaded his patient that it would be far better to go to Spring Grove and be cured than to stay at home in his present condition.

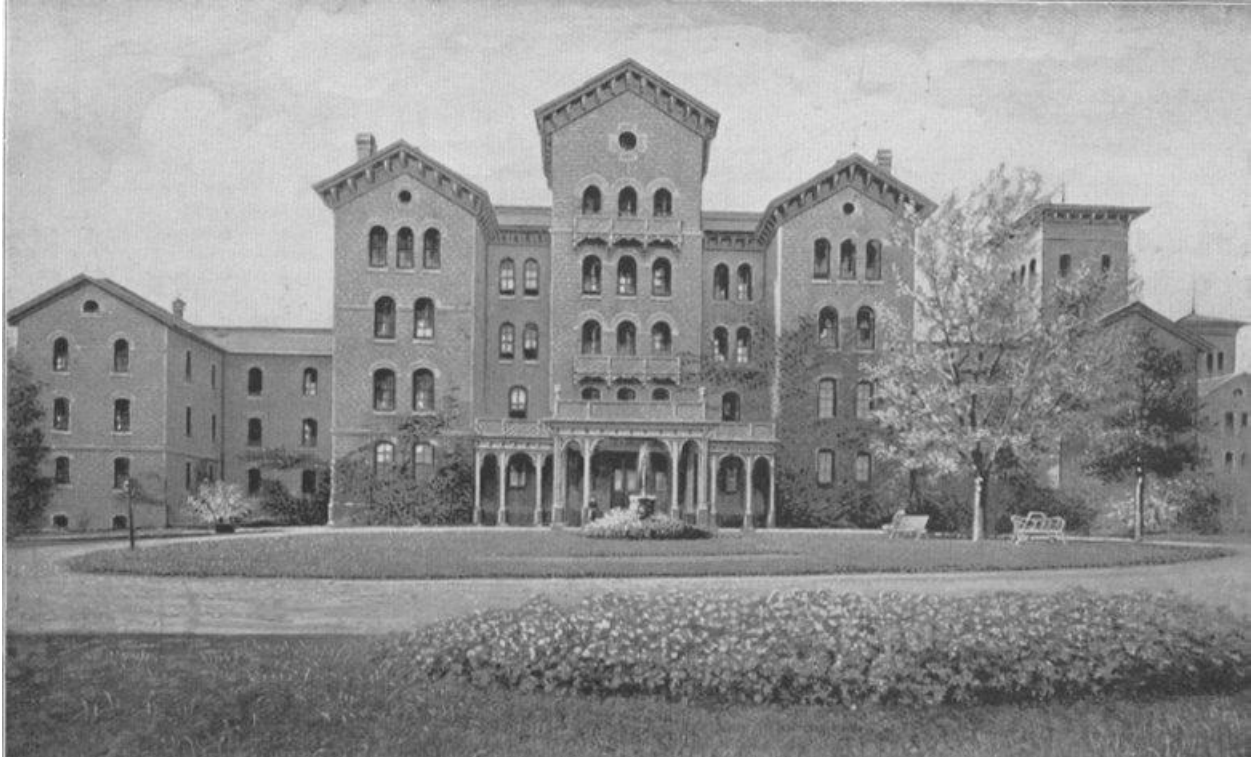
Dr. Horton tonight said he believed Fitzhugh would be much benefited by his staying in the asylum and would come out cured. He has been under a great mental strain for some time, and the fact that he has broken down should cause no surprise to anyone who knew him.⁸³

Despite all this, George continued to argue he was correct in seeking to marry the child. “A few hours before he was taken to the asylum [George] told Dr. Horton that he was willing to marry the child, and “would marry her yet if his family did not object”.”⁸⁴

⁸² Fitzhugh Taken to Asylum, *Evening star*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 14

⁸³ Pastor Fitzhugh Goes to Asylum, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 2

⁸⁴ Minister Taken to Asylum, *The Baltimore Sun*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 12



Spring Grove Asylum for the Insane is the second oldest mental hospital in the United States - <https://health.maryland.gov/springgrove/phototours/Pages/history.aspx>

Monday, August 24, 1908

Lulu was escorted back to her home in Albemarle County, Virginia, either by George's daughter Mary Padgett or Lena Fitzhugh, perhaps both⁸⁵. Lulu said she was happy to go back to live with her family, but she hoped to come back to the parsonage as she'd made friends among the village children.⁸⁶ George Collier returned to his home in Richmond, and Lee returned to school at UVA.

Also on Monday, George was evaluated and judged insane⁸⁷ by Spring Grove authorities⁸⁸.

Aftermath

George eventually did recover from his heart attack and whatever disorder that caused him to want to marry little Lulu Virginia Frazier. He lived for another 17 years and was well enough to get back to work preaching in Virginia. His children kept him close, and for some time he lived

⁸⁵ Pastor Fitzhugh Goes to Asylum, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 2

⁸⁶ Asylum for Rector, *The Baltimore Sun*, Aug 23, 1908, Page 12

⁸⁷ Minister Taken to Asylum, *The Baltimore Sun*, 24 Aug 1908, Page 12

⁸⁸ Wanted to Wed 10-year old; Goes to Asylum, *Arkansas Democrat*, 23 Aug 1908

in Fredericksburg, Virginia, near his son Lee. Eventually the Fitzhughs moved, seeking their fortunes, to the newly built dam of the Tennessee River at Sheffield, Alabama, near Muscle Shoals. George passed away in Alabama with his daughters, Mary and Lena, and son, Lee, nearby.

Lulu, it seems, lived a tragic life. After returning to her family and the desperate situation near Mission Home at Simmons Gap, Lulu eventually married Thomas L. Shifflett of Albemarle County at age 19.



Lulu V Frazier and husband Thomas Shifflett - https://www.shifflett-klein.com/Lula_Shifflett_murder.htm

Lulu and Thomas had three children when she and Thomas separated. Thomas' second cousin, Battle Shifflett, was a violent man who had become infatuated with Lulu after they'd had some sort of romantic relationship. On August 8, 1931, Battle entered the Jefferson Cafe in Charlottesville, Virginia, where Lulu worked, and engaged her in conversation. He left and bought a gun at a nearby hardware store and returned shooting, striking Lulu once. Lulu ran into the kitchen seeking protection from kitchen staff. Battle followed her into the kitchen and shot Lulu four more times. Lulu was paralyzed from one of those bullets, which lodged in her spinal column. She died shortly thereafter, but was initially able to speak and identify her shooter.

Battle went on the run, but he was eventually apprehended and convicted. He narrowly avoided the electric chair and was freed from prison in the 1970s. Battle died in 1976.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ An extensive history documenting Lulu's murder is online at The Lula Frazier Shiflett Murder, Shiflett Family Genealogy: Pursuing the Truth. https://www.shiflett-klein.com/Lula_Shiflett_murder.htm