

In The Big White Castle

by two "pretend" children

Once upon a time there lived a family in the land of Salem. It was a very special family. They had not always lived in this land—you could tell by their dialects.

The mother and the daddy had four strong handsome boys who were their "real" children and about three hundred "pretend" children—all girls! They took good care of all their children and always made the "pretend" ones welcome in their big white castle at the end of a wisteria-arched brick path.

Actually the "pretend" children were under the protection of parents who lived in far away lands like Char-Lotte, Green-Ville, Ra-Leigh, and Blue-Field. But, these real parents had sent their children to the court of this special family, for there were many learned men in the court who could make them wise in the ways of higher education. And so, the "pretend" children made the Salem fief their home for usually four short years. They roamed the lands and learned to love their adopted family.

The Lord of the House, Worthy Dale, was a tall, be-spectacled, amiable thane. At this time he and his worthy co-hort, Sir Britt, were waging a campaign to enlarge their Salem fief.

One day, the parents of the now "pretend" children were invited to a tourney on the fief. They came from far and wide to see the challenge of the "shovel" to the "clay". Thus began the battle to increase the habitat for more "pretend" children in the future. In all this Lord Dale was most proficient.

For many fortnights he waged verbal battles. He went forth to every neighboring castle to gain support for this his greatest war. (Sir Britt stayed home to guard the moat!)

One Sunday night after a day of three such verbal battles he returned to the white castle on his gray steed named Packard.

The fair Dame Caroline greeted him with open arms. Her hair curled merrily 'round her smiling face. She was known through Salem land as a most gracious dame and was in constant demand at all the neighboring castles' functions.

Thane Dale walked into their reading room, sat down, and took off both his shoes—took up the latest town dispatch and called Caroline to place a supper of ice cream and potato chips on their table round (his favorite Sunday night repast).

Their favorite "graymalkin" purred at his feet. Dame Caroline reported that Cat Inky had once again usurped the guest room bed! She then sojourned to the kitchen, opened the freezer, and threw up her hands in dismay—no ice cream! She called to Dale, "Would'st thou

rather have a cold pork sandwich dear? And here is half a Hershey bar (with almonds)!"

"I fain would not" cried he. "We'll wait and send the boys for a gallon when they return—before they depart for far-off David-Son and neighboring Cen-Tral."

By chance the three eldest sons were returning to the castle together from nearby damsel's fiefs. The "sometimes" worthy Diggs spied a Dairy Queen and said, "let's take a gallon home to Dad." He was a lean and hungry boy bearing his father's name (and also his specs). The other two deemed this a very wise move.

These were named Hugh and Bill. The former, also dubbed "Grinny" by his brothers of a secret order, had just recently given away his jeweled Beta pin. The latter was an athlete, greatly acclaimed at tourneys near and far; a shy lad than Hugh and Diggs, but handsome, tall, and bright. All three were thrifty, summer-working lads, but Diggs, thriest of all had "left his wallet home" when the ice cream bill came due!

They journeyed on and came upon their youngest brother Steve walking up the brick path. In one hand he carried the national banner which he had just removed from its post—in the other a bunch of violets for his mother, the Lady Caroline. He talked to his imaginary playmates as he walked along the path. He was truly a precocious child and greeted his brothers in Thane Dale's manner, "And how are you today? Tell me what has happ'd of late."

