

“The Dryad Days”:

Frances Hodgson Burnett in East Tennessee, Part 2

By Paul F. Brown*



Before the world knew her as Frances Hodgson Burnett, residents of Knoxville and New Market knew her as a young writer, Fannie E. Hodgson, whose short stories were being bought and published by nationally known women’s magazines. The Hodgsons had relocated to East Tennessee from Manchester, England, just after the Civil War, and after about three years of financial hardship, Fannie resolved to help make ends meet by selling her stories. Her first, “Hearts and Diamonds,” appeared in the June 1868 edition of *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine*, followed by “Miss Carruthers’ Engagement” that October and “Ethel’s Sir Lancelot” in *Peterson’s Magazine* that November.¹

The combined incomes of Fannie and her brothers, Herbert and John, allowed the Hodgsons to move from the small cottage they called “Noah’s Ark” to a riverside home in Knoxville that came to be known as “Vagabondia Castle.” Fannie witnessed her mother’s death in 1870 and the marriages of her brother Herbert and her eldest sister, Edith, the same year. Edwina, the youngest Hodgson girl, married in early 1872. A few months later, Fannie would travel to Europe, leaving her own suitor waiting, for over a

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¹ Frances Hodgson Burnett (as The Second), “Hearts and Diamonds,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine* 77 (June 1868): 524-28; Frances Hodgson Burnett (as The Second), “Miss Carruthers’ Engagement,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine* 77 (October 1868): 311-21; Frances Hodgson Burnett (as F. Hodgson), “Ethel’s Sir Lancelot,” *Peterson’s Magazine* 54 (November 1868): 365-69.



year, in the wings back in Knoxville. In 1877, Fannie bid farewell to East Tennessee as her home. In the decades that followed she became an internationally known author.

This essay, the second part of the study from the previous volume, follows Fannie's movements in and out of East Tennessee between the spring of 1872 and her final months as a resident in 1877.² It also discusses the possibility that she paid Knoxville a brief visit in 1890. Although she eventually romanticized her earliest years in the region as her "dryad days," she grew dissatisfied there and longed for material and cultural refinements that she believed East Tennessee could not provide. Similar to the first installment in volume 90, the essay will make connections between her experiences in the region and the writings they inspired. Likewise, the nickname Fannie will be employed throughout much of the text, as she answered to it among Tennessee acquaintances and published as "Fannie E. Hodgson" through 1876. A significant portion of the essay examines how New Market and Knoxville have celebrated and commemorated the author's legacy since her death.

Knoxville (Spring 1872 – Spring 1875)

Fannie's eldest brother, Herbert Hodgson, was the family's Renaissance man. Besides being an accomplished watchmaker, he played and repaired pipe organs and led various music ensembles in town.³ He performed with cousin Fred Boond in a concert hosted by the Ladies Memorial Society at the Franklin House Hotel's Turner Hall in April 1872. That October his "Hodgson Orchestra" performed the overture at the grand opening of Staub's Opera House on Gay Street and would become a fixture there.⁴ Herbert also composed and arranged music for the stage. His "Our Katie's Polka" debuted during a performance of the play "The Marble Heart" in 1871.⁵ He was also an amateur painter whose works won awards at Knoxville's annual Eastern Division Fair. In 1871, he won \$5 for "best animals

² See, Paul F. Brown, "The Dryad Days': Frances Hodgson Burnett in East Tennessee, Part 1," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 90 (2018): 5-39.

³ Newspapers reporting Herbert performing on and repairing pipe organs include, *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, September 11, 1872, December 25, 1872, August 6, 1873; [Knoxville] *Press and Messenger*, June 2, 1875.

⁴ "Ladies Memorial," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, April 26, 1872; Staub's Opera House, advertisement, *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, September 29, 1872.

⁵ "Evadne," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, March 7, 1871; "The Tableaux," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, April 27, 1872.

in oil,” and in 1873 he won two prizes, “best East Tennessee flowers” and “best copy oil painting.”⁶ Viewing Herbert’s painting of “a vase of flowers” in photographer T.M. Schleier’s gallery, one critic opined, “The coloring of the different flowers is perfectly natural, each tint being portrayed in colors as fresh and vivid as if they had been freshly culled. Mr. Hodgson evinces decided talent as an amateur, and if he devoted himself entirely to art . . . he would achieve eminence in his profession.”⁷

Although John Hodgson, like Herbert, was very much a part of Knoxville’s working class, he apparently lacked the artistic qualifications that enabled Herbert to mingle among the town’s higher social circles. John still worked in a saloon, a fact that had pained his late mother despite his earlier confirmation of faith in the local Episcopal church.⁸ In late 1872, John Scherf put Hodgson in “charge of his saloon at the Atkin House,” a hotel at the north end of Gay Street where author George Washington Harris had died of mysterious causes in 1869, and where “passengers arriving on the trains can always find everything in the wine or liquor line, either Foreign or Domestic.”⁹ The following spring the newspaper reported that “Johnny Hodgson has a fine red bat on exhibition at the Atkin House bar. He keeps it in a perforated cigar box, and it will not be likely to die for want of air.”¹⁰ Saloon owners sometimes exhibited odd artifacts to draw patrons. John’s specimen, probably an eastern red bat, was quite ordinary compared to the “petrified giant” once displayed in another Knoxville bar.¹¹

Of course, Knoxville’s younger generation had more entertainment available than plays, parties, orchestra concerts, and art exhibits. While the Hodgsons’ leisure activities undoubtedly revolved around the arts, with boating apparently one of their few

⁶ “List of Premiums—Awarded at the Eastern Division Fair, October, 1871,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, October 17, 1871; “Eastern Division Fair—Closing Exercises of the Annual Exposition,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, October 15, 1873.

⁷ “Beautiful Painting,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, February 8, 1872.

⁸ John was confirmed in Knoxville at St. John’s, October 28, 1866. See, “St. John’s Episcopal Church, Knoxville, Tennessee, Records, 1844-1971,” volume 1, 1844-86, microfilm, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, East Tennessee History Center, Knoxville (McClung Collection).

⁹ “New Advertisements,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, November 26, 1872; Jack Neely, *Knoxville’s Secret History* (Knoxville, 1995), 46-47; Donald Day, “The Life of George Washington Harris,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 6 (March 1947): 37-38.

¹⁰ “Local Miscellany,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, May 20, 1873.

¹¹ Jack Neely, “Middle Knoxville: Adventure Tales Work Best When They’re Real,” *Knoxville Mercury*, December 2, 2015.

activities that resembled a sport, they must have known of the “base ball” games that were becoming increasingly popular in postwar Knoxville. The ball field was located downtown off the east side of what is now the four hundred block of South Gay Street. Since the fall of 1867, the tournaments held there had attracted teams from the wider region, including Atlanta. Perhaps Fannie caught sight of the somewhat dangerous American game (played with a hardwood ball and no gloves or padding) that, with eventual modifications, would remain the town’s sport of choice well into the next century.¹²

Dr. Burnett

Swan Burnett, the slightly crippled but charming young neighbor the Hodgsons had met in New Market, had been separated from Fannie for a time after her family relocated to Knoxville. He studied medicine, first at Miami Medical College in Cincinnati between 1866 and 1867, and apprenticed with Dr. John M. Burnett, his father and “preceptor,” back in New Market. In January 1869, after Governor William G. “Parson” Brownlow summoned additional volunteers for the Tennessee State Guard, Swan held a temporary position at a “State Guards’ Hospital”—though probably in Nashville, contrary to biographers’ claims, since there is no evidence that such an institution existed in Knoxville.¹³ That fall he enrolled at Bellevue Hospital Medical College in New York, and graduated on February 26, 1870. A year and a half later, the *Knoxville Daily Chronicle* introduced “Dr. S.M. Burnett,” a specialist in “the study of diseases of the eye and ear,” and announced that he had set up his office on “Church Street, between Gay and State.”¹⁴ Naturally he treated cases both mundane and bizarre; one memorable patient was a thirteen-year-old boy who, after “experiencing a tickling sensation in his throat,” had pulled from his own mouth a thirty-three-inch segment of tapeworm.¹⁵ Swan’s medical knowledge earned him the trust of

¹² Jack Neely, “The Boys of Autumn: Before Novembers Brought Football Weather,” *Metro Pulse*, November 1998.

¹³ “Dr. Swan Moses Burnett, M.D.,” New York University, Health Sciences Library, Lillian and Clarence De La Chapelle Medical Archives, https://archives.med.nyu.edu/research/about/person/a_burnes02 (NYU Medical Archives); *Annual Circular and Catalogue of the Bellevue Hospital Medical College, City of New York, 1870-71* (New York, 1870), 10; Vivian Burnett, *The Romantick Lady* (Frances Hodgson Burnett): *The Life Story of an Imagination* (New York, 1927), 49; “Dr. S.M. Burnett Dead,” *New York Times*, January 19, 1906, 11.

¹⁴ “Bellevue Hospital Medical College 8th Annual Commencement, Academy of Music, 1870,” NYU Medical Archives; “Medical Cards,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, August 13, 1871, 4; “New Advertisements,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, August 15, 1871, 3.

¹⁵ “Tape Worm,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, April 3, 1873.



Knoxville Mayor William Rule, who appointed him as head of a new smallpox hospital that was built in March 1873 “on an elevation beyond the Federal cemetery.”¹⁶ That summer he was summoned to examine the corpse of a General Joel Dewey from Dandridge, who had collapsed and died just after testifying in the circuit court trial of Adolph Roehl versus William Boond, Fannie’s uncle.¹⁷ At a later date, the *Knoxville Weekly Chronicle* praised Swan for “restoring sight to a young lady who had been threatened with complete loss of vision,” and called him “a very skillful and successful operator.”¹⁸

But despite this local recognition, Swan was being called on much more as a general practitioner than as a specialist. Though he would remain in Knoxville for a few more years, his chances of real success there looked increasingly slim.¹⁹ Fannie could not help but fictionalize his professional hardship. In April 1872, *Godey’s* published her short story “Tom Halifax, M.D.,” which follows a doctor who “had come to Dorning . . . with the fixed intention of carving out for himself a wonderful name in the medical world.” However, after four months with few patients, Dr. Halifax’s practice was struggling. A woman of interest, Bessie Ashby, viewed him as a potential suitor, except for the fact that his “Dorning practice would hardly supply her with bonnets.” The story referenced one real place, West Point, the distant academy which Bessie’s two brothers attended. Fannie did not identify Dorning; evidently the “small town” was a southern one, because Bessie “had returned [there] from the North.”²⁰

Europe and Marriage

Meanwhile, Fannie’s reputation was growing far beyond Knoxville. Her first submitted stories contained the cryptic byline “The Second,” but she soon began publishing under her own name, “Fannie E. Hodgson.” The *Knoxville Daily Chronicle* regularly announced the appearance of new stories by “Knoxville’s talented

¹⁶ William Rule, ed., *Standard History of Knoxville, Tennessee* (Chicago, 1900), 112; “Small Pox,” *Knoxville Weekly Chronicle*, March 19, 1873.

