

Fredonia's Brother/Sister Inns  
By Douglas H. Shepard

A surviving letter from 1840 reminds us that two inns in today's Fredonia were once homes that belonged to a sister and a brother. The letter was written by Julia (Juli) Sarah **White** (1819 – 1856) and was recently purchased by Carol and Jim **Boltz** for the Darwin R. **Barker** Museum. Fredonia's **Edwards Waterhouse** Inn began as Julia's home, and Fredonia's **White** Inn began as the home of her brother Devillo **White** (1816 – 1913).

Devilleo was mentioned in Julia's letter. They were the children of Dr. Squire **White** (1785-1857) and his wife Sarah (Sally) **Barker White** (1795 - 1823), who was in turn the daughter of Hezekiah **Barker** (1757-1834) and Sarah **Wood Barker** (1764-1851). Sally **White** died at a young age from the typical, nineteenth-century complications of childbirth, and her infant Edwin died within two years afterward.

Dr. **White** remarried to Lydia **Cushing Houghton White**. Julia and Devillo grew up with their step-siblings in the Dr. Squire **White** house, which stood at today's *52 East Main Street*. Devillo later built a new mansion there, and parts of his home can still be seen in portions of today's **White** Inn.

Julia attended the Fredonia Academy from 1829 through 1836. Children from her father's second marriage included the "Ellen, George, and Mary," who are mentioned in Julia's letter, which she wrote four years after her own school days. It was sent to her cousin-in-law "Mrs. Caroline **White**, care of Dr. D. **White**, Sherburne Village, Chenango Co., N.Y."

Julia's Letter

Caroline's husband Dr. D. **White** was another Devillo **White**, and he was also mentioned in Julia's letter. Although Julia was soon to be married and would move to the earlier version of the home at today's *71 Central Avenue*, her letter does not indicate an upcoming wedding. Nor does it mention the home which would later become the **Edwards Waterhouse** Inn. The letter is transcribed as follows:

*Fredonia April 27<sup>th</sup> 1840*

*Dear Cousin Caroline.*

*Your letter of Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> is now before me. I can scarcely think it possible that so long a time has elapsed since its reception, without conveying some testimonial of my continued regard & friendship – but Time, that sly rogue, has actually cheated me out of weeks and months, and I must either charge him with extra rapidity or acknowledge my guilt at once.*

*Indeed my good Cousin could you catch a glimpse of this drawer of scribbled papers – some half dozen of which are unfinished letters to you – you would conclude, and very justly too, that you was very far from being forgotten - - On the whole, perhaps I cannot better show my penitence than by promising to be a very very, punctual correspondent hereafter --*

*Shall I tell you how I have spent my time since I wrote you last? The winter has passed quickly and pleasantly away – some of it has been spent with friends and pleasant schoolmates – and much with the family circle at home. I have often pictured to myself how you all looked in that quiet sitting-room of yours and would have liked right well to have spent some of those long, pleasant winter evenings with you. Cousin Devillo says – “things go on pretty much the same as in 1839,” excepting that people’s faces are rather longer on account of the hard times”- by the by, Caroline do you think it has had any serious effect on that boyish, roguish face of his?*

*Methinks even now I can catch a glimpse of the playful wink.—I rather think he is thinking of the “glorious change” which will be, when old “Tip” takes the Presidential chair – when this strange affair happens. I expect to see bank-bills growing on trees – well – success to his election – I don’t know as we ladies can do anything more than give him our best wishes ---*

*This has been a very lovely Spring day - Sis H- & myself have just returned from a long walk in the fields – and have found some beautiful wild flowers. I have one beautiful nosegay – which I should like right well, to send to you – But “Uncle Sam” would not allow this I suppose – so I must be content to keep it myself- - -*

*You remember the Narumbarga [Nierembergia] – It was in blossom when I came home last fall and we kept a box of it in the house for a long time, after the cold weather came on – it is a pretty flower – I would send you some seeds in a Newspaper – if I thought it would be safe ---*

*But you would like to hear something about the family – I will give you a short discription [sic] of each. The children Ellen, George, & Mary have not altered much – excepting they have grown taller – Ellen is the same old sixpence – likes to*

have her own way quite as well as ever – a few years more – and she will see the folly of this, if this habit of hers is once corrected – I shall have no fear for her then.

George is about as fond of play as ever – his thoughts & time are employed in arrangements about fishing & shooting. I occasionally hear him speak of a promised Gun – and what remarkable things he shall do when he gets the promised treasure. Of Mary I cannot say much only she grows handsome - & keep [sic] her amiable disposition yet.

But you will weary of this long description, so I will include the rest in a few words. Sis H spends the summer at home – we have fine times together I assure you – Ma's health is not as good as usual – she sends love to you both. Pa is well – and please tell the Dr – that of late he is quite bound up in Durham Calves – I sometimes wish he was here to tip up the trough Has he forgotten that yet?