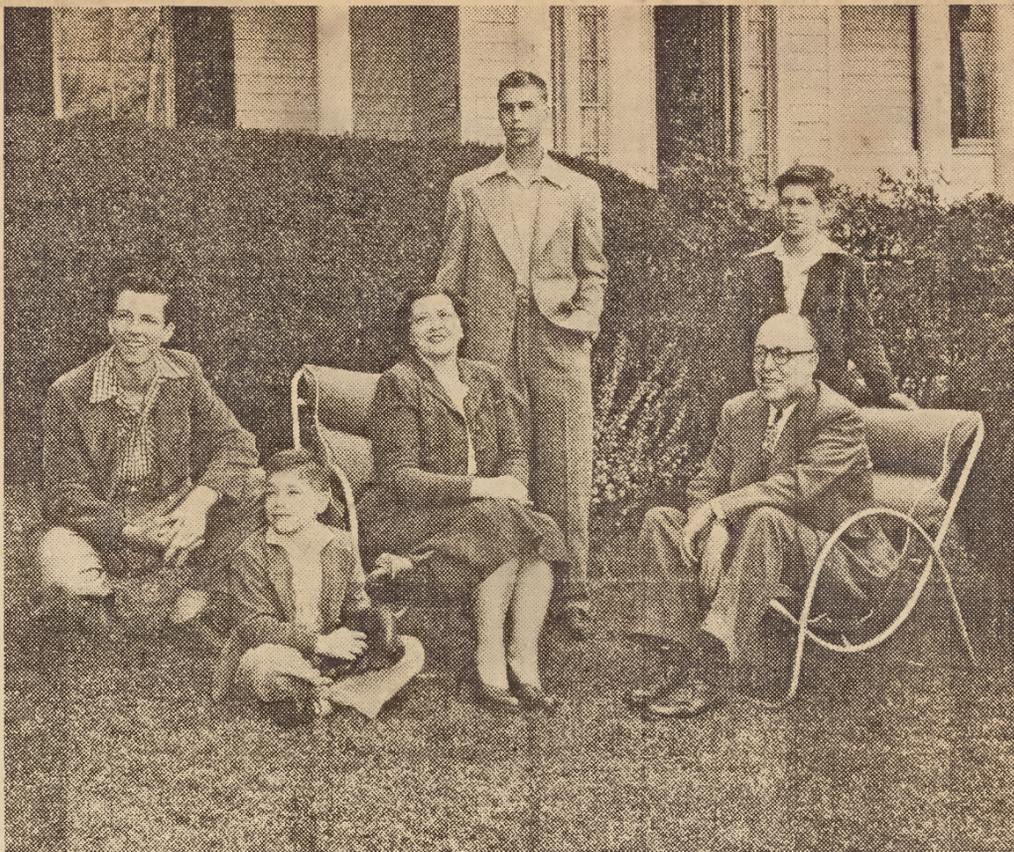
They sallied forth together. Steve grabbed his trombone at the gate

of the castle and announced their regal entrance. Bill was elected to bear the ice cream for he was strong from hurling the shot-put and the javelin. Diggs took on his countenance of jester which Hugh decried — (the two were oftimes, skirmishing).
Dame Caroline, aghast at their onslaught, was frantic over what to feed them—as in they marched through kitchen door—a handsome witty, goody, always-hungry four! Thane Dale perceived the gallon borne and calmed his Lady fair. He was overjoyed about their gift

and straightway opened a can of chocolate sauce.
They sat down at their kitchen table round. It was always a merry, merry meal. They laughed at Diggs antics until Thane Dale had to remove his specs and dry his eyes. Steve had disappeared and later they could hear him laughing—he may have been watching television or reading comics, for the castle reverberated with his laughter whenever he ployed either occupation. Hugh and Bill kept Lady Caroline busy with their orders for food to last them all week back at David-Son.
At last the eldest three departed and Dale and Caroline climbed the

stairs. The former clutched a mystery thriller; the latter, her needlework. They could hear Stevie conversing with his imaginary playmates in his room. Lady Caroline hushed him, for he had a long day ahead at Cen-Tral. They entered their bedchamber and smiled at each other as their glances came upon a picture of four smiling little boys—now so grown up.
If you ever go to Salem land, walk up the wisteria-arched brick path to the white castle — You'll find my story's true. There lives a very special family.

By Bobbi Kuss and Maggi Blakeney



The inhabitants of the big, white castle as they appeared on first becoming lord, lady, and lads of Salem fief. (Acquiring the fief some years ago, it is natural that each one of the Gramley court should change in appearance. Dire financial straits has made it impossible for us to obtain another picture of the court, will you bear with us in this our trying time?)

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