

15 September, 2014

To : Dominion Transmission

From: Andrew H. Gantt II, Owner of Parcel 90 A7, Wingina, VA

PRECIS

This 800 acre farm named "Rock Cliff" has been owned by my family since 1738. We were the first European settlers here. At one time, my family, the Cabells owned some 60,000 acres in the community. This farm is now the ONLY place with an originally constructed full size frame house that has been in the family continuously since 1738. It is an important element in Virginia history. A pipeline through this property will devastate its historical import, its place in an important conservation effort, and its future as a historical landmark.

I will do everything I can to prevent it.

HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE

In 1738, Dr. William Cabell settled at Warminister, Virginia with his wife Elizabeth Burks. He was given a grant of some 4500 acres up the James river from Warminister by the King of England. This grant included Rock Cliff. Dr. Cabell had five children: Mary, William, Joseph, John, and Nicholas. By 1805, by survey, grant, and purchase, the family's holdings had reached some 60,000 acres. Much of the land bordered the James River, and was used to grow tobacco in a plantation style economy.

During the period prior to the Civil War, Cabells from this land played an intimate part in Virginia's history. A William Cabell was Governor of Virginia in 1805. Joseph Carrington Cabell served in the Virginia Senate, and was instrumental in helping Thomas Jefferson locate the

University of Virginia in Charlottesville. His interaction with Jefferson is contained in his diaries. In inviting Jefferson to visit Edgewood, another place in the original Cabell grant, he wrote, "The roads are impassible at this time of year, Mr. Jefferson, but I will send some hands to carry you." In a year in which his efforts in the Legislature to have the University established in Charlottesville had failed, he wrote, "Mr. Jefferson, I am sorry to inform you that once again my efforts have failed. The Presbyterians and bigots have defeated us." Joseph Carrington Cabell was President of and also was instrumental in achieving the construction of the Richmond and Kanawha Canal, which runs parallel to the James River and through Rock Cliff. Another cousin, John Cabell Breckenridge, was the youngest Vice President of the United States from 1857-1861.

At the time of the Civil War, of course, the Plantation economy and the fortunes of the Cabell family collapsed. Land was lost to debt and taxes. Poverty reigned. My grandmother wrote in her diary. "Today, Sheridan's troops rode up on the back porch(of Rock Cliff). They were quarreling and almost came to blows over a glass of wine. I had expected monsters, but they were just ordinary humans." After the Civil War, most of the Cabells left the area.

But, not my ancestors, and Rock Cliff remained in the family. My great-grandfather, Dr. William Andrew Horsley descendant of Mary Cabell, bought Rock Cliff from Mayo Cabell around 1840. The first house, an overseers dwelling was built around 1825. The first portion of the main house was constructed around 1840, and an addition added in 1880. In addition, he built the first public schoolhouse, still standing, around 1875, and gave it to Nelson County. When the County, desperate for revenue during the great Depression began selling its assets to gain funds, my father, Dr. William Andrew H. Gantt, M.D. bought it back. My son has spent many thousands of dollars in its restoration.

My great-grandfather was able to keep the land mainly because as a doctor, he did not depend on slavery for his living. Nevertheless, post Civil War poverty in my family was intense. I believe that few if any repairs were made on the Rock Cliff house from the time of his death in 1885 until 1929. The farm itself was divided up among Dr. William Andrew Horsley M.D.'s children, and their children, into pieces as small as 1/84th of the total. It was a desperate time. My father said that he could never remember a time as a child when he was not hungry.

His mother, Dr. Horsley's daughter was left a widow in 1895 with her two small children, my uncle, Henry P. Gantt, and my father, W. Horsley Gantt. She was left with \$3000 in debt. On a teacher's salary of \$270 per month, she paid off the debt. She also managed to get my uncle into West Point, and my father into Medical School. She and the children lived at Rock Cliff during their childhoods, and she taught at the school on "Rock Cliff" that her father had built and given to the County.

My father lived in Russia during the 1920's first in charge of the Leningrad office of Hoover's American Relief Administration, and later working with the Nobelist, Dr. Ivan Pavlov. He returned to the United States in 1929, and was later recommended himself for the Nobel prize in Medicine.

Among recent family successes which may have a bearing on this issue, my younger daughter was first in her Virginia Law School class, clerked for Supreme Court of the United States, Justice Breyer, and now works for a very large law firm in Virginia. She is a strong advocate of conservation, doing pro bono work for the Southern Environmental Law Council.

My father had a great appreciation for the history of his family and his place, Rock Cliff. When he returned from Russia in 1929, he began to purchase all the pieces of the property that had been left to his cousins, and brother. He completed this process of reassembly in 1975, buying the final 1/84th piece. In addition, he made major repairs to the house, keeping it from falling down. My wife and I have spent several hundred thousand dollars restoring the main house and outbuildings.

I inherited the property from him. I have always been interested in conservation. I served as a Director on the first Board of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. In that vein, during my lifetime, 300,000 trees have been planted on Rock Cliff, and I have developed a sustainable forestry program here. In addition to its designation as a Virginia Century farm, I have maintained it as a nature preserve, allowing no shooting of animals on the property for the past sixty years. Thus, we have seen cougar here, as well as bobcats, coyotes, and all the other animals native to Virginia. Recently, a mother bear walked through our back yard with three cubs in tow. I was an elected Director and Treasurer of the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District for twelve years, and the Treasurer of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Districts for one year. As the lead organizer of JAWACC, we prepared a tributary strategy for cleaning up the James River, and submitted it to the Virginia Legislature for funding.

There is a family cemetery on the property, with graves going back to the 1850's. It is held in a trust owned and maintained by the family. In addition, there are slave graves scattered throughout the property, near the various remnants of housing quarters. There are endangered flora and perhaps fauna on the land.

Without exaggeration, it will be an ecological and historical travesty if Dominion Transmission runs a pipeline through our property. It will not only disturb the ground and pose a significant safety issue, but it will detrimentally influence the entire character of an historically significant property. We are original settlers. The land and our family have played an important part in the past history and current affairs of Virginia. This history of Rock Cliff IS intimately Virginian, from settlement, through the plantation economy, the devastation of the Civil War and consequent family poverty, and the family's rise again into prominence. Through all this period, we have preserved our place, Virginia's place. It is the soul of our family, and of the history of Virginia. The land itself is a gem of conservation, due to our efforts over the past centuries.

A large natural gas pipeline through this place of living history will inflict a scar that cannot be erased. Rock Cliff is virtually unique. It should be preserved. Dominion Transmission will be well served by helping to making it happen.