We expect Wm here in May. The Cottage on the hill, owned by I. Z. **Saxton** [today's 28 Hamlet Street] is to be sold the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, and he is coming to attend the sale – Devillo will remember the situation I presume. We feel the hard times too, here in Western New York. Mr. **Guild** one of our wealthiest merchants has lately failed – and has retired from business some thousands in debt - - He is a useful citizen and well merits the sympathy of all. -- --

Well cousin C\_\_ I see I have nearly filled this sheet – and though it is but a hasty scrawl – I hope you will overlook all in your friend- You would not blame me much if you could see my work-basket. Here are 8 shirts to be finished before May 14!! All for that boy Wm. Don't you think he taxes my patience too much? To all our friends in S [Sherburne] present the regards of myself & the rest of the family – and accept a good portion for yourselves. I hardly know whether it is best to ask you to write soon – at least let me say – I know of nothing which would give me more pleasure than letters from both you & Cousin D. and will expect one soon.

To Mr & Mrs T. Pratt present my congratulations & best wishes – Love to Adaline – tell her I have not forgotten her – To Augusta – best love & many kind wishes and to all who inquire – to each & all give my best regards. Write soon - & tell me all which you think would interest me - & no one know so well what will – than you. Juli.

A note in the margin reads as follows: *By the by cousin C. I shall begin to be half jealous of you – I am afraid you hear the knocker more frequently than ever – Is it not so?* A second marginal note reads as follows: *Deville & Lamira send love- Lamira's health is very poor- Pa has been somewhat fearful she would run into the consumption – But her cough is better now. They call their little girl Catharine Margaret. It is a sweet little child and D\_ thinks it is a perfect witch - - - Ever yours affectionately. Julia*

Julia married the Fredonia lawyer Francis Smith (F. S.) **Edwards** on 7 October 1840, just a few months after her letter to “Cousin Carolyn.” Edwards was a politician, and Julia’s two children were Mary Buell **Edwards** (1841-1907), who married Charles Warren **Smith**, and Clayton Frank **Edwards** (1850-1928), who married Mary Platte **Morgan**. The **Edwards** family home was later remodeled into its present style by Fredonia’s **Waterhouse** family.

Julia died young, and she was probably buried in Fredonia’s Pioneer cemetery with her parents and grandparents. Shortly before her death, her husband F. S. **Edwards** had defeated New York’s Governor Reuben **Fenton** for a seat in the U. S. Congress. **Edwards** was later buried in Fredonia’s Forest Hill cemetery with his second wife and at least one of his children from his second marriage.

### The Two Devillos

Julia’s paternal grandfather William **White** (1742-1827) and paternal grandmother Eunice **Rogers White** (1746-1818) had lived in Sherburne NY with their nine children, who included Julia’s father, and also her uncle Dr. Asa **White** (1772-1819). Asa **White** and Sarah **Corbin White** (1774-1845) had had eight children, including Julia’s cousin Dr. Devillo **White** (1801-1882), whose wife Caroline **Pratt White** (1804-1897) was the addressee of Julia’s letter.

The “Sherburne Devillo” was cited in a biographical sketch in *History of Chenango and Madison Counties, New York* by James H. **Smith** (D. **Mason & Co.**, Syracuse NY, 1880). In spite of growing up at an inn where his father was a proprietor and doctor, the “Sherburne Devillo” was also educated as a doctor. Devillo’s father had tutored Julia’s father in medicine, so after the death of Devillo’s father, Julia’s father tutored his nephew Devillo.

The “Sherburne Devillo” took over his father’s practice and became a prominent and wealthy citizen. He was active in the Whig party and later became “warmly attached” to the Republican Party. He apparently assisted with fundraising to

support the Union effort during the Civil War. The “Sherburne Devillo” was also a generous supporter of his community, loaning money to those in need. He and his wife Caroline also adopted several homeless children.

The “Fredonia Devillo,” Julia’s brother, seems to have had, at least for a time, an entirely different personality. On 30 December 1863, the *Fredonia Censor* published the “Fredonia Devillo’s” notice from the *Fredonia Advertiser*, an advertisement in which Devillo had announced the sale of his property in order to “leave this d--- Negro town.” In other words, he did not like abolitionists.

The *Censor*, which was the anti-slavery newspaper published and edited by the Willard **McKinstry** family, replied to the “Fredonia Devillo’s” announcement as follows: “Being willing to contribute in a liberal spirit to the furtherance of the laudable purpose of the subscriber to leave..., we give his advertisement a gratuitous insertion. Our readers ... will not be surprised ... to learn that its writer is of the genus ‘Copperhead,’ ....”

The *Censor* went on to say that no one in Fredonia should lament Devillo’s departure, “since the old couplet will now apply: ‘True patriot he, for be it understood, he left his country for his country’s good’.” Levi **Risley**, who was from another prominent, anti-slavery family in Fredonia, sent his own comment to the *Censor*, published on 10 February 1864: “I hope friend **White** may find a purchaser and that he may find an agreeable asylum.... The cause of the Union wants none of the help of such men.”

The “Fredonia Devillo” did not leave town, however, and may have decided to make amends for his negative comments about Fredonia abolitionists. According to his obituary, the “Fredonia Devillo” was mourned as “a strictly honest man. We never heard him accused of trying to take advantage of anybody in any transaction. He was a druggist in Fredonia many years and also followed other lines of business.... He did many very kind acts but never mentioned them.”