¹⁷ “Death Scene in a Temple of Justice—The Proceedings of a Court Arrested by a Sudden Death,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, June 18, 1873.

¹⁸ “A Rising Young Man,” *Knoxville Weekly Chronicle*, August 12, 1874.

¹⁹ Swan was listed as a “General Practitioner” in Knoxville between 1870 and 1875. See, “Swan Moses Burnett,” NYU Medical Archives.

²⁰ Frances Hodgson Burnett (as The Second), “Tom Halifax, M.D.,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine* 84 (April 1, 1872): 347, 349-51; Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett: The Unexpected Life of the Author of The Secret Garden* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2004), 49.



Fannie Hodgson's engraved portrait appeared alongside other contributors on the cover of Peterson's Magazine, December 1872. According to an article in the Knoxville Daily Chronicle, November 10, 1872, the likeness was based on a photograph made by T.M. Schleier in Knoxville. Peterson's Magazine, 62 (December 1872): cover.

authoress" and asserted that "the best literary critics class her among the finest novelists of the country, placing her along side of Brete [sic] Harte, Mrs. [Ann S.] Stephens, Mr. [Edward] Eggleston and others of like character."²¹

By spring 1872, Fannie's magazine earnings allowed her to visit Europe on holiday. She departed Knoxville by train on June 3, destined for Philadelphia and then New York. Before leaving port she met with Scribner's editor, Richard Watson Gilder, who would become a mentor and advocate. This meeting was "her first contact with literary America." On June 27 the *Knoxville Daily Chronicle* reported that she had arrived in England aboard "the steamer Columbia."²² A month later it printed a travelogue that Fannie had written from Oswestry, England, to a friend in Knoxville. It is unclear whether she had intended it for publication. The paper printed a second one, written from Chester, in September.²³ She would not return to Tennessee until late the following summer. During this interval, several of her stories appeared in *Godey's*, *Peterson's*, and *Scribner's* magazines. The stories included "Surly Tim's Troubles" in June, "Miss Vernon's Choice" in July, "One Day at Arle" in September, the serial "Lindsay's Luck" between October and December (*Peterson's*

²¹ "Home Talent," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, May 23, 1872; "Miss Hodgson's New Story," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, August 23, 1872; "Another New Story by Miss Hodgson," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, October 22, 1872; "Miss Fannie Hodgson," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, November 10, 1872.

²² "Personal," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, June 4, 1872; Burnett, *Romantick Lady*, 58-59; "Safe in Port," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, June 27, 1872.

²³ "Letter from England," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, July 28, 1872; "Correspondence from England," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, September 1, 1872.

included her portrait on the final month's cover), the serial "Dolores" beginning in January, and "The Woman Who Saved Me" in March.²⁴

In her absence, Fannie missed the wedding of her last single sibling. John Hodgson married Ellen Gunther on February 24, 1873, at the Roman Catholic Church, where Father Francis Marron officiated. The party then reconvened at "Turner Hall, where they enjoyed themselves to a late hour, as only members of that Society can enjoy social gatherings." With a nod to John's profession, the writer from the *Knoxville Daily Chronicle* explained: "Refreshments in abundance were handed around, while wit and humor went riot and all was merry as merry could be."²⁵

Merriment in Knoxville turned to dread by July as a cholera epidemic swept through the southeastern United States. Reportedly, up to fifty percent of Knoxville's citizens temporarily fled to other parts of the country that summer. Swan remained in town, treating those infected as best he could, and perhaps joined other local doctors in blaming the contagion on the "reckless use of vegetables and fruits." He may have urged Fannie by mail to extend her vacation until the threat of illness subsided.²⁶

Fannie spent much of her time in England sightseeing and visiting family, such as "her Boond cousins" in Manchester. But she did not consider the trip a total departure from real life, and successfully wrote and submitted several stories despite her friends' constant, obligatory entertainments.²⁷ Marriage was also on her mind. Near the end of her European holiday she found a wedding dress "with veil and wreath" in Paris, had it tailored, and paid to have it shipped to Tennessee. She sailed from England aboard the *Parthia*, which steamed into New York on September 7, 1873. On her return to Knoxville, Fannie was dismayed that her dress had not yet been delivered, and attempted to put off the ceremony until it showed up. Swan had waited long enough.²⁸

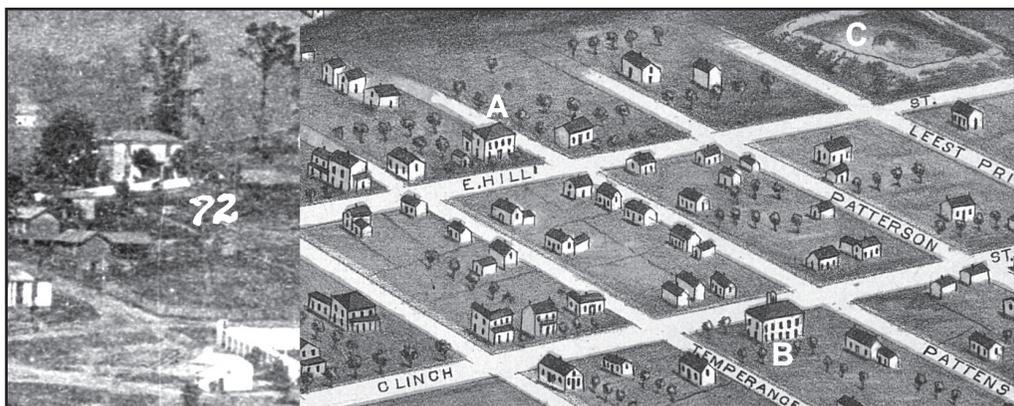
²⁴ *Morristown Gazette*, March 19, 1873; "Literary Notices," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, March 30, 1873; *Peterson's Magazine* 62 (July-December 1872); Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 37, 49-50.

²⁵ "Married," *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, February 25, 1873.

²⁶ Daniel M. Albert and Sarah L. Atzen, "Swan M. Burnett, MD, PhD: The Forgotten Father of Little Lord Fauntleroy," *Arch Ophthalmol* 127 (December 2009): 1666; Jack Neely, "The Tight-Rope Soirée: Acrobatics in the Time of Cholera," *Metro Pulse*, August 1998.

²⁷ Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 50.

²⁸ Edith Mary Jordan, "My Sister—An intimate, loving story of one of the world's most beloved writers," *Good Housekeeping* (July 1925): 143; Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 53.



In the photograph detail at left, the house numbered 72 is where Frances and Swan Burnett lived on Temperance Hill, according to John S. Van Gilder. The map detail at right shows the house (A) on the northwest corner of East Hill and Patton streets, and the nearby locations of Temperance Hall (B) and the earthwork remains of Fort Huntington Smith (C). *View of Knoxville, Tennessee with Numbers, Part 4 of 4*, by T.M. Schleier, 1865, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, East Tennessee History Center, Knoxville; *Bird's Eye View of the City of Knoxville, Knox County, Tennessee, 1871*, by A. Ruger, Merchants Lithographing Company, 1871, Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C., <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3964k.pm008990>.

On September 16, Fannie arrived at the New Market station aboard the 9:45 p.m. train. Supposedly, locals had already circulated gossip about “a prospective wedding.” Swan’s presence in town the next morning made the rumor seem “quite probable,” and the arrival later that day of Fannie’s “friends and relatives” from Knoxville—including “matrons” Edith and Edwina, “each with a baby in arms”—proved its veracity. The party gathered at the Dr. John Burnett home, where on the evening of September 17 the ceremony was held.²⁹ The family’s “old-fashioned living-room” had been “lit with candles [and] had a sort of plain dignity.” Fannie had banked on wearing her Parisian wedding gown. “But the boat was delayed, and it did not arrive till days too late,” Edith recalled. Instead, the bride “wore one of the frocks she had brought back with her,” which Edith described as “fawn-color and very becoming.”³⁰ Fannie remembered her substitute dress somewhat differently, calling it “a mere corn colored flowered poplin . . . that was pretty too—only it had no train which seemed ignominious.”³¹

²⁹ “Items from New Market,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, September 19, 1873; Jordan, “My Sister,” 143.

³⁰ Jordan, “My Sister,” 143.

³¹ Bonnie Tom Robinson, “Ft. City Library Gains Noted Woman’s Letter on ‘Unmarried Wedding Dress,’” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, June 15, 1940.

Following the “short period after their marriage” when they remained “in New Market, with the Burnetts,” the new couple returned to Knoxville and moved to a ridge east of downtown named Temperance Hill after a prominent landmark. Temperance Hall, a two-story brick edifice at the corner of Clinch and Temperance, had been constructed around 1851 through the influence and financial backing of William G. Brownlow. The Methodist minister-turned newspaper editor and politician had recently joined the Sons of Temperance, and sometimes lectured in the hall. During the war, the building housed prisoners, most likely those captured by Union troops, who built Fort Huntington Smith several hundred feet up the ridge in 1863.³²

The Burnett home sat on the northwest corner of East Hill and Patton streets, one block north of Temperance Hall and just over two blocks west of the Civil War fort. Several years earlier this neighborhood had been part of the separate town of East Knoxville, which incorporated in 1856 but consolidated with the city proper in 1869.³³ Situated east of First Creek, the house probably seemed more distant from downtown than any of Fannie’s residences since Vagabondia Castle. But the hillside offered an elevated vantage of the buildings and church steeples of Gay Street. And the creek bridge at Clinch Street provided Fannie and Swan easy access to the town center.

