In the background of Miss Berry's home life there was always the figure--or colored mammy, Aunt Martha.

As she passed through the years of childhood to girlhood and into young womanhood and on to middle age her father had died, her sisters and brothers had left the old home, her mother had died, but Aunt Martha was always there. She would return from her journeyings up and down the land there was never a time when Aunt Martha was not waiting and watching for her. During the years after her mother's death when Miss Berry was busy every moment of the day with the affairs of the School and would come home at night to manage things at Oak Hill, Aunt Martha would call her "the Boss," though she well knew that she herself was the boss of the boss! In the tradition of the Old South, the hands that had washed you when you were dirty and spanked you when you were naