

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE**

**MARGARET AND EMILY HUGHES  
VICTORIAN COLONISTS OF THE CUMBERLAND PLATEAU  
THEIR LIFE AT RUGBY, TENNESSEE**

**A SENIOR THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
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**by  
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Thomas Hughes was a noted English author, politician, and philanthropist, who wanted to establish a haven for the English nobility's second sons and their families. Nestled on the Cumberland Plateau in East Tennessee, Rugby, Tennessee was intended to be the realization of Thomas Hughes' vision. At Rugby these young men would be free of the constraints put on them by Victorian society of the 1880's. No longer would they be limited to occupations in the military, clergy, or to professions such as a doctor or lawyer; nor would they remain reliant on the generosity of their fathers or older brothers in order to maintain their accustomed lifestyle. They came expecting to establish a new Victorian society in the unlikely spot of Rugby, Tennessee. For a time Rugby was a thriving community of over three hundred people, complete with most of the amenities of an English Victorian village.

While most of the early settlers were young men there was a contingency of women settlers- wives, sisters, even some mothers moved to Rugby. Rugby's social foundation came in the form of a pair of unlikely women – Margaret Hughes, mother of Thomas and Hastings Hughes, and Emily Hughes, daughter of Hastings Hughes. Margaret, the venerable matriarch of the Hughes clan, was eighty-three when she undertook the arduous journey from London to Rugby, Tennessee. Emily, on the other hand was a young woman of eighteen looking forward to being reunited with her father, who had already settled in Rugby. Together Margaret and Emily shared in the development of Rugbian society, came to be the most notable of Rugby's citizens, and proved to be invaluable in binding the community together. Margaret and Emily were known to all the Rugby settlers and provided them with a tangible link to Thomas Hughes, who was never a full time resident of Rugby. Living together at Uffington

House, Margaret and Emily's lives were very different. Margaret, with her proper English manners and ways, exemplified the part of benevolent matron to the town, filling in for Thomas in many of the formal ceremonies and events of the town. She played hostess to visitors, entertained "the Rugby boys", helped form clubs and societies, and was active in charitable causes and her church. Emily, in contrast to her grandmother, developed into a very unconventional young woman for the period. Owning and running her own farm, traveling about the area often without a proper chaperone, and learning photography were some of the activities that Emily pursued during her time in Rugby. Margaret Hughes with her proper Victorian behavior was a model for the settlers, especially the women who came to Rugby, of how a proper English lifestyle should be structured; Emily on the other hand showed the settlers how a proper young Victorian woman could adapt to their new environment.

Throughout the Victorian Era, English aristocracy faced many changes, not only to their livelihoods but also to the very way in which they were perceived by the rest of English society. Various essayists in the book, *Victorian England*, contend that the Victorian Era was a time of great change in England. A strong middle class emerged as factory owners and businessmen made huge profits, demanded more say in politics, and won the right to vote. Men, women, and children who left the countryside to find steady work in the factories flooded the already crowded cities, adding to the strife among the classes. Class division was no longer as rigidly fixed and people began to move between the classes.<sup>1</sup> Yet for the upper class the centuries old inheritance system, which automatically passed the family estate to the first-born son, remained in effect and left

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<sup>1</sup> Clarice Swisher, Introduction, *Victorian England*, Clarice Swisher, ed. (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc. 2000), 11-13.

little in the way of prospects for any sons that followed. Few options were available to these highly educated young men. Thomas Hughes, as a second son himself, was very aware of these limitations and sought to find a beneficial remedy for all concerned.

Thomas Hughes was born October 20, 1822 at Uffington, Berkshire, England. His family was deeply religious; as biographer George J. Worth described Thomas' family, "His grandmother was the daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter of three early vicars of Uffington."<sup>2</sup> His grandfather, after whom he was named, was also a minister. Hughes' time at the famous Rugby School in England has been cited as being the most important factor in forming his social and political beliefs. Rugby School was under the leadership of Dr. Thomas Arnold when Thomas Hughes was a student. Arnold, an educational reformer, was instrumental in implementing changes at Rugby School to eliminate bullying, to give more authority to the teachers, and to allow the upper classmen "to set the moral tone of the school."<sup>3</sup> Arnold's religious, ethical, and social teachings were instrumental in shaping Hughes' moral beliefs and made him acutely aware of the gulf not only between the upper, middle and lower classes, but also of the growing economic gap in the upper class between the first son and subsequent sons. Doug and Dawn Brachey wrote, "Hughes was a versatile individual, deeply concerned about his fellow man."<sup>4</sup> Hughes became a successful lawyer and member of the House of Commons, both acceptable professions for a second son, but it was as a novelist that he became best known. Publication of Hughes's first novel, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, made him an instant celebrity, both in England and in the United States, and allowed him to

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<sup>2</sup> George J. Worth, *Thomas Hughes* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Doug and Dawn Brachey, *Rugby Tennessee's Victorian Village* (Brentwood, TN.: JM Productions, 1987), 6.

pursue his dream of establishing a place where second sons could come into their own and no longer be dependant on handouts from their families.