Soon the newlyweds fell back into Knoxville’s social scene. A ball at the Lamar House gave Fannie an excuse to finally wear her new wedding gown. The garment had been damaged, “spotted with the silver wrapping paper” in transit to Knoxville, but Fannie made it presentable.³⁴ Mamie B. Foust, whose family lived in New Market when the Hodgsons arrived there, grew up in Knoxville and was present the night Fannie debuted the dress. Foust remembered the sight of her “clad in a most bewildering white gown, descending the stairway” and “laughing up into the face of [her] adoring husband, who [was] gallantly carrying the wonderful train.”³⁵ When Foust wrote to her asking for details about that dress, Fannie replied in a

³² Burnett, *Romantick Lady*, 67; Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 54; John S. Van Gilder, notes accompanying photograph, “1865 4-Part View of Knoxville with Numbers,” ID_004, McClung Collection; “Only a Faded Picture. Knoxville Forty-Four Years Ago as Pictured in Brownlow’s Whig,” *Knoxville Daily Journal*, April 7, 1895, 2; “An Historic Old Structure,” *Knoxville Journal and Tribune*, March 8, 1907, 8.

³³ Aelred J. Gray and Susan F. Adams, “Government,” in Lucile Deaderick, ed., *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1976), 83-84.

³⁴ Jordan, “My Sister,” 143.

³⁵ Burnett, *Romantick Lady*, 67.

long letter about “the wedding dress which strayed on its way from England. . . . I remember that the first and in fact the only time I ever wore it was to that particular party which was a ball at the Lamar House where I think at that time all the balls were given.” The dress had an “immensely long train which was of white satin covered entirely with fluffy ruches of white tulle sprinkled with little sprays of Jasmine blossoms.” Fannie wrote, “How amusing it is to think of the little girl standing watching me at the foot of the staircase and remembering the unmarried wedding dress for a lifetime.”³⁶

Around this time, Fannie became acquainted with another little girl, a seven-year-old who inspired the title character of “Birdie,” a short story published years later. If indeed factual, Fannie’s first-person narrative reveals that the girl lived a few miles outside Knoxville at a house called “Riverside” and that her father, “the Major,” was a former Confederate officer who now taught at “a well-known Southern university”—no doubt the nearby East Tennessee University, renamed the University of Tennessee in 1879. Riverside felt a few degrees cooler than the Burnett house on Temperance Hill, and Fannie strolled with Birdie beneath shade trees and helped the imaginative girl decorate the grove as a fairy ballroom. When Birdie told Fannie that her doll, “Miss Anna,” had the measles, Fannie offered to take Miss Anna to a spa to recuperate: “So I carried her to my house in town and kept her there,” Fannie wrote. “I think I wrote one or two letters from her to her mother [Birdie] describing her gay life at Montvale [Springs in Blount County] or White Sulphur [Springs, West Virginia]. But the truth was that Miss Anna was really with me, and I was making her some new things to wear.” Fannie reported that “at the end of the summer [Birdie’s] family left their house in the country and took a house in town, which was just on the opposite side of the street from mine.”³⁷ Although the family in Fannie’s story remains unidentified, a house called Riverside was located upriver from Knoxville, near Lebanon in the Fork. Margaret Jane Ramsey Dickson—a daughter of physician, historian, banker, and Confederate treasury agent J.G.M. Ramsey—owned the home until the war forced her family’s departure.³⁸

³⁶ Robinson, “Ft. City Library Gains Noted Woman’s Letter.”

³⁷ Frances Hodgson Burnett, “Birdie,” in *Giovanni and the Other: Children who Have Made Stories* (New York, 1892), 147-58.

³⁸ See, Dr. J.G.M. Ramsey, *Autobiography and Letters* (1954; Knoxville, 2002).



About two years later, while in London, Fannie contributed a story at Birdie's request for the girl and her siblings to print in their family newspaper back in Knoxville. In "Behind the White Brick," officially published in *St. Nicholas* in 1879, Fannie included a tribute to the girl. When a worker in Santa Claus's workshop asks what color eyes he should give the doll for the "little girl in the red brick house at the corner . . . name of Birdie," Santa replies, "Blue eyes, if you please, Thistle, and golden hair. And let it be a big one. She takes good care of them."³⁹

Fannie's year of travel, celebrating professional achievements, and marriage should have ended as joyously as it began. However, the Hodgson and Burnett families closed out 1873 mourning the loss of Swan's sister and Herbert's wife, Annette P. Hodgson, who died on December 9 at age twenty-three. Her death was not sudden; she had been "ill for about two years" with "that skill-defying disease, consumption." Little is known about Annette other than her family relationships, but there is no reason to doubt the *Knoxville Weekly Chronicle* when it eulogized her as "universally kind and affable" and "beloved and esteemed by all who formed her acquaintance."⁴⁰ Despite his grief, Herbert—perhaps to fulfill an obligation, perhaps to cheer himself—agreed to perform with his "famous string band" at the Lamar House's masquerade ball on December 29.⁴¹

The family's spirits were lifted in 1874 when Fannie made it known that she was expecting. As she made preparations at home, and as the weather turned increasingly hot, two special dignitaries made separate trips to Knoxville that spring and summer. In May, "former president Andrew Johnson" participated in the city's Decoration Day ceremony at the National Cemetery, the same day a local Union widow may have initiated a nationwide trend when she placed, in lieu of flowers, a small U.S. flag in front of each grave. And on July 4, many Knoxvilleians awoke promptly at sunrise, as did visitor and former Union officer Ambrose E. Burnside, to the sound of thirty-eight rifles firing a salute from Fort Sanders, in the city's first postwar observance of Independence Day.⁴² Later that month, with about two months of pregnancy remaining, Fannie wrote of her vain efforts to fight off humidity inside the house on East Hill Street:

³⁹ Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 88; Frances Hodgson Burnett, "Behind the White Brick," in *Little Saint Elizabeth, and Other Stories* (New York, 1890), 138-39.

⁴⁰ "Died," [Knoxville] *Press and Messenger*, December 9, 1873; "Died," *Knoxville Weekly Chronicle*, December 10, 1873.

⁴¹ "The Bal Masque," *Knoxville Weekly Chronicle*, December 31, 1873.

⁴² Jack Neely, "Decoration Day: In 1874, Something New for the Union Dead," *Metro Pulse*, May 1999; Jack Neely, *Knoxville's National Cemetery: A Short History* (Knoxville, 2018), 33-35; Jack Neely, "Guests of Honor: Weird Tales of the Fourth," *Metro Pulse*, June 28, 2001.



I have suffered fearfully from the intense heat of this summer. I do not think I shall ever sing the praises of a summer in the sunny south again—I have positively gasped through the last two months and I shudder at the thought of August. I spend two or three hours every afternoon lying on the bed in the loosest and thinnest of wrappers fanning with a palm leaf fan and panting and longing for rain. I can't sleep and I can't rest—in fact, I can't do anything but feel profane.⁴³

With little else to do, she stuck to writing. Her sweltering circumstances likely informed some of her fiction during these summer months. Take her opening description of a country road in “On the Circuit,” the story of a woman’s love for a circuit preacher, published by *Harper’s New Monthly* that December: “It was a hot summer day, and so the road looked especially white and dusty. It was far too hot to be pleasant, Désirée thought. The roses in the garden seemed to burn upon the bushes; those climbing upon the arch over the gate actually flamed and panted when a faint breath of air touched them: at least this was Désirée’s fancy about them.” Although Fannie did not specify the location of the fictional town of Hamlinford, she colored the story’s dialogue with unmistakably southern phrases like “women-folks,” “this mornin’, I reckon,” “meetin’ took up,” “handsome critter,” and “Sakes alive!”⁴⁴

Lionel Burnett was born on September 20, three days after his parents celebrated their first year of marriage. To nurse and care for the baby, Fannie hired a former slave named Priscilla Whitson, known as “Aunt Prissie” to the family. She would live with the Burnetts for a time and nurse their second son as well. Whitson died in Knoxville in 1901, just two years after the publication of Fannie’s novel *In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim*.⁴⁵ In the book, Fannie named “Aunt Prissy” as the sort of faithful house servant that had been “indispensable” to the old southern families before the war.⁴⁶

By 1875, having found little success as a medical specialist in Knoxville, Swan wished to study in Paris. At the same time, Fannie, who had recently sold a serialized novel, *That Lass o’ Lowrie’s*, to

⁴³ Ann Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849-1924* (New York, 1974), 45.

⁴⁴ Frances Hodgson Burnett (as Fannie Hodgson Burnett), “On the Circuit,” *Harper’s New Monthly* 50 (December 1874): 105, 109.

⁴⁵ “Old Negress Who Cared for Mrs. Burnett’s Hero is Dead,” *Nashville American*, February 8, 1901, 3.

⁴⁶ Frances Hodgson Burnett, *In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim* (New York, 1899), 219.

Scribner's, was being urged by publisher Charles Peterson to come to Europe at his expense and finish writing a novel for him. So Fannie, Swan, six-month-old Lionel, and Aunt Prissie left Knoxville in May 1875. Heading east, they briefly visited the Burnetts in New Market before departing on May 19 toward "Washington, Philadelphia and New York" on their way to Europe. Knoxville's *Whig and Chronicle* announced the family's plans to "spend a year or two among friends and relatives of Mrs. Fannie Hodgson Burnett, in England and different parts of Europe."⁴⁷

In subsequent decades Fannie's connection to the house on East Hill Street would be forgotten; later biographers noted only that she lived on Temperance Hill. Knoxville city directories indicated that by 1884, East Hill was renamed Payne Avenue. The house first appeared on a Sanborn Fire Insurance map in 1890, addressed as 33 Payne; street renumbering changed the address to 515 Payne a few years later. Temperance Hall fell out of religious and political use by the late 1800s, and in 1908 became a boarding house, Gray Terrace.⁴⁸

Like many larger homes in working-class sections of town, 515 Payne became a rooming house by the mid-1920s. At least nine separate occupants resided there in 1926, and the 1930 city directory indicated that the dwelling contained twelve apartments. Ultimately the neighborhood and its streets became casualties of the Mountain View urban renewal project, the third of four such projects enacted in Knoxville between 1954 and 1970.⁴⁹ Urban renewal projects destroyed all traces of Fannie's life on that hill and also wiped out the thriving African American community that later developed there, as writer Nikki Giovanni depicted in her essay "400 Mulvaney Street."⁵⁰ Today, Green Magnet Academy, on Lula Powell Drive, provides a point of reference for locating Temperance Hill. A historical marker near the school's entrance identifies the property as the former site of Fort Huntington (or Huntingdon) Smith.

