

How Grayson became Grayson

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The town of Grayson, Kentucky County seat of Carter, was named so in honor of Heabard (Grayson) Carter. She would be known as Hebe.

It is hard to imagine anyone with a richer, blue blooded pedigree, than Hebe. Her grandmother was a cousin of James Monroe. Her mother, was a sister of Maryland Governor William Smallwood. Her nephew, was Confederate General John Breckenridge Grayson.

Hebe, daughter of Col. William. Grayson and Miss. Smallwood, married Robert W. Carter(1), of Loudoun Co., Virginia about 1795. They had a fine estate in Virginia and life was good. It appears that Robert passed away around 1808 leaving six children. Hebe decided to move to Kentucky to work the huge 70,000 acre grant given to her father for his war service. The move was hardly a back-breaking affair, at least for Hebe and the family, as she brought along the slaves. The 1810 census shows that Hebe owns 12 slaves. In addition to the children, in the household there are seven other adult males and one female; most likely hired help and slave overseers. Two cousins of Hebe, Robert H. and George W., who apparently made the trip with her, own 49 and 5 slaves respectively. Even with the luxuries her position afforded her, the move from the soft life in a grand house in Virginia, to the backwoods of Kentucky, must have must have come after considerable contemplation.

With the amount of baggage and bodies, it is most likely that that her party traveled first to Wheeling, Va. then by boat to Greenup. This was a much easier, albeit more expensive route, then the Wilderness Trail used by most early eastern Kentucky pioneers. It is not clear how long Hebe stayed in Greenup/Carter County or where she lived while there. Likely, it was only long enough to secure her land holdings which included the profitable Little Sandy salt works.

By 1811 she would was living in a much more comfortable surrounding in Paris, Kentucky. Located in the heart of the bluegrass, Paris in 1811 offered a lot more in the way of comforts than the wilderness of Eastern Kentucky. Furthermore, a small society of Virginia aristocrats, were taking hold there.

In Paris, she came under the influence of another ex-Virginian, Valentine Peers. Although born in Ireland, Valentine had served with distinction in the Continental Army and he too received a land grant for his service. After the war he settled in Loudoun Co., Virginia and married a cousin of Hebe's, Eleanor Orr.

Peer moved to Maysville around 1782, and later to Paris. Some twenty years later he is credited with bringing the first piano and the first carriage to Kentucky.

While here, Hebe, with the assistance of Peer, divested herself of much of her Carter County holdings, although a great amount was passed on to her children.

In 1811 Hebe added to her slave holdings; witness the following bill of sale:

Charles Tyler sells 5 Negroes to Hebe Carter for 965 dollars. Slaves are Rachael and her children Lydia, Sam, and Penelope. Also a mulatto named Rachel. May 15th 1811. Signed by Charles Tyler Jr. witnessed by Robert H. Grayson and George W. Grayson.

Unfortunately, Hebe's time in the Bluegrass was not to last for long. She passed away on October 26, 1813. It is said that she died at the home of Valentine Peers. She left the following will:

(Last Will and Testament of Hebe Carter. Leaves all property to her 6 children. To raise money for debts may sell property that is not related to Little Sandy Salt Works. Slave Betsey to receive her freedom. Her 2 children are to remain with her till old enough to labour [sic] and are then to go to religious families. States that they will receive their freedom at the usual time given to literate young servants. Susan Peers receives "girl" Rachael until of age to "literate" at which time she gains her freedom. She is to be educated at Hebe Carters expense. Cousin Eleanor Peers receives a carriage to be repaired if worth the expense, all the household furniture, except stated items for daughter. Children to be educated and Benjamin Peers to receive education at Hebe Carters expense. A piano to be bought out of resources for Susan Peers. Executor to determine extent of education of children. Wants Mr. James Barns or some other religious young man to live with children and assist them in their studies. Rev. Lyle Robert Trimble and Valentine Peers made executors of will. Signed by Hebe Carter October 12th 1813. Witnessed and signed by Thos Holt and Andw Todds. Note that will was recorded in court. Signed by Thos P Smith DCBC.

One of her sons, William Grayson Carter, became a state senator for Greenup, Lawrence and Lewis County. Through his influence, both the County and the County seat were named for his family. In time, he too left the area, moving on to Arkansas.

A daughter of Hebe Grayson (also named Hebe) and Robert Carter married Dudley Mann, Asst. Secretary of State under the Pierce administration

A son, Landon Carter attended the Military Academy at West Point along with his cousin, Robert E. Lee. Sources vary as to if Landon graduated or if he married. He is the only one of the family buried in Carter County, said to have been buried in the rear of Horton House.

A note to researchers. I have made no attempt to verify the information contained herein and thus should not be used as "proof".

(1) Remarkably, three sources give three different names for the husband of Hebe. One says Robert Wormsley Carter. Another says William G. Carter and yet another says her husband was John B. Carter. One would think this was better documented. I choose the one most likely

Links for further reading:

<http://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=770> Wm. Grayson (Hebe's father)Marker

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/fgr29.html> A cousin of Hebe

<http://library.osu.edu/sites/speccoll/finding/vpeers.html> Valentine Peer papers.