Most of the books written about Rugby go into great detail about Hughes' reasons for founding the colony and of his hopes for these young men. Hughes wanted to provide opportunities for England's educated young men to make their living in occupations that were not considered appropriate for their class in Victorian England. The Bracheys wrote that, "Hughes hoped that in Rugby second sons could be merchants, farmers, and laborers without shame."<sup>5</sup> An advocate for working on the land, Hughes believed that Rugby's 75,000 acres would provide ample room for large numbers of settlers to establish themselves. The founding director of Historic Rugby, Brian L. Stagg wrote that Hughes "was certain that these young men would turn to agriculture and other manual labor if they were but provided an opportunity."<sup>6</sup> Much was written about the plight of these "Will Wimbles" as Hughes and others referred to these young men. But theirs was not the only cause Hughes sought to further by bringing English settlers to America; Hughes also wanted to help repair the gap between many northern Americans and the English that British support of the Confederacy had opened during the Civil War. Historian, Dr. Marguerite Hamer wrote, "Hughes had always close at heart the idea of Anglo-Saxon solidarity."<sup>7</sup> Through his community, Hughes hoped to reestablish close ties between Americans and the British.

Hughes' dream officially became a reality on October 5, 1880. *The Rugby Handbook* states, "...the colony was formally opened by Mr. Hughes, and named

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<sup>5</sup> Brachey, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Brian L. Stagg, *The Distant Eden: Tennessee's Rugby Colony* (Rugby, TN.: Paylor Publications, 1973), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Marguerite Hamer, *Cameos of the South* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1940), 3.

‘Rugby’ in honor of that gentleman’s scholastic and literary connection with the Rugby in England.”<sup>8</sup> Thomas Hughes and the Board of Aid to Land Ownership had very specific ideas for how Rugby would be developed and populated, as well as how the settlement would grow into a self-sustaining entity. Thomas Hughes wrote *Rugby, Tennessee the American Utopian Adventure* in 1881 in response to the numerous questions he was being asked about the settlement. In the preface Hughes’ wrote, “These inquiries, speaking roughly, are addressed mainly to three points – (1) The class of persons for whom the place is intended; (2) What it is like; (3) Its prospects.”<sup>9</sup> Hughes sought to put to rest the concerns that many parents and guardians had about allowing their young men to move so far from home. Concerning the advantages of sending their sons to Rugby, Hughes wrote:

We have felt and seen, in many instances the danger and cruelty of letting our Will Wimbles wander out hap-hazard with a few pounds and a letter or two of introduction in their pocket. In the great majority of cases a boy will go wrong at first under such conditions- well, indeed, if he ever gets thoroughly right again. Whereas if you send him to a place where he will fit in naturally and easily, as a piece of the social machine already at work, and where that machine is in a sound and healthy condition, the chances are all the other way.”<sup>10</sup>

Hughes believed that given the choice between idleness and learning to be productive citizens the young men would choose the latter course. Hughes contracted with the local farmers to take in his Will Wimbles and teach them the farming methods necessary to make a living in the Rugby area. In writing about the Rugby settlers, Edward C. Mack and W.H.G. Armytage noted that they were to be, “boarded and taught to

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<sup>8</sup> *The Rugby Handbook of the English-American Colony on the Plateau of the Cumberland Mountains in East Tennessee*. Rugby, TN.: Historic Rugby Press, 1996, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Hughes. *Rugby, Tennessee the American Utopian Adventure*. (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), preface.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7.

farm...and allowed to do piece-work while they learned.”<sup>11</sup> The Rugby Handbook also provided prospective settlers with information on the area and was intended to provide an overview of life in the settlement.