⁴⁷ Burnett, *Romantick Lady*, 67-68; "Her New Story," [Knoxville] *Press and Messenger*, March 17, 1875; Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*, 47; "New Market News," *Knoxville Whig and Chronicle*, May 19, 1875.

⁴⁸ "An Historic Old Structure"; Gilder, "1865 4-Part View of Knoxville with Numbers," McClung Collection.

⁴⁹ Gray and Adams, "Government," 129; Bob Cunningham, "Multi-Phase Rehabilitation Projects Changing Face of City," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, September 11, 1966, F3.

⁵⁰ Nikki Giovanni, "400 Mulvaney Street," in *The Prosaic Soul of Nikki Giovanni* (New York, 2003), 9-21.

New Market (Fall 1876 – April 1877)

The Burnetts were in Paris on April 5, 1876, when Fannie gave birth to a second son, Vivian. Now with two children, an ever-increasing workload, and financial debts, Swan and Fannie needed a more practical living arrangement and chose to return to the United States. Fretting but still optimistic, she wrote to Edith:

We shall not have enough to live on, even in Knoxville. I am all at sea just now, but perhaps it will come out right. And, in spite of all my anxiety, I cannot wish I had not spent my money. Three thousand dollars would certainly have bought a house in Knoxville, but then, you see, I did not want a house in Knoxville; that is not what I have aimed at. I want my chestnuts off a higher bough.⁵¹

Despite her opposition to a permanent life in Tennessee, Fannie took her children to New Market that fall and boarded with the Burnetts while Swan established himself in Washington, D.C. She remained in town through the holiday season and the end of winter. Her regular correspondence with editor Richard Gilder confirmed that the pace of her writing did not diminish in the interim.⁵²

In March 1877, a month before Fannie left New Market, *Lippincott's* magazine published "Seth," one of only two works of fiction in which she would specify Tennessee as a location. It also marked the final time her nickname "Fannie" appeared in her byline. This short story depicted immigrants from Lancashire working and living at an East Tennessee mining camp called Black Creek. "The scene of the story," wrote one Knoxvillean, "is located on Coal Creek, our great mining district. . . . [Burnett] frequently went out to our coal districts to hunt characters." While this cannot be substantiated, Fannie later researched mining camps in Virginia and North Carolina while writing her novel *Louisiana*.⁵³

Fannie's depictions in "Seth" included "the houses of the miners—rough shanties hurriedly erected to supply immediate needs," "the shed dignified by the title of 'depôt,'" and the "pine and

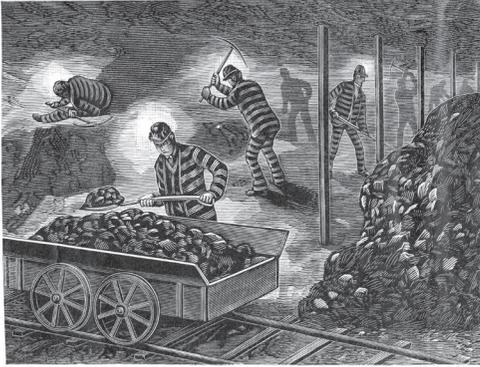
⁵¹ Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*, 51-54.

⁵² Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 64-66.

⁵³ Frances Hodgson Burnett (as Fannie Hodgson Burnett), "Seth," *Lippincott's Magazine of Popular Literature and Science* 19 (March 1877): 296-307; "Knoxville Notables," [Nashville] *Daily American*, October 5, 1877, 3; Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 90.

TENNESSEE'S SHAME!

Convicts in the Coal Creek Mines.



CONVICTS AT WORK.



ONE OF THE RESULTS—STARVATION
The father and husband has gone to a distant State for work.

Vote for **TURNEY** for Governor and **WELCKER** for Congress, if you wish this to continue.

Vote for **WINSTEAD** for Governor and **HOUK** for Congress, if you wish to abolish this great crime, which has so long been committed in order to raise Democratic campaign funds from the lessees

The use of convict labor in the Coal Creek mines in Anderson County resulted in violent protests. The Coal Creek War amplified opposition to the practice of leasing convicts, which became a political issue in the early 1890s. "Tennessee's Shame! Convicts in the Coal Creek Mines," [1892], Ephemera Collection, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, East Tennessee History Center, Knoxville.

cedar" forest surrounding the camp.⁵⁴ Like Fannie, main character Seth Raynor treasured the East Tennessee landscape: "He sat down upon the door-step with wearily clasped hands, and eyes wandering toward the mountain, whose pine-crowned summit towered above him. He had not even yet outlived the awe of its majesty, but he had learned to love it and draw comfort from its beauty and strength."⁵⁵

English immigrants, many from Wales, indeed worked in the mines near Coal Creek.⁵⁶ In the early 1890s, coal mine owners replaced their miners with convict laborers from the state prison

⁵⁴ Burnett, "Seth," in *Surly Tim, and Other Stories* (London, 1878), 303, 295, 301.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁵⁶ Fred Brown, "Prints of Wales," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May 9, 2004.

system. The unemployed miners staged a series of protests, which turned deadly and attracted national attention. The uprising occurred in Anderson County, roughly twenty-five miles from Knoxville and thirty-five miles northwest of New Market. The Coal Creek War became a political issue and resulted in the end of the convict-leasing system in Tennessee.⁵⁷

Fannie had set her first important novel, *That Lass o' Lowrie's*, in a mining town in Lancashire. *Scribner's* ran it as a serial from August 1876 to May 1877, spanning her entire stay in New Market, and released the book in April, around the time Fannie and her sons were leaving to meet Swan in Washington. By then, she had published at least fifty-six stories of various lengths. As she departed small-town life forever, American critics were hailing Frances Hodgson Burnett as a major talent and *That Lass o' Lowrie's* as one of the best new works of literature in recent years.⁵⁸ Along with "Fannie," the East Tennessee nickname she had professionally shed months earlier, she left two mementos behind in New Market. She gave the pram her boys had used as infants to the Snoddy family, who kept it for many years before they donated it to a museum. Another family acquired a small, plain writing desk that Frances had supposedly used while writing there. It had a sloped top and a drawer below it with two simple knobs. In later years the desk became the property of Mrs. H.L. Ivy of New Market and then Lillian Hill of Jefferson City.⁵⁹

Even though the departure marked the end of Burnett's residence in Tennessee, southern—if not clearly Tennessean—settings continued to appear in her work. In "Lodusky," published in *Scribner's* that September, Frances used herself as the model for young Rebecca Noble, an enthusiastic writer vacationing in "North Carolina in search of material." It is unclear whether Frances herself had vacationed in that state prior to the family's summer trip in 1878. She somewhat recycled this character as Olivia Ferrol for her 1880 novel, *Louisiana*.⁶⁰ In July and August 1878, *Peterson's* published "The Last Duchesne," about an old southern family coping with

⁵⁷ See, "Fight at Coal Creek," [New York] *Sun*, August 19, 1892; Karin A. Shapiro, *A New South Rebellion: The Battle Against Convict Labor in the Tennessee Coalfields, 1871-1896* (Chapel Hill, 1998).

⁵⁸ Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 67-68; Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*, 56.

⁵⁹ "Souvenir Program, 1955, Frances Hodgson Burnett Celebration," June 1955, Frances Hodgson Burnett biographical file, McClung Collection; Estle P. Muncy, *People and Places of Jefferson County* (Rogersville, TN, 1994), 122.

⁶⁰ Frances Hodgson Burnett, "Lodusky," *Scribner's Monthly* 14 (September 1877): 673-87; Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 85; Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*, 65.



poverty and the temptation to sell off their plantation to a coal mining company. As she would in *In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim*, here Frances romanticized the Old South and depicted the Duchesne family's former slaves as loyal to the prewar way of life.⁶¹

New Market itself never appeared by name in Burnett's fiction (it appeared only as an anonymous, "curious little village" in her 1893 memoir), but the town seems to have inspired the setting of her short story "The Proud Little Grain of Wheat" (1880), which she created after her sons asked her "what flour was made of." Her narrative followed the titular character from his humble beginnings in a wheat sack to the end of his life as a slice of cake being eaten. Behind this are the human characters—including "a farmer, his black helper, the farmer's wife, and her black cook," plus the farmer's daughters—who in various ways are responsible for sowing the seeds, harvesting the crop, taking wheat to be ground at the mill, mixing the flour into cakes, and eating the cakes. Frances also included two young characters named Lionel and Vivian, "children from Washington city" who travel to the country and to stay with the farmer's family. This story element suggests that her sons had already made such a trip to New Market without her; they would do so again in 1881. While "Proud Little Grain of Wheat" contains no obvious references to Tennessee locations, Frances may well have fictionalized her New Market in-laws, the Burnetts, as the farmer's family, and the "actual servants in the Burnett household" as the helper and cook.⁶²

Swan returned to New Market in February 1881 when his father died, and later that year Lionel and Vivian traveled there to stay with their widowed grandmother, Lydia.⁶³ Frances apparently never set foot in the town again. As mentioned, sections of the log house that her family once rented there may have survived. Dr. John M. Burnett's old homestead, just east of the former Hodgson home, changed hands after Lydia died. William A. Houston purchased the property in 1913. He established a well on the east side of that lot in 1931, and the family has sold fresh mineral water from it ever since. For years the Houstons lived in the old Burnett home, a log house

⁶¹ Frances Hodgson Burnett, "The Last Duchesne," *Peterson's Magazine* 74 (July-August 1878): 39-44, 110-16.

⁶² Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All* (London, 1893; 1974), 232; Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 88; Frances Hodgson Burnett, "The Proud Little Grain of Wheat," in *Little Saint Elizabeth and Other Stories*, 114.

