



Sara Puryear Rodes sits on her deck with the Harpeth Hills in the background.



Little Sara,
during her
Belmont days

Seven Hills and Green Hills, were thickly wooded with only a few trails through them. She and her siblings would go horseback riding and hunting there and often got lost trying to get back home.

The area known as Belmont, adjacent to the college, began to build up with homes just before the turn of the century. Several doctors lived in the area. Dr. Crawford lived across from the college and his twin daughters went to Belmont. So did the Leftrich boys, Hunter and William, and their little sister. And, there was Mary Crittendon (a relative of Charlie Waterfield), "She was a lovely girl, and everybody liked her."

The Hillsboro Village area consisted of only the Belmont Methodist Church and one country grocery store. Mrs. Rodes' childhood memories recall a beautiful little stream that flowed beside the church.

Though she doesn't remember seeing the school's founders at Belmont, Mrs. Rodes remembers going with her parents to visit Miss Ida Hood and Miss Susan Heron in their home on Deer Park.

After her years at Belmont, Mrs. Rodes transferred to a country school, Stokes. Then in ninth grade, she entered Miss Annie Allison's School for young ladies. (Miss Annie later taught at Ward-Belmont after her own school closed.) In the class of 1918, she graduated from Miss Annie's "to Vanderbilt" just at the end of World War I. "When I graduated from college in 1922, we still did not have electricity at home. Our house was a half mile from the electric poles!" Following her Vanderbilt graduation, she periodically substituted for Miss Annie (who was at Ward-Belmont, by that time), teaching history, English and math.

Travel during her childhood was either by train from Union Station or by buggy. Mrs. Rodes recalls train trips to Kentucky and "all-day" buggy trips to visit relatives in Gallatin. A highlight of the buggy trip was the stop by the river for a lunchtime picnic. "Now I can go up there and be back by noon!" exclaims the lively nonagenarian, who still drives her Oldsmobile around Middle Tennessee.

"I Remember Belmont"

by Joan Yarborough

During her school days on the Belmont College campus, she especially enjoyed the beauty of the trees and flowers, walking and playing among the statues and climbing on the deer.

What is so remarkable about that? Only that on March 3rd, Sara Puryear Rodes was 90 years old, and her memories of Belmont date back to the years 1907-1909!

The Puryears enrolled their daughter in the primary school of Belmont during her third and fourth years of school. Their farm home was "out in the country" where Woodmont Boulevard crosses Hillsboro Road today. Mr. Puryear took his daughter to school in a buggy or sometimes riding double with him on horseback.

Later, when their farm was subdivided to build Woodmont Estate homes, Sara helped her sister and two brothers name the streets. Bear Road was so named because that is where the children thought they saw a bear; Valley Brook, because it ran through the valley where the brook flowed after rains. It was here that Mrs. Puryear took them walking after a rain to see the streams and brooks make waterfalls and cascades. "Mother was a poet at heart. Life, to her, was *pretty*. She would stand at the window washing dishes and see the daisy fields and the hills instead of the dishes."

At Belmont, little Sara was in a classroom that contained all primary grades.

Her eyes light up and her voice gets wistful as she remembers Miss Coral White, the lovely young woman who taught about 20 children in various grades who were mostly residents of the area surrounding the campus. The children brought their lunches and ate each day in the classroom on the ground floor of Fidelity Hall. Mrs. Rodes remembers studying the usual primary subjects and also recalls the definite religious acceptance in the instruction: "There was no question about prayer at the beginning of the school day. It was a ritual of respect."

Although she saw the "big" girls out on the campus, the primary school was quite separate from the high school and college. "We saw the 'big' girls out on the grounds and I thought they were *wonderful*," she recalls, describing the brown uniforms, and on special occasions, white dresses worn by the Belmont College girls.

West and South Nashville residences in those years were primarily along the main arteries of West End, 16th Avenue, Acklen, and Hillsboro. Homes were built along Hillsboro, all the way out to Blair Boulevard. The street car provided public transportation as far as the Blair intersection. When she was a high school student at Miss Annie Allison's School just off West End, Mrs. Rodes remembers riding the "car" as far as Blair and walking home from there "along a lovely country road out Hillsboro Pike with the hills in the distance." Those hills, now known as