While Rugby was to be a society as biographers Edward C. Mack and W.H.G. Armytage wrote, “based on an outdoor manly life...”<sup>12</sup> it was expected that married men would bring their wives and families, that engaged men would marry once they were established, and that bachelors would find wives and bring them to Rugby. While the exact number of women settlers at Rugby was not available, *An Anthology of Rugby Poetry* included, “A Listing Of Early Rugby Colonists.”<sup>13</sup> This list, while not a complete list of Rugby residents, included more than forty married couples and their families, several married women with children (presumably widows), and several unmarried women. The first name on the list was that of Thomas Hughes, followed by “Madame Margaret Hughes, His Mother.”<sup>14</sup>

In 1880 Margaret Hughes made plans to move her household from London to her son Thomas’s Rugby Village; she intended to provide a home for Thomas on his visits to the settlement and to reunite Emmy with her father, Hastings, who had moved to Rugby to be Rugby’s manager in his brother’s absence. At 83, Margaret Hughes had been a widow for twenty-four years; she had reared her granddaughter Emily whose own mother died shortly after her birth. In a letter to her grandsons dated December 8, 1880, Margaret Hughes wrote, “I feel that dear Emmie, now that her school education is

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<sup>11</sup> Edward C. Mack and W.H.G. Armytage. *Thomas Hughes The Life of the Author of Tom Brown’s Schooldays*. London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1952, 229.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 227.

<sup>13</sup> *An Anthology of Rugby Poetry As Written By Rugby’s Early Colonists Or Reprinted In 1880’s Publications*. Rugby, TN.: Historic Rugby Press, 1997, p 19-20.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 19.

finished ought to be at her dear Father's side to cheer and help him."<sup>15</sup> Emily's health was also a concern to Margaret, who felt that the climate in Tennessee would be beneficial to Emily's health. In a letter to Emily's brothers living in Texas, Margaret Hughes wrote

You have no conception what superior character Emmie has become since you saw her...She is a treasure to be thankful for. —I wish she were stronger. She still continues to suffer from those attacks that have tried her for the last two years, and they pull her down considerably. —One of my reasons for wishing to get to Rugby is, that I feel sure the mild, dry, beautiful climate there would be good for her, whereas she always suffers from the smoke and fogs of London at this season of the year.<sup>16</sup>

Before moving to Rugby, Margaret and Emily lived very conventional upper-class lives in London, in a modest house on Park Walk, in Chelsea. Ever the proper Victorian lady, Margaret Hughes did not let lack of funds deter her from carrying out her duties as a member of the upper class. Of their life in London, Dr. John DeBruyn, expert on the Hughes family, wrote, "Margaret Hughes, in spite of a somewhat limited means, carried on as an upper-class gentlewoman, entertaining and visiting friends as distinguished as the Tennysons and the Leslie Stephenses."<sup>17</sup> Besides Emily and herself, Margaret's household included her long-time servants, the Dyers – Charles, his wife Elizabeth, their two children, and Charles' sister Louisa.

Despite her families apprehensions Margaret determined to proceed with her planned move to Rugby. DeBruyn wrote, "There were strong statements of family disapproval concerning Margaret's coming to Rugby, especially from Tom, who felt that

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<sup>15</sup> Margaret Hughes, *Papers*, December 8, 1880.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Dr. John DeBruyn. *A New Centre of Human Life: The Family of Thomas Hughes at Rugby, Tennessee* (Rugby: Historic Rugby, Inc., 1995) 2.

‘it was too great an undertaking for her age.’”<sup>18</sup> Margaret on the other hand expresses a great deal of excitement in her letters about the anticipated move. She recounts putting her house and furniture up for sell and noted her determination to make the move writing, “I abide by my earnest wish to come out in April to Tennessee, and if the lease and furniture of this old house sell well, shall have ample means to do so.”<sup>19</sup> However her plans changed when Tom’s health began declined a short time later. In a letter to Hastings she wrote, “I cannot leave England, he wishes me to stay, and nothing will take me away from him.”<sup>20</sup> Tom’s health was to remain a grave concern to Margaret and prevented Tom from making a permanent move to Rugby. By the end of December, Tom had rallied and Margaret again made plans to move to Rugby, in a letter dated January 10, 1881 to Hastings, she wrote, “I hope you are making arrangements to build the house I told you about.”<sup>21</sup> Part of her desire to move was probably due to the fact that Hastings was already in Tennessee and three of his sons had a ranch in Texas. Margaret often wrote to her grandsons of Tom’s desire for them to sell their ranch and move to Rugby. She also hoped that her grandsons would move to Tennessee so that more of the family would be in one place. In one letter Margaret wrote, “Dear boys I cannot help hoping that you will be able to sell your Ranche and be at liberty to remove to Rugby.”<sup>22</sup>

Evidence that Margaret Hughes, even at 83 years old, was a strong, independent woman can be found both in the letters she wrote to Hastings and her grandsons prior to moving to Rugby and her letters written from Rugby. Upon deciding to move to Rugby, Margaret oversaw the sell of most of her possessions and made plans to travel to Rugby

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Hughes, *Papers*. Hughes, M. December 8, 1880.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, December 16, 1880.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, January 10, 1881.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, December 8, 1880.

in the company of Emily and the Dyers. In making plans for her home in Rugby, Margaret Hughes had definite ideas about what she wanted and wrote detailed instructions on the type of house and furniture she would require. Writing to Hastings, Margaret described the house that she wanted him to build: “a wooden house of an entrance passage and two good sitting rooms with four bedrooms over them...add to it a kitchen, scullery, and a larder, and over them you must have three bedrooms.”<sup>23</sup> When she realized her own home would not be ready when she arrived Margaret, who was always concerned with her finances, instructed Hastings

...now darling on matters of business I must ask you to attend to scrupulously as I wish. --I do not wish to encounter the expense of living at the Hotel, or at the Boarding House. --The Dyers will be engaged to work for me for a year free of wages, in consideration of their passage out being paid. If I lived at an Hotel they would have nothing to do. --Can you possibly hire a house for us till my own is ready for me?<sup>24</sup>

Margaret never wavered in her support for Thomas’ dream of success for the Rugby colony. In one letter Margaret described Rugby’s continuing growth, “Rugby is certainly looking up...The Tabard is full...Our public library is finished building...There has lately been talk of a railroad from Rugby to Sedgemoor.”<sup>25</sup> Though not directly involved with the management of Rugby, Margaret was committed to doing her part to make Rugby a success. One way she tried to help was by seeking to obtain outside support for the Rugby. She wrote to Hastings, “I shall send Mr. Forbes one of the Pamphlets and ask him to give the support of his good opinion to the new Colony of Rugby.”<sup>26</sup> (The Mr. Forbes referred to was probably John Murray Forbes, a wealthy railroad builder from the Boston area, whose daughter Sarah Forbes married Hastings

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<sup>23</sup> M. Hughes, December 16, 1880.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, March 7, 1881.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, August 21, 1882.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, December 17, 1880.

Hughes in 1887.) Margaret supported Hastings for the position of managing Director of Rugby and mentioned in one of her letters to Hastings that she knew he had the support of at least two of the English Directors.<sup>27</sup>

Nothing was written in Margaret's letters to suggest that Emily was anything except a proper young Victorian woman. Emily Hughes was the youngest child and the only daughter from Hastings' first marriage. Emily had grown up under the care and guidance of her grandmother and her paternal aunt, Jane Nassau Senior, who was a well known social reformer. At eighteen she had finished her schooling and, having no prospects for marriage, planned to move to Rugby to be closer to her father and to continue to run her grandmother's household. DeBruyn wrote, "In London, Emmy attended concerts as well as the theater and amateur theatricals. Anticipatory of her life in Rugby and her frequent trips to Cincinnati, she eagerly looked forward to her move overseas."<sup>28</sup> Plagued by frequent illnesses that were exacerbated by the London weather, Emily was still able to pursue the typical pastimes of a young woman in her position, including traveling and visiting friends. Although Emily was young her grandmother described her as having "superior character," and described Emily as possessing, "all the thought, energy, and determination of a woman of thirty."<sup>29</sup>

On May 11, 1881, Margaret and Emily Hughes along with the Dyers left Liverpool for Philadelphia. They were met by Hastings in Philadelphia and went by train to Cincinnati then on to Sedgemoor Station, which was the closest stop to Rugby. They arrived in Rugby on May 31, 1881 and moved into the Tabard Hotel, where they stayed until their house was finished. Margaret's first reaction to Rugby is unknown, but Emily

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<sup>27</sup> M. Hughes, February 9, 1881.

<sup>28</sup> DeBruyn, 6.

<sup>29</sup> M. Hughes, December 8, 1880.

wrote at length about her first impressions. In the first of many letters Emily would write to her good friend Lucy Taylor, Emily confided, “I like the place very much & I think I shall like the life when we get into our own house immensely.”<sup>30</sup> Emily’s first few weeks in Rugby were filled with concern for her grandmother’s health. Margaret was afflicted with an attack of gout which Emily believed was brought on by “the change in food & water & climate.”<sup>31</sup> Much of Emily’s time was spent exploring the Rugby area. Rides with her father were a favorite pastime for Emily and they often rode, “14 to 18 miles at one time.”<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately shortly after Margaret and Emily arrived in Rugby, the colony experienced an outbreak of typhoid fever. Margaret, who was still recovering from her bout with gout, did not fall ill, but Emily did. According to Margaret, Emily became ill on August fourth, and it was not until near the end of August that it became clear that she would recover. Margaret wrote to Emily’s brothers, “Since Friday...she has begun to amend though very slowly...Dr. Kemp...assures me that the fever has subsided.”<sup>33</sup> Several young men died during the epidemic, which was caused by a contaminated well at the Talbert Hotel. In a letter to Lucy, Emily mentions her illness only in reference to the fact that she was not able to ride regularly since being sick.

Once established in their new home, Emily Hughes adapted quickly to her new surroundings and through her many letters to her brothers, father, and best friend Lucy; she provided detailed accounts of herself and her grandmother. Emily owned a small tract of land which she bought with her own funds and named “Landscape”. In his

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<sup>30</sup> Emily Hughes. *Dissipations At Uffington House: The Letters of Emily Hughes Rugby, Tennessee 1881-1887*. Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1976, pg5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> M. Hughes, August 27, 1881.

introduction to *Dissipations at Uffington House*, DeBruyn wrote, “Emmy rather successfully completed the difficult adjustment to life in a remote colony...She bought land, started a farm with chickens and cows and ended up selling milk to the hotel.”<sup>34</sup> The first thing she had done on her land was to have a stable and fowlhouse built. She quickly filled her farm yard with animals. In a letter to Lucy dated December 21, 1881, Emily wrote, “my farmyard consists of 36 fowls, two turkeys, two ducks, a goat, & a puppy.”<sup>35</sup> Emily intended to expand her small farm and made plans to get “a pig in the spring and perhaps some bees as well.”<sup>36</sup> By June 1882, Emily’s chickens had multiplied to “over a hundred and thirty”<sup>37</sup>

Emily continued to look for new ways to expand her farm’s productivity. One of her more creative ideas was to raise silkworms. By October 1882, she was ready to begin her newest project; in telling Lucy about her project Emily explained, “We have got 200 small mulberry trees, & I have ordered 200 more, and I think I shall begin with ½ ounce of eggs, about 20,000 I think.”<sup>38</sup> Emily spent a considerable amount of time in attempting to raise her silkworms. In one very colorful account of her time with the silk worms, Emily related to Lucy:

They take up a great deal of my time, as they insist on spinning in the wrong places, behind doors, on the underside of tables, on the edge of pictures &c &c, everywhere in fact except in the papers I put for them. I pin little bags like this in rows on the walls for them, & have to be continually putting them in again.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Emily Hughes, *Dissipations*, p xii.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p 8.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p 37.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p 21.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

As with many of the enterprises the Rugby settlers attempted, Emily had little success in raising silkworms. Her farming efforts met with a modicum of success; Emily continued to expand her flock of chickens and at one time had over 200. She also oversaw the farm work done on her grandmother's property, in a letter to her brother Harry Emmy wrote, "We have got the Jefferson field plowed & planted in potatoes, & I hope we shall get a good crop of early potatoes."<sup>40</sup> The gardens provided the two women with plenty of produce; Emily bragged to her brother about their strawberries, "We have made jam of about 50lbs besides giving away lots."<sup>41</sup> Emily was described as "a canny businessperson, investing in land and ultimately selling milk and butter to the Tabard Hotel."<sup>42</sup>

Margaret Hughes, once recovered from her bout of gout and sure that Emily was going to recover from her illness, began settling into her new life. Neither Margaret nor Emily's letters mentioned why the house Margaret requested was not built, but the house, Underhill Cottage, to which they moved from the hotel was small house that did not meet their needs. Margaret found it necessary to ask her grandsons for repayment on money she had given them to help establish their ranch in Texas. Writing about her circumstances Margaret said, "I wish before I die to be able to have all my cases unpacked and my things arranged in proper order, and to effect this I must add rooms to my Shanty."<sup>43</sup> By October 1882, construction of the addition was well underway, but it was not until February 1883, that Margaret and Emily were able to unpack all the books, pictures, and other items that they had brought from England. Emily described to Lucy

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<sup>40</sup> E. Hughes, April 13, 1886.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, May 23, 1886.

<sup>42</sup> DeBruyn, p 9.

<sup>43</sup> M. Hughes, May 29, 1882.

the chore, “We are in the midst of a very nasty job, unpacking our books wh [sic] have been packed very nearly two years... When they are done... we shall be able to really begin to be comfortable.”<sup>44</sup> Margaret named her new home Uffington House after Uffington parish in England which had been the home to several generations of Hughes. Margaret and Emily made Uffington House into a pleasant home, where they entertained friends and family.

In England, Margaret had been an avid gardener, a hobby she continued to enjoy at Rugby. It is doubtful at her age and station in life that she actually did the work herself, but rather she probably oversaw the construction and planting of her gardens. In April, 1882, she wrote to her grandson Willie that she wished they “could see my garden... The walks are all now laid down, the beds in order, all the fruit trees I planted are alive... I have been very fortunate.”<sup>45</sup> It was also around this time that Margaret purchased the property next door in order to expand her gardens. As in England, Margaret was content to have Emily oversee the daily running of the household while she spent her time in the gardens, writing, and entertaining.

During her early days at Rugby, Emily wrote about the shortage of women her own age to be friends with, a problem that persisted throughout much of her time at Rugby, and which was the main complaint Emily had about her life there. Shortly after arriving in Rugby, Emily wrote Lucy, “There is a great want of ladies here at present, there being only one other young lady here besides myself, & and the schoolmistress.”<sup>46</sup> In almost every letter, Emily begged Lucy to come and visit her at Rugby. She was grateful that Lucy continued to carry on correspondence with because her “old

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<sup>44</sup> E. Hughes, *Dissipations*, p 29.

<sup>45</sup> M. Hughes, April 10, 1882.

<sup>46</sup> Emily Hughes, *Dissipations*, p 5.

schoolfellows...have given up writing to me and you are the only *girl* friend who still writes me regularly.”<sup>47</sup> Eventually Emily made friends not only with other English ladies living in the area, but also with some of the local American girls. By 1883, Emily’s letter included descriptions of outings made with other young people from Rugby, visitors to Rugby and friends who lived nearby.

Emily’s adaptation to life in American included being able to enjoy a lot of freedom at Rugby, she frequently traveled around the area by horse. She wrote of riding to visit friends as far as nine miles from home. Emily often spent time with Helen Marshall, another transplanted English woman, whose family lived about eight miles from Rugby. Emily and Helen visited back and forth quite frequently. The trip often proved to be quite an adventure as the river was not always fordable and even when it was the horses were not always willing to ford. Emily gave this account of one trip

On Friday morning Miss Tyson & I went to meet Helen...We got along splendidly till we got to the river on the way home. It was pretty deep, though quite fordable, & we didn’t care to ride thro’ it double, so they left me the other side & came across...Helen tried to lead Kitty over for me, but her horse positively refused to enter the water again...We were in a fix...as a last chance Miss Tyson mounted Kitty & tried leading the other horse, & I got safely over.<sup>48</sup>

Emily was not deterred by incidents such as the one above and continued to travel about the countryside even when the river was not fordable. Also surprising were Emily’s riding companions, on at least one occasion on a visit to the Marshall’s Emily rode over with “Mr. Churchill, getting home just in time for tea.”<sup>49</sup> Not all of Emily’s rides took place during the day, in one letter to Lucy she mentioned riding with Mr. Wilson to see her Uncle Tom off at the train station, “...started at

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p 13.

<sup>48</sup> E. Hughes, April 18, 1886.

<sup>49</sup> E. Hughes, May 8, 1886.

about 9:30 p.m....getting to the station about 11:30 p.m....getting home at about 12:40 a.m.”<sup>50</sup> In the same letter Emily mentioned another night ride, this one made partially by herself, “When Father went away...I rode about 5 miles of the way with him...No one else went with us, & I came back at about 10:45 p.m.”<sup>51</sup> Emily was well aware that her night rides such as the one alone to see her father off were subject to the scrutiny of the entire community, “I believe several people were rather shocked at my riding 5 miles alone at that time of night.”<sup>52</sup> However the community reacted to Emily’s unconventional behavior it did not seem to deter her from continuing to go where she wanted, when she wanted, and with whom she wanted.

Surprisingly several of Emily’s jaunts were overnight excursions with friends, with no mention of a chaperone accompanying the group, which was quite unconventional for a young woman of that period. On one such occasion, Emily and her friends, Helen Marshall and Bertha Devereux (a local American girl), went to Covington, Kentucky to shop and “passed the night at the house of some friends of the Devereux’ named Trimble.”<sup>53</sup> Emily enjoyed the skating carnival they attended with their hosts, but found her “glimpse of Kentucky society”<sup>54</sup> not at all to her liking. Emily complained that after they left the carnival at 11:00 p.m., “The Trimbles had about eighteen guests for supper & a dance afterwards...By the time the company went away it was 2 a.m. & I was

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<sup>50</sup> Emily Hughes, *Dissipations*, p 56.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p 62

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p 62.

almost dead.”<sup>55</sup> Even more unconventional for a young woman of that time were the trips Emily took with groups made up of both women and men. One such overnight excursion was made with, “two lady visitors & Mr. Wilson & Mr. Fisher (two Rugby gentlemen).”<sup>56</sup> On this occasion the group was “away one night and went nearly 50 miles altogether...We slept at the house of a native of this country.”<sup>57</sup> Emily enjoyed her travels and explorations of her new community and the surrounding area, both alone and in the company of her friends