⁶³ Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 98; Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*, 76.



built around 1850 and located between the mineral well and the former Hodgson property. Although the house was torn down in 1982, an old pole barn still stands in back of the Houstons' lot and is likely one that the Burnetts used.⁶⁴ Other historic structures remain nearby as well, such as the brick Presbyterian Church down the block that was erected in the late 1800s to replace an earlier building that the Hodgsons likely attended. A few homes in the area predate the Civil War. One structure at 1607 Depot Street was built in 1850, and Frances and her family would have passed it often as they walked to and from the railroad depot.⁶⁵ Even though its depot is long gone, the town's association with railroading endures because of the deadly New Market Train Wreck of 1904.

Knoxville (1890)

Ada Campbell Larew wrote that Frances "made a very brief visit to Knoxville in 1890." Such a trip would have been unusual for Burnett considering that her career frequently kept her away from her own children for weeks or months at a time. Thanks to the success of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, published in book form four years earlier, she was internationally famous by 1890. But that year her son Lionel contracted tuberculosis and died in December. Perhaps his long illness and Frances's own guilt over being absent for long stretches was the reason Larew "failed to recognize" in the author "the buoyant, blithe spirit I used to know in childhood days."⁶⁶ Burnett's arrival in town would surely have attracted the local press, yet a search of Knoxville newspapers published between 1885 and 1895 turned up no mention of a visit. If the trip did occur during that period, it must have been unannounced and "very brief" indeed.

Aside from her old acquaintances like Larew, Frances had few reasons to return to Knoxville. Shortly after she relocated in 1875, all but one of her siblings also left for other places—Herbert and his second wife, Medora, to Norfolk, Virginia, and Edith's and Edwina's

⁶⁴ G.W. Dice to John L. Mathews (Mathews), November 13, 1892, WD 44-211; A.G. Mathews et al to W.A. Houston, September 1913, WD 50-72, all in Jefferson County Archives, Dandridge; Louise Durman, "Well Worth Renovating," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May 24, 1981, F1, F10; William C. Houston (owner of Houston's Mineral Water and grandson of William A. Houston), conversation with the author, May 2019.

⁶⁵ "Real Estate Assessment Data," parcel #033C-A-011.00, "Tennessee Property Viewer," <http://tnmap.tn.gov/assessment/>.

⁶⁶ Ada Campbell Larew, "Childhood Recollections of Frances Hodgson Burnett," *Sunday [Knoxville] Sentinel Magazine*, July 26, 1925, 6.



families to California.⁶⁷ Her brother John Hodgson still resided in Knoxville. Years earlier his life appeared to be improving when he moved on from bartending to carpentry. Inspired by Frances's achievements, John further educated himself to the point that some Knoxvilleians regarded him as "a ripe scholar" and "the most brilliant man in labor union circles." His son, Bert Cecil, was born in 1888. But John, who never distanced himself completely from the saloons, drank heavily, and could not hold a steady job. In fall 1890, John's wife, Ellen, filed for divorce.⁶⁸

One might imagine that if indeed Frances visited Knoxville that year, John was her primary motivation. Knoxville acquaintances knew that she "often sent her brother money," and they "were kind to him on account of the fact that he was a brother of the distinguished authoress." In his final years, John lived on West Main while struggling as a jeweler in North Knoxville. Despite his circumstances he "was kind and affectionate . . . and often aided those who had been unfortunate like himself." Reportedly, he rarely mentioned Frances in public without a drink in his hand; when he did it was usually to say that "he was not worthy of the name he bore."⁶⁹ On November 9, 1904, John Hodgson, fifty-seven-years-old and destitute, died of spinal meningitis at the Knoxville General Hospital. Hall and Donahue Mortuary stored the body and contacted Frances in England, expecting that she would help pay for the funeral. She sent money, but only enough to bury John in their mother's single plot without his own marker.⁷⁰ Today Eliza Hodgson's timeworn gravestone, located a few hundred feet inside the entrance to Old Gray Cemetery, is the city's most personal reminder of Frances's time there.

⁶⁷ Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 158.

⁶⁸ "John Hodgson Dies a Miserable Pauper," *St. Paul Globe*, November 16, 1904, 3; "Bert Cecil Hodgson," memorial ID# 124199658, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/124199658/bert-cecil-hodgson>; "Knox County Divorce Index, 1792-1985," Knox County Archives, Knoxville, <http://engagedpatrons.org/database/KnoxArchives/Divorce/>.

⁶⁹ "Brother of Authoress, John Hodgson Dead After a Dissipated Life," *Montgomery Times*, November 18, 1904, 2; *Knoxville City Directory*, 1902 (Knoxville, 1902); *Knoxville City Directory*, 1903 (Knoxville, 1903); *Knoxville City Directory*, 1904 (Knoxville, 1904); "John Hodgson Dies a Miserable Pauper."

⁷⁰ "Tennessee, City Death Records, 1872-1923," Ancestry.com, <http://www.ancestry.com>; "Brother of Authoress, John Hodgson Dead"; Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 238; "Funeral of John Hodgson Burnett [sic]," [Johnson City] *Comet*, November 17, 1904.



In the early twentieth century, Frances Hodgson Burnett worked at a feverish pace to produce new books, essays, and plays for her adoring fans. The stress and workload took a toll on her health. Frances Hodgson Burnett, full-length portrait, seating, reading at a table, by Virginia M. Prall, ca. 1908, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004681682/>.



The World Beyond Tennessee

In 1893 Frances published a memoir, *The One I Knew the Best of All*. In this book, a third-person narrator recounts the childhood of an unnamed “Small Person” and her early contact with literature in Manchester, England, her family’s necessary move to America, the “curious little village” where they first lived in Tennessee, and the subsequent move to a cottage they called “Noah’s Ark.” It also describes how these circumstances provided the Small Person the impetus and courage to submit her first story to a magazine. The publication’s timing suggests that Frances’s last purported visit to Knoxville, three years earlier, was made partly to aid her remembrance of those “dryad days” in the region, which she depicted so fondly in the book’s final three chapters. She wrote in an 1896 article for *Lady’s Realm* of her influential “years spent among the woods and mountains of East Tennessee.”⁷¹

Frances’s success as a novelist, beginning in 1877 with *That Lass o’ Lowrie’s*, forced her to write for the theater as well, in order to stave off unauthorized stage adaptations of her works. She won a significant lawsuit in 1888 against a pirated dramatization of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, and the ruling established legal copyright protection for authors in Britain.⁷² Frances wrote and produced more than a dozen plays between 1878 and 1912.⁷³ From 1913 onward,

⁷¹ Frances Hodgson Burnett, “How I Served My Apprenticeship,” *Lady’s Realm* 1 (November 1896-April 1897): 76.

⁷² Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 73-74, 120-21.

⁷³ Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*, 253-54.

Hollywood repeatedly sought the rights to her works; seventeen film adaptations—including three versions of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, the last (1921) starring Mary Pickford in the title role—were produced during her lifetime.⁷⁴

But as her fame increased, Frances's life lost the simple, storybook quality it had reflected in East Tennessee. She had been the family's primary breadwinner from almost the start of her career, but now had multiple houses, a lavish lifestyle, and various charitable causes to maintain. Work obsessed and exhausted her; long hours at the writing table contributed to her declining health.⁷⁵ Her marriage to Swan also deteriorated after years of living apart. When the couple finally split in 1895, three years before the divorce, many observers blamed the "inevitable" breakup on Frances's hunger "for the adulation of the world," as one journalist put it.⁷⁶ Frances's brief remarriage in 1900 to Stephen Townsend, her stage collaborator and business manager, raised eyebrows, as did a highly publicized libel suit against her, filed by a nephew's wife in 1916.⁷⁷ She crossed and re-crossed the Atlantic in a restless search for the perfect place to write and recover, settling for a time at Maytham Hall in Kent, England; the estate's walled garden helped inspire her love of horticulture and the setting of *The Secret Garden*, published as a book in 1911. Her pace of travel slowed somewhat after she had a house built in Plandome, Long Island, New York, where she resided for the last fifteen years of her life when not wintering in Bermuda.⁷⁸

About a year before her death, Frances had one more brush with her Tennessee past. Bert Cecil Hodgson, Knoxville musician and son of the late John Hodgson, visited his aunt's New York home, perhaps meeting her for the first time. He asked about her years in Knoxville, and she repeated the story of the family's necessary move to Tennessee, the poverty they endured there, and of selling grapes to finance her first story submission. Before the end of Hodgson's visit,

⁷⁴ Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 273-74; "Frances Hodgson Burnett," Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com>.

⁷⁵ Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, "Not Just for Children: The Life and Legacy of Frances Hodgson Burnett," in Angelica Shirley Carpenter, ed., *In the Garden: Essays in Honor of Frances Hodgson Burnett* (Lanham, MD, 2006), 10-11.

⁷⁶ Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 107; "Just Like a Novel. Frances Hodgson Burnett's Strange Career," *Knoxville Journal*, September 22, 1895, 3.

⁷⁷ Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett*, 215-16, 283-84; Gerzina, "Not Just for Children," 11.

⁷⁸ Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*, 248-49.



his aunt “asked many questions about Knoxville and the people who lived [there] more than fifty years ago.”⁷⁹ Frances was at Plandome when colon cancer claimed her life on October 29, 1924.

Memory and Commemoration

Living in Tennessee had both frustrated and inspired Frances. With her early successes and growing reputation there as a writer, she believed that New Market and Knoxville could offer little more than “shabbiness,” far short of her desired life of art and sophistication. Even so, she could not deny that the beauty of East Tennessee, and her family’s experiences there, had stimulated her imagination. Since Burnett named Tennessee only twice in her fiction (in “Seth” and *In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim*), it is difficult to know fully how many of her stories and novels contain her disguised memories of the Volunteer State, and whether she indeed drew on those memories and experiences throughout her career (“as long as I lived”) as she once imagined she would.⁸⁰ By acknowledging in print—in *The One I Knew the Best of All* and the 1896 article for *Lady’s Realm*—that East Tennessee, and specifically Knoxville, played pivotal roles in the start of her career, Burnett laid her own foundation for a lasting legacy there. People in the region indeed recognized the author’s achievements and local connections, but would not celebrate Burnett in any tangible way during her lifetime.

