

The land would not be fully his for another three years, but in 1870 Hugh Carr paid John Shackelford \$100 in “partial payment” of 58 acres that would become River View Farm. A little more than a week later the rains came; rains that would devastate lands and towns all along the Shenandoah Valley.

Hugh Carr was born into slavery on the Woodlands plantation (owned by R.W. Wingfield), located just around the bend of Ivy Creek. As is true of so many born enslaved, we do not know the exact date of his birth but records indicate that he was in his late-twenties when the Great Flood of 1870 destroyed the adjacent mill town, washed away prime farm land and cut the area off from the world for weeks. It is hard to imagine what went through the mind of this man who had spent his first 5 years of freedom laboring and sharecropping to save up for this moment. But both the farm and the man were resilient. Hugh Carr would become the farm manager at Woodlands while working his own land. Census records from 1880 show River View Farm’s 80 acres valued at \$1500, with crops including wheat, corn, oats, and tobacco. By 1890 River View Farm would total 125 acres, making Hugh Carr one of the local African American community’s largest land holders. Hydraulic Mills would be rebuilt as well and the surrounding community of Union Ridge would be thriving. Carr would marry his second wife, Texie Mae Hawkins, in 1883. Together they would raise six daughters, Mary, Fannie, Emma, Peachie, Hazel and Virginia, and one son, Marshall. Texie Mae would die in 1899, leaving Hugh to raise the children, largely with the help of his eldest daughter, Mary Louise, who was 14 at the time.



Hugh Carr



Texie Mae Hawkins



Mary Carr

Education would be a driving force in the story of the family. While Texie Mae was born post-*emancipation* and able to receive a formal education; this was denied to Hugh Carr and he never learned to read or write. The two were determined that their children would all go to school, regardless of any obstacles. And they did, with five going on to earn higher degrees. Their eldest daughter, Mary Louise, for whom nearby Greer Elementary School is named, would become first a teacher and then principal for Albemarle Training School (ATS), the African American secondary school. Under her leadership ATS expanded to a fully accredited 4-year high school, offering chemistry, biology, civics and foreign language in addition to the vocational sciences. She would take a leave of absence at one point to return to Virginia Normal and earn her B.S. degree, something the institution was unable to offer when she was a student there, 20 years before. Mary Carr Greer spent 36 years at ATS before her retirement in 1950. Mary Carr Greer was also active in countless community groups and would visit families throughout the county advocating for advanced education for the children.

While studying at Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute (now known as Virginia State University) Mary Louise met Conly Greer and, in 1913, they were married. Conly Greer had studied agriculture and took over the running of River View Farm from an aging Hugh Carr, who passed away in 1914. The handing over of this successful farm from a man, born enslaved with no hope to own his own property and denied even the chance to learn to read, to his well-educated son-in-law is one of the many examples of perseverance and courage evident within African American communities during the times of Reconstruction and Jim Crow.

In 1918 Conly Greer became the first African American agricultural service extension agent for Albemarle County. Greer would teach best practices to the local farmers that he served; traveling throughout the county inspiring empowerment through modern agricultural practices. Conly Greer would continue to work his own farm as well as other jobs that would sustain it. His days often spanned from 3am to well past dark. In the 1930s he cemented River View Farm as a place of education when he built his state-of-the-art barn here. He retired from the Extension Service in 1953.

Conly Greer was the last of the family to farm on this land. With his passing in 1956, the agriculture was maintained by tenant farmers, some of whom had known Greer through the extension service.

Mary Carr and Conly Greer had one daughter, Louise Evangeline, who married and moved to Nashville where she raised her family and pursued a career at Fisk University. Evangeline’s four children all spent considerable time with their grandparents. Three of them would live at one time or another at River View Farm. However, none of Hugh Carr’s descendants were farmers at the time of Mary Carr Greer’s death in 1970 and the land was sold, eventually becoming the Ivy Creek Natural Area.



Conly Greer with one of his grandsons