Emily also found love at Rugby, with another colonist, a Mr. Charles Wilson. Mr. Wilson was a friend of her father, and along with his sister, he was a frequent visitor at Uffington House. He was responsible for teaching Emily about photography, a hobby that remained a favorite pastime for Emily throughout her life. Emily’s letters did not mention a romantic relationship between herself and Mr. Wilson, until she told Lucy in March 1887, “I am engaged to Charles Wilson, whom I have mentioned in my letter several times.”<sup>58</sup> When Emily wrote this news Mr. Wilson was out of the country working in British Honduras doing surveying for the government. The engagement was very short, Emily was never to see Mr. Wilson again as he died of yellow fever in September, 1887 while still in Honduras. None of Emily’s letters mentioned the loss of her fiancé, or her feelings of once again being an unattached woman.

Emily became quite skilled as a photographer after moving to Rugby. Her brother had been given a camera, which was left at Rugby, and Emily decided to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p 39.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> DeBruyn, p 15.

make use of it and try her hand at photography. With help from Charles Wilson, Emily learned to take and develop photographs. With Mr. Wilson away much of the time, Emily found photography to be “rather slow work, as I have no one to tell me when I make mistakes & so have to learn by experience.”<sup>59</sup> While Emily thought that most of her photographs were not very good, samples of work show that was not the case. Emily was often asked to photograph people and places around Rugby such as a photograph of “Mrs. Milmow and her five children, which her husband requested.”<sup>60</sup> Margaret was very proud of Emily’s work as a photographer, to her grandsons she bragged, “We have had a Photographer in the place for the last month who has taken of all the buildings and many of the settler’s shanties, but I do not think them a bit better than Emmie’s.”<sup>61</sup> Emily continued throughout her life to document important places and people in her life with the photography skills she learned in Rugby. Her book, *Dissipations*, included many photographs she took around Rugby and of her family.

Socially, members of Rugby society were determined to enjoy as many English pursuits as possible despite their distance from their homeland. Even before Rugby officially opened, a lawn tennis club was established, the first of many clubs and activities established for the Rugby settlers to enjoy. Some of the clubs and activities which the town enjoyed included a coronet band, a football club, and a musical and dramatic clubs. Emily and Margaret both played major roles in the development and management of the clubs, both served in various capacities in clubs and on committees. In his graduate paper, Ernest Miller wrote that, “It is likely that the place of women in the

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<sup>59</sup> Emily Hughes, *Dissipations*, p. 29.

<sup>60</sup> M. Hughes, letter, no date.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

colony was determined to a considerable extent by the residence at Rugby by Thomas Hughes' aged mother, Madam Margaret Hughes."<sup>62</sup>

Margaret Hughes, both because of her age and her relationship to Thomas Hughes held a unique place in the community. She was often called on to perform in some official capacity for the town. The June 10, 1882, edition of *The Rugbeian* reported that, "The cornerstone of the Hughes Public Library was successfully and auspiciously, and most appropriately laid on Monday, by Mrs. Hughes."<sup>63</sup> Later Margaret presented the Hughes library with a portrait of Thomas. Other articles and notices in the newspaper told of various activities that Margaret was involved in such as being president of The Ladies Aid society, which was a sewing society. The most important outside commitment to Margaret Hughes was to the church, her letters were filled with religious references and Emily's letters noted that except for the few times of when Margaret's health would not permit it both she and Margaret attended church with great regularity.

Margaret Hughes was very involved in the education of the town's children. In January 1886, Margaret wrote to the head of school board concerning establishing a kindergarten for the town and pledging her support.<sup>64</sup> Margaret Hughes wanted to provide more than just support for the school, she also provided the students with special activities such as the one described in an article printed May 6, 1882, in *The Rugbeian*. On the lawn at the Talbard Hotel, the students were treated to a "May-day festival" hosted by Mrs. Hughes. The day included games, races, and a meal served on the hotel

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<sup>62</sup> Ernest Miller. *The English Settlement at Rugby, Tennessee*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee, 1941, p 12.

<sup>63</sup> *The Rugbeian*, June 10, 1882.