In December 1893, the same year Burnett published her memoir, a group of female students at the University of Tennessee formed the Barbara Blount Literary Society “to stimulate self-culture and to attain proficiency in the art of expression.” At the society’s inaugural meeting on February 2, members presented a program, “Notable Women of Tennessee.” The group discussed Frances Hodgson Burnett and her short story “Sara Crewe, or What Happened at Miss Minchin’s” (which Burnett expanded and released as a novel, *A Little Princess*, in 1905).⁸¹

After Frances’s death, East Tennesseans did not commemorate the author until Vivian Burnett published *The Romantick Lady*, a biography of his mother, in September 1927. Perhaps motivated by

⁷⁹ “Knoxville Nephew of Famous Novelist Tells of Her Struggles Here,” *Knoxville News*, October 31, 1924, 19.

⁸⁰ See, Burnett, “How I Served My Apprenticeship,” 76.

⁸¹ *University of Tennessee Record* 1 (1898): 69; “The Barbara Blount Society,” *Knoxville Daily Journal and Tribune*, February 3, 1894.



In 1892, the University of Tennessee admitted its first female students. The next year, a group of female students formed the Barbara Blount Literary Society. Barbara Blount Society, 1900, Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

that publication, the Writer's Club, another Knoxville literary society, may have marked one of Frances's former homes with a plaque late that year or early the next. Supposedly Frances had once lived in a house at 701 West Cumberland that in 1926 was converted into a tea room named Tinker Tavern. Contemporary newspaper accounts of a marker being placed there have not been found, though columnist Lucy Curtis Templeton suggested in September 1927 that "the Writer's Club might be interested in marking [Tinker Tavern]." The only confirmation that the honor was carried out came sometime in the 1990s, when *Metro Pulse* columnist Jack Neely received a call from an elderly woman who remembered the "old brick house" on Cumberland. She said the tea room "had a brass plaque on it. The plaque said 'Former Home of Author Frances Hodgson Burnett.'" But the honor was short-lived.⁸² Edward Vestal, who had purchased the home in October 1927, found out months later that a new bridge spanning the river would be built at Henley Street and the residential street itself widened and leveled into a major thoroughfare, requiring the removal of dozens of properties along the west side of Henley.

⁸² *Knoxville City Directory, 1927* (Knoxville, 1927); *Knoxville News*, September 21, 1926; Lucy Curtis Templeton, "Books—Old and New," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, September 18, 1927; Jack Neely, "Finding Vagabondia," *Knoxville Mercury*, March 8, 2017.



Vestal's corner lot fronted about one hundred and forty-four feet of that street.⁸³ The City of Knoxville paid him \$19,360 for the property in July 1928 and by September began razing homes. If indeed there was a brass plaque, and it was recovered from Tinker Tavern at that time, it has since been lost.⁸⁴

On April 5, 1932, the Mimir Club—a local women's group named after the "Scandinavian God of Wisdom" and presided over by Mrs. Oliver Hill—conducted a memorial service for Burnett at historic Blount Mansion, which hosted weekly memorial services "for Knoxville citizens." At the same time, Mr. and Mrs. John Snoddy of New Market donated to the museum a baby carriage that Burnett had owned when Vivian was an infant. Burnett had given the pram to the Snoddys before departing New Market, and for several decades afterwards the couple stored it "in a garret." The carriage remained at the mansion for years.⁸⁵

In February 1936, the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* published an article stating that Knoxville College wanted to build "a music hall" on its campus as "a monument" to Frances Hodgson Burnett. Harry Cansler, who had marked with stones the spot where Frances had lived there, received "a letter from Vivian Burnett, New York City, in which Mr. Burnett expressed interest in the monument . . . but asked that Knoxville start the move."⁸⁶ The City of Knoxville never initiated the project, and the proposal fell flat.

For the opening of a new Fountain City library in May 1938, Mrs. Thomas H. Berry commissioned artist Eleanor Wiley to paint a portrait of Burnett, titled "The Romantick Lady." In Wiley's portrait, Frances leans on a pile of books with quill in hand. The author appears slimmer, highly idealized, and dressed according to 1938 fashion. The painting originally hung above the library's fireplace mantle but later was moved near shelves of Frances's works, so that as children read her books they could "send her a friendly smile."⁸⁷

⁸³ J. Leonard Jones et al to Ed M. Vestal, October 10, 1927, WD 454442, Knox County Archives; Bob Cunningham, "Here's What is Going to Happen Along Henley Street," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May 27, 1928, A8.

⁸⁴ Edward M. and Dorothy F. Vestal to City of Knoxville, July 12, 1928, WD 48040, Knox County Archives; "Razing Doesn't Stop," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, September 26, 1928.

⁸⁵ "Little Lord Fauntleroy Carriage to Come Here," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, April 5, 1932.

⁸⁶ "Lord Fauntleroy Writer May Get Memorial Here," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, February 28, 1936.

⁸⁷ "Fountain City's New Library is Open to Public," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May 1, 1938, D6; Margaret Ragsdale, "Author of 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' Found Romance and Happy Home in Knoxville," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, December 11, 1949, A8.





Knoxville artist Eleanor Wiley painted this stylized portrait of Burnett in 1938 for the opening of a new library in Fountain City. The work now hangs in the Jefferson County Courthouse in Dandridge. Photograph by the author, 2017.

Wiley's painting now hangs in the Jefferson County Courthouse in Dandridge. The library collection also included a six-page manuscript donated by Constance Buel Burnett, Vivian's widow. In 1964, the city replaced the library on Hotel Avenue with a larger building; forty years later a new facility opened on Stanton Avenue. Frances's manuscript, a piece she wrote for *Country Gentleman* magazine late in life, apparently did not follow the library to its new location, as current staff members have no knowledge of its existence.⁸⁸

On April 1, 1940, Frances was the subject of a radio play, presented by Knoxville's Junior League and broadcast by WNOX—known for its popular *Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round* country music program. The script by Mrs. Robert (Evelyn) Creekmore depicted scenes from Burnett's life, including the time she wore her unused wedding dress to a Knoxville party. Cast members included Mrs. Lynn Snyder as Frances, Mrs. Roy Witt as Edith, Marion Bankson as Herbert, Mrs. Cletus Jasper as Eliza Hodgson, and Alvin Willis as Swan. Howard Darrow narrated the performance. The play was one

⁸⁸ "Fountain City's New Library"; "New Library to Be Dedicated," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, March 22, 1964, B10; Ed Marcum, "A New Chapter—Dedication Ceremony Marks Fountain City Library's Recent Move, Expansion," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, November 10, 2004.

of several in a series that dramatized local historical figures, such as Cherokee heroine Nancy Ward and Unionist “Parson” Brownlow. While all of the scripts were written to appeal to children, the Junior League received favorable reactions from many adult listeners.⁸⁹

The following year, on May 29, 1941, Knoxville College commemorated the author with a program in Presnell Chapel, in the school’s administration building. Professor and event organizer James L. Cary “made remarks concerning Mrs. Burnett’s life here.” Students Agnes Watson and Mabel Thomas “discussed respectively the life and works of the author.” Following the program, attendees reconvened between the president’s home and McMillan Chapel.⁹⁰ There the Literary Gem club dedicated a “small marble marker” on the spot where Noah’s Ark, the Hodgson cottage, had been located. The plaque was a simple one, and there were hopes of replacing it with something more significant. John M. Frazier, the school’s vice president and business manager, stated in 1949, “I wish we had something better. . . . I wish we could interest some historical society in a better marker.”⁹¹ At some point the marker was removed, perhaps when an addition was constructed onto the rear of McMillan Chapel in 1954. It was never replaced.

A decade after the Snoddy family of New Market placed Vivian Burnett’s baby carriage at Blount Mansion, they apparently relocated it to the University of Tennessee. In June 1942, university president James D. Hoskins accepted the donation, and announced that the university hoped to open a “museum of ‘Tennesseana’” that would hold the pram and “other documents and artifacts pertaining to Tennessee history.” But the museum was never built, and the carriage was eventually returned to Blount Mansion.⁹²

In 1947, two years before the centennial anniversary of Burnett’s birth, the Knoxville Branch of the American League of Pen Women planned a summer program to honor Burnett. They also voted to sponsor the creation of a plaque in Burnett’s honor and have it placed at the Lawson McGhee Library in downtown Knoxville. At a meeting that October, however, the club “tabled” the motion for unknown

⁸⁹ “Junior League will Give Last of Series,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, March 29, 1940, 8.

⁹⁰ “Literary Gem Honors,” [Knoxville College] *Aurora*, June 10, 1941, 4.

⁹¹ Ragsdale, “Author of ‘Little Lord Fauntleroy.’”

⁹² “U.T. Given Carriage of Little Lord Fauntleroy,” [Murfreesboro] *Daily News-Journal*, June 22, 1942, 5.

reasons.⁹³ Burnett gained national attention in 1949 when Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer released *The Secret Garden*—a film version of her novel, produced by former Knoxvilleian Clarence Brown and starring Margaret O’Brien—that April, and when *Life* magazine highlighted her in its December issue. But aside from a lengthy *Knoxville News-Sentinel* article by Margaret Ragsdale that December, Burnett’s hundredth birthday came and went without any recognition in East Tennessee. After reading the *Life* feature, Bert C. Hodgson argued that his aunt Frances was not “silly” and “simpering” as portrayed in the magazine, but rather “forceful . . . forthright” and “a lot more masculine than fluffy feminine as she is pictured there.” Hodgson had hoped Knoxville would commemorate the centennial with some sort of a monument to Burnett. He cited the “elaborate fountain . . . in Central Park, New York,” which had been dedicated in 1937 as a nod to *The Secret Garden*. Hodgson remarked, “Looks as if they think more of her than we do.”⁹⁴

New Market thought enough of Frances to host a major pageant in her honor on June 11, 1955, ninety years after the Hodgsons moved there. Jefferson County’s chapter of the Association for Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA) sponsored the event as the second in its series of historical celebrations.⁹⁵ Held on the campus of New Market Elementary School, the program commenced with remarks by APTA president Clarence Bales, followed by several guest speakers. Knoxville Mayor George Dempster spoke of her earlier years in New Market. Author Helen Topping Miller presented the event’s keynote address about Frances Hodgson Burnett. Tennessee Supreme Court Judge Hamilton Burnett spoke about the Burnett family and his own ties to them.⁹⁶ Bert C. Hodgson, Frances’s nearest relative in attendance, had been invited from Knoxville to share his recollections, but after greeting the audience he made few public comments.⁹⁷

⁹³ “Pen Women Announce Plans for Three Summer Projects,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, June 23, 1947, 6; “Distinguished Knoxville Author to Be Honored,” *Knoxville Journal*, June 24, 1947; Joe Cummings to Vera T. Dean, September 7, 1982, Frances Hodgson Burnett biography file, McClung Collection.