<sup>64</sup> *Sketches of the Late Margaret Hughes*. Historic Rugby: April 9, 1889.

veranda. At the conclusion of the festivities, “the children filed before Mrs. Hughes, who, from a tray and basket handed each a big bun and a bag of candy.”<sup>65</sup>

Margaret was very popular among the Rugby residents and they often came to Uffington House to visit her, not always with an invitation. This was one aspect of her role as Rugby’s “matriarch” that Margaret did not enjoy: the constant stream of visitors calling at Uffington House tired her out and was not always appreciated, especially as her hearing failed. DeBruyn quotes from a letter to her grandsons, “how I am tormented with visitors. - Just now a lady from Newberry house stopped me writing for half an hour. Before she came two other ladies called...my valuable time is eaten up.”<sup>66</sup> However, despite her loss of hearing, Margaret continued to entertain on a regular basis at Uffington House. Emily wrote of one Christmas dinner, “Granny has issued invitations for our Xmas dinner to 4 gentlemen already...”<sup>67</sup> Thomas Hughes used Uffington House to entertain when he was in residence, hosting small dinner parties for some of the young men who settled Rugby. Margaret and Emily often had guests staying at the house. Emily’s father was in and out, her brothers came fairly regularly, and several young women came to stay with the ladies for varying periods of time.

Emily enjoyed an even more diverse social life than her grandmother. Emily’s activities outside of Uffington House were centered on the various community clubs, church activities, and cornet and piano lessons. A few months after arriving in Rugby, Emily was teaching a Sunday School class, a task she was reluctant to undertake, “I have a Class in Sunday School here, consisting of 11 boys, ranging from 8 to 11 years old. I

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<sup>65</sup> *The Rugbeian*, May 6, 1882.

<sup>66</sup> DeBruyn, p 14.

<sup>67</sup> Emily Hughes, *Dissipations*, p 44.

don't like teaching at all.”<sup>68</sup> She was relieved when she was able to turn the class over to another teacher. In contrast Emily enjoyed playing the piano and was in great demand to accompany different people for events such as those held at the Social Club. Emily never mentioned playing solo, but she spoke of performing in duets and trios. The town formed a piano company and raised funds to buy a piano to be used by the entire town, Emily was on the board of the company and bought six of the nineteen shares sold to purchase the piano. Emily also took part in Shakespeare readings and in farces that were presented as entertainment at gatherings. In 1886, Emily was on the committee to “draw up the formation of a Philharmonic Branch of the Social Club.”<sup>69</sup> Emily took her responsibilities to these various organizations very seriously and wrote about the many rehearsals and events she attended.

Although Margaret and Emily Hughes shared a home, had similar positions in the community, and were extremely close, their adaptations to life in Rugby were markedly different. Margaret, perhaps because of her age, continued to live much the same life she had lived in London. She entertained friends and relatives, held positions in various clubs, attended church, and enjoyed time in her gardens. Emily on the other hand seems to have enjoyed more freedom than in London and led an unconventional life for a young Victorian lady of the 1880's. She owned her own land and sold products from her farm, was a member of many of Rugby's clubs, rode most anywhere she wanted to go, and enjoyed many varied friendships. Emily traveled to Cincinnati for shopping and to attend the theatre, she went to visit her brothers in Texas, and accompanied her father on business trips.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p 12.

<sup>69</sup> E. Hughes, May 8, 1886.

The death of Margaret Hughes touched the lives of every citizen of Rugby and in many ways her passing began the final chapter of Thomas Hughes involvement and support of his Rugby colony. Emily Hughes devastated by the loss of her beloved grandmother in October 1887 and the death of her fiancé, Charles Wilson, in September 1887, left the colony shortly after Margaret's death with her friend Lucy, who had finally arrived for a visit. Emily traveled back to England to visit the Wilson family. Afterwards she traveled to Texas to spend time with her brothers, before joining her father and his new family with whom she lived until her marriage in 1902. With Emily's departure much of the life went out of the colony. Margaret and Emmy had provided stability and a tangible tie to Thomas Hughes dream of an English colony in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee. These two very different women had found a home in a new place; they had not only adapted to their environment, but came to thrive in it as well. Rugby, Tennessee may have been Thomas Hughes creation, but it was under the care and guidance of the Hughes women that its spirit took shape and grew.

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This collection of letters was written by Emily to her brothers living in Texas. The letters provide another view of Emily’s life in Rugby.

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Written by Thomas Hughes this book explains his plans for the Rugby Colony. The first part of the book explains his reasons for forming the colony and who he hoped would benefit by immigrating to Rugby. The second part tells about the colony, its location, and the area and people surrounding it. The final section is dedicated to explaining and defending the Board of Aid to Land Ownership.

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This work was written as a memorial to Margaret Hughes and her life and was read at a club meeting of the Margaret E. Hughes King’s Daughters’ Circle of Rugby, Tenn. It includes copies of a letter she wrote in support of the Rugby school. The memorial paper shows how loved and respected Mrs. Hughes was in the Rugby community.

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