⁹⁴ Dorothy Kunhardt, “Little Lord Fauntleroy—This is Centennial of His Creator’s Birth,” *Life*, December 5, 1949, 71-74, 79; Ragsdale, “Author of ‘Little Lord Fauntleroy’”; “Burnett Memorial Fountain,” New York City Parks, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/central-park/monuments/196>.

⁹⁵ “Jefferson Pageant to Honor Famed Author,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May 22, 1955, A12.

⁹⁶ “Souvenir Program, 1955, Frances Hodgson Burnett Celebration,” McClung Collection.

⁹⁷ “Frances Hodgson Comes Back Again to ‘Pick Blackberries in New Market,’” *Jefferson County Standard*, June 15, 1955.



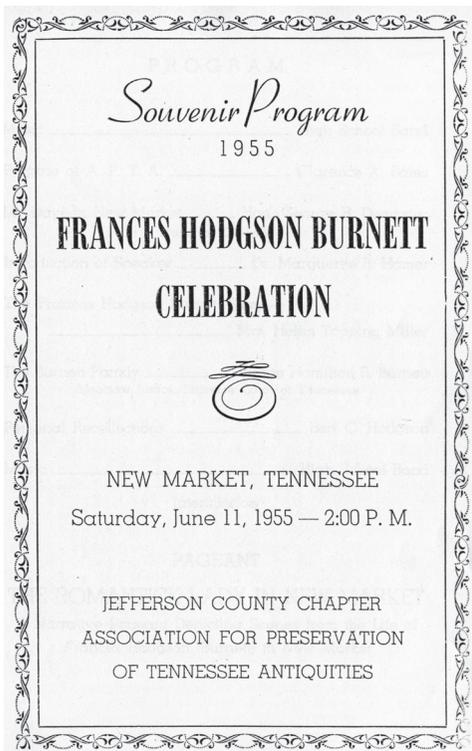


Burnett owned this wicker baby carriage when her son Vivian was an infant. Once donated to Blount Mansion in Knoxville, the pram is now housed at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Dandridge. Photograph by the author, 2017.

After an intermission, the pageant began. “The Romantick Lady in New Market: A Narrative Pageant Depicting Scenes from the Life of Frances Hodgson in New Market” was written, directed, and narrated by Elizabeth Skaggs Bowman. Her cast of about twenty locals included Elizabeth Godfrey Luttrell as Frances and Guy Patterson as Swan. Bowman opened the story in 1865, in Frances’s Select Seminary “schoolroom,” then portrayed Frances planning to sell berries for postage, beginning to write “at the Brazelton Spring,” visiting “the Country Store,” and finally marrying Swan “in the home of Dr. and Mrs. John Burnett.” The cast performed the play in “open-air . . . without back-drops, or painted scenery and with a minimum of furniture and stage props.” Bowman noted that the costumes were correct to the “period of the Reconstruction.”⁹⁸ The pageant’s only flaw was that it perpetuated the notion that Frances sold her first stories while living in New Market rather than in Knoxville, a misconception that found its way into future articles and books.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ “Souvenir Program, 1955, Frances Hodgson Burnett Celebration,” McClung Collection.

⁹⁹ For example, repetitions of this error are found in “Frances Hodgson Comes Back Again to ‘Pick Blackberries in New Market’”; Bible, *Bent Twigs of Jefferson County*, 143-44; Doug Mason, “Art Mimics Life—Uncle’s Grief in ‘Secret Garden’ Echoes Cast Member’s in Clarence Brown Production,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, November 16, 2003.



Program cover for "The Romantick Lady in New Market," a pageant performed in June 1955 to commemorate the Hodgson family's arrival in New Market ninety years earlier. "Souvenir Program, 1955, Frances Hodgson Burnett Celebration," June 1955, Frances Hodgson Burnett biographical file, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, East Tennessee History Center, Knoxville.

Hastened by the pageant, the Tennessee Historical Commission erected two markers in New Market between April and June 1955.¹⁰⁰ The first (1B-51) was planted along Old Andrew Johnson Highway to mark the site where the Hodgsons "spent the winter of 1865," and where Frances opened the "Select Seminary" and met Swan Burnett. The second (1B-52) was placed off

the shoulder of the newer highway, 11E, near Churchview Street, and informed motorists that the author of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* lived "about 250 yards south" of the marker during her first year in the country. The marker, apparently knocked down by a vehicle around 2015 and never replaced, included the author's birth and death years, but not her name.

The Ossoli Club of Knoxville presented Bowman's play again in April 1956 with a cast that included Mrs. Walter Lee Montgomery as Frances. James D. Hoskins, writers Bert Vincent and Ada Campbell Larew, and other local dignitaries attended the performance.¹⁰¹ Seven years later, a different production was staged at Fairfax Mansion in White Pine, Jefferson County. The local APTA chapter hosted "a silver tea" to raise funds for the restoration of New Market's historic Brazelton Cabin. The event included a ballet version of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, choreographed by Bonnie Richardson and performed by her students from Bonnie's School of Dance in Jefferson City.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Email from Linda T. Wynn (Tennessee Historical Commission, assistant director for state programs) to author, April 25, 2018, in author's possession.

¹⁰¹ "Ossoli to See Pageant" *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, April 29, 1956, D6.

¹⁰² "Jefferson APTA Sets Benefit," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, June 23, 1963, E10.



Although the pageant and ballet were never performed again, East Tennesseans would see more than a dozen stage productions of Burnett's works beginning in the 1990s. Much of the renewed interest was due to the successful Broadway musical *The Secret Garden* (1991), and the film adaptations of that novel and *A Little Princess*. In February 1990, as part of its "School Day Series," the Tennessee Theatre presented a roadshow version of *The Secret Garden*, a musical for students and families, created and performed by TheaterWorksUSA. Four years later, in spring 1994, the Cumberland County Playhouse (CCP) in Crossville held the "American premiere of the original British musical adaptation" of *The Secret Garden*, which had opened in Watford, England in 1983. Knoxville native, University of Tennessee alumnus, and Broadway veteran John Cullum sang the role of Archie Craven in Columbia Records' 1988 recording of that musical. For the American premiere, CCP producing director Jim Crabtree reworked the original musical's book and incorporated puppets to depict Burnett's animal characters. CCP performed the musical again in fall 2001.

From that time until the present, productions of either *The Secret Garden* or *A Little Princess* have appeared in the Knoxville area every one to three years including: Maryville High School's production of *The Secret Garden* in March 2002; Clarence Brown Theatre's musical *The Secret Garden* in November 2003; Actors Co-Op of Knoxville's production of *The Secret Garden* in January 2005; Oak Ridge Junior Playhouse's *A Little Princess* in March 2005; the Actors Co-Op's staging of *A Little Princess* in January 2006; Farragut High School's production of *The Secret Garden* in late April 2009; the Children's Theatre of Knoxville's *The Secret Garden* in July 2010 and *A Little Princess* in late September 2012; WordPlayers' musical *The Secret Garden* in July 2014; and the Children's Theatre of Knoxville's staging of *Sara Crewe: A Little Princess* in January 2016. This frequency confirms the relevance of those two novels and suggests that these productions have helped uphold Burnett's literary reputation in the region.¹⁰³

The author's name appeared on another historical marker in Greeneville, Tennessee, seventy-five miles east of Knoxville. Frances passed through the town on her journeys between Washington, D.C. and New Market, as Greeneville was a major stop along the East

¹⁰³ Articles announcing these theater productions appeared in search results for "Frances Hodgson Burnett" from the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* archive, Knox County Public Library.



Tennessee, Georgia, and Virginia Railroad. The Dickson-Williams Mansion, completed in 1821, was known for its grand receptions, attended by luminaries like Davy Crockett, Marquis de Lafayette, and Presidents Andrew Jackson and James Polk. In late 1996 or early 1997, following the mansion's restoration and listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the Tennessee Historical Commission erected a marker (1C-76) along West Church Street. The marker listed Burnett among the house's other notable guests. While several publications have connected Burnett to the mansion, this claim has not been authenticated. The guest list can only be traced back to the "family tradition of the late Miss Marie Williams." At some point during the past two or three decades, a writing desk that Frances allegedly used while writing *Little Lord Fauntleroy* was donated to the mansion museum, but the provenance also has yet to be authenticated.¹⁰⁴

While the Dickson-Williams marker was razed in Greeneville around 1997, work progressed along Neyland Drive in Knoxville on a major riverfront development called Volunteer Landing Park. The finished project encompassed twelve-and-a-half acres, stretching from First Creek to Second Creek. The park included picnic tables, a playground, river access, public restrooms, and a paved greenway.¹⁰⁵ Designers planned for fourteen "Secret History Stones" to be placed at various points across the park, each a chunk of Tennessee marble etched with "brief written tidbits of Knoxville city history." Nearby there would also be "audio units telling historical facts related to the river," narrated by Bill Landry, host of WBIR's *Heartland* series.¹⁰⁶

City planners chose to dedicate one stone to Frances Hodgson Burnett and Vagabondia Castle, the riverside home where she lived with her family. Jack Neely, who researched and wrote the stone's text, specified that the marker be located near the western end of Volunteer Landing, a little west of Henley, close to the Maplehurst neighborhood. The city instead placed it "about a third of a mile" east of there, just shy of the Gay Street Bridge, reasoning that the horizontal stone worked better in that spot than it would have near

¹⁰⁴ "Dickson-Williams Mansion" file, Tennessee Historical Commission, Nashville.

¹⁰⁵ "Volunteer Landing Park," Parks and Recreation, City of Knoxville, http://knoxvilletn.gov/government/city_departments_offices/parks_and_recreation/parks/volunteer_landing_park.

¹⁰⁶ "Preserving Thought in Stone," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, November 6, 1996; Jim Balloch, "Statue Honors Indian Treaty, City's Founding Volunteer Landing Gets Artwork Today," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, March 13, 1998; Jack Neely, "The Case of the Misplaced Markers at Volunteer Landing," *Knoxville Mercury*, April 13, 2017.





This “Secret History Stone” was one of fourteen created in the late 1990s to highlight historical points of interest along Volunteer Landing Park in Knoxville. The stone’s text, written by historian Jack Neely, describes the riverside home that Fannie Hodgson and family knew as “Vagabondia Castle.” However, the marker sits below the Gay Street Bridge, about a third of a mile east of the most likely homesite. Photograph by the author, 2019.

Henley.¹⁰⁷ The placement of the marker made the opening phrase of its text (“NEAR THIS SPOT IN 1869”) inaccurate, and the stone is virtually hidden near the dumpsters of the restaurant, Calhoun’s On the River. One of the restaurant’s managers reported that: “The rock is hardly visible and doesn’t do [Burnett’s] story or memory justice.”¹⁰⁸

A higher-profile Burnett commemoration was planned for 2015, the 150th anniversary of the Hodgsons’ arrival in Tennessee. Kim Fountain Stapleton, a New Market resident who owns the historic Minnis House Bed and Breakfast, organized the conference with a desire to highlight Frances’s local connections. “I’ve had an interest in Frances really all my life,” Stapleton said. “My interest is not really in [Burnett’s] literary works, but mainly as part of our little town’s history since she is the most famous person ever to have lived in New Market.” The Frances Hodgson Burnett Sesquicentennial comprised eight events held over three days in two counties. On November 16, 2015, a wreath was laid at Eliza Hodgson’s grave in Knoxville,

¹⁰⁷ Neely, “Case of the Misplaced Markers.”

¹⁰⁸ Liv McConnell, “Remains from ‘Vagabondia Castle’ Still Guard Knoxville’s Historic, Artistic Roots,” [University of Tennessee] *Daily Beacon*, February 25, 2014.

and that evening Frances's great-granddaughter, Penny Deupree, gave a presentation at Carson-Newman University. The following evening, Valarie Budayr, author of *A Year in the Secret Garden* (2014), and Penny Deupree appeared at the New Market Elementary School. On November 19, the final day of activities, the East Tennessee Historical Society hosted a "Brown Bag Lecture" in Knoxville. The event featured Deupree, who spoke again at the Jefferson County Courthouse in Dandridge that evening, along with presenters Dr. Katherine Carlson and author David Madden. The events marked East Tennessee's largest Burnett commemoration to date, bringing together for the first time a few of Frances's descendants connected to her siblings Herbert and Edith.¹⁰⁹

Almost exactly a month after the Burnett Sesquicentennial, Knoxville lost a beloved citizen, one whom Frances might have considered a kindred spirit had they lived in the same era. Andie Ray had an eye for style, an ear for a colorful story, and a mind for business. In 2004, these three interests merged as Ray opened a dress shop at 27 Market Square. Inspired by literature with local ties, she named her shop Vagabondia, after Burnett's novel.¹¹⁰ Ray sold the business in 2010, and concentrated more on historic preservation and gardening until cancer ended her life on December 18, 2015.¹¹¹

Richard and Jane Ray funded a memorial project at the Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum (KBGA), where their daughter had "spent some time . . . gardening and enjoying the scenery." Landscape architects at Hedstrom Design created "a small garden room" bounded by cypress and arborvitae trees, holly bushes, and stacked stones, and named it "The Secret Garden" after the Burnett novel. Guests enter the space through a wooden door, stepping over a set of skeleton keys embedded in the cement pavement, and follow the walkway past a series of artifacts meaningful to those acquainted with Ray and Burnett: "a clay robin," a giant bird's egg and nest, "a bronze replica of one of [Andie's] favorite trademark hats," the metal "Vagabondia" sign that once hung in her shop on Market Square, and a weatherproof replica of *The Secret Garden*, positioned on a large stone as if someone momentarily set the book aside.¹¹² The

¹⁰⁹ Lesli Bales-Sherrod, "The Secret's Out—Burnett to Be Celebrated in Jefferson, Knox Counties This Week," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, November 15, 2015, E3.

¹¹⁰ Jack Neely, "Andie Ray, 1967-2015," *Knoxville Mercury*, December 21, 2015.

¹¹¹ Carly Harrington, "Vagabondia Building has New Owner, Tenant," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May 28, 2010; Neely, "Andie Ray."

¹¹² "Knoxville Botanical Garden Secret Garden," Hedstrom Landscape Architecture, <http://www.hedstromdesign.com/portfolio/knoxville-botanical-garden-secret-garden/>.





*The Secret Garden at Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum. Created as a memorial to Knoxville business owner and preservationist Andie Ray, and inspired by Burnett's novel *The Secret Garden*, the space was dedicated in September 2016. Photograph by the author, 2019.*

KBGA dedicated the Secret Garden on September 25, 2016, during its annual Green Thumb Gala. The park will remain a beautiful memorial to Andie Ray, and there are plans to expand the space and draw further attention to Burnett there as well. Jim Richards, executive director of the KBGA, said that after the current shrubs mature they will be manicured into the hedges of a formal garden. Eventually a “Secret Garden” sign, featuring text by Knoxville author Laura Still, will be placed at the entrance, and the paths will be enhanced with additional signs etched with quotes from the Burnett novel that inspired the memorial.¹¹³

In June 2018, Knoxville commemorated a major Burnett milestone—the inception of the author’s career in that city 150 years earlier with her first published work. The Knoxville History Project held an event, “An Evening with Frances Hodgson Burnett,” at Maple Hall on Gay Street. Jack Neely read excerpts from Frances’s story “Hearts and Diamonds,” which appeared in the June 1868 edition of *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine*. The audience also heard

¹¹³ Susan Alexander, “Secret Garden Will Be Revealed Today at Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, September 25, 2016; Jim Richards, conversation with the author, June 20, 2018.

a presentation detailing Burnett's Knoxville homesites. At its bar that evening, Maple Hall served cocktails created for the event, including one—containing Bombay gin, St-Germain (a liqueur from elderflower blossoms), cucumber, lime juice, simple syrup, and ginger beer—named “The Secret Garden.”¹¹⁴

On October 5, 2018, the fifteenth annual East Tennessee Writers Hall of Fame Awards Gala was held in Knoxville at Club LeConte. The award, established in 2004 by the nonprofit organization Friends of Literacy, is given to “local writers” whose works have contributed “to our culture and history.” Among fourteen inductees (Cormac McCarthy was honored in absentia with a Lifetime Achievement award), six were awarded posthumously, including one writer of fiction: Frances Hodgson Burnett.¹¹⁵ Author and naturalist Doris Gove accepted her own award that night for Children's Literature, and during her speech “read a passage from *Little Lord Fauntleroy*,” citing it as one novel that “really made an impression on her” as a child. When asked why Friends of Literacy chose to honor Burnett in 2018, executive director Teresa Brittain said:

This year, the Hall of Fame selection panel decided we should make a conscious effort to induct more prominent East Tennessee writers from previous eras, acknowledging their influence on current writers. Jack Neely was a champion for [Burnett], and this was the perfect year to induct her since it marks the 150th anniversary of her first published work. I think many of us didn't realize that Frances got her start as a published author while living in Knoxville.¹¹⁶

* * * * *

Between summer 1865 and spring 1877, excluding the months she traveled abroad, Fannie Hodgson called East Tennessee home for about nine years and two months. During that time, she learned its local customs and dialects, struggled against poverty, published her first stories, mourned her mother's death, celebrated her siblings'

¹¹⁴ Email from Zach Cowen (Maple Hall bar manager) to author, August 31, 2018, in author's possession.

¹¹⁵ “Good Morning, East Tennessee—Tickets on Sale for ET Writers Hall of Fame Gala,” *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, August 22, 2018, A2; “2018 Awards Gala,” East Tennessee Writers Hall of Fame, <https://www.etwritershof.org>.

¹¹⁶ Email from Teresa Brittain to author, October 20, 2018, in author's possession.

marriages, gained wide recognition for her work, married Swan Burnett, and became a mother. These East Tennessee experiences heavily influenced Fannie's personal and professional development and helped her become the author known worldwide as Frances Hodgson Burnett. Accordingly, East Tennessee holds an important place in her legacy and, therefore, a responsibility to help maintain it. Within Burnett's lifetime or shortly thereafter, all of her homes here (possibly excepting the one in New Market, parts of which may still exist) were destroyed; some monuments were dedicated only to disappear without a trace. Columnist Ruth Campbell complained in 1941 that "Knoxville, where Frances Hodgson Burnett lived, the city she called home, does her no honor. Isn't it about time Knoxville awakened to its duty toward the memory of a great woman[?]"¹¹⁷

Today, Burnett fans see little physical evidence that the world-renowned author ever lived and began her career in East Tennessee. Historical signs in New Market and even Greeneville bear the author's name, but tourists seem unlikely to learn of Burnett's connection to these places while passing through the region, as conferences, pageants, and festivals are few and far between. Still, Knoxville now has its own Secret Garden, a peaceful bower hidden among a fifty-acre park through which a young, self-proclaimed dryad like Fannie Hodgson might wander. In the past several years Burnett has been promoted not only through the writings of local historians, but through staged productions of her works, through "literary heritage" excursions like those led by author Laura Still of Knoxville Walking Tours, and through the official recognition of Burnett as an East Tennessee writer.¹¹⁸ In 2019, one hundred and seventy years after Burnett's birth, it appears that there is finally momentum and interest toward making her a visible part of East Tennessee's history.

¹¹⁷ Ruth Campbell, "Proposes Shrine Here for Frances Hodgson Burnett," *Knoxville Journal*, July 13, 1941.

¹¹⁸ Terry Shaw, "Holston Hills Woman Gives Downtown Walking Tours," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, July 18, 2012, D3; "Literary Heritage Tour," Knoxville Walking Tours, <http://knoxvillewalkingtours.com/literary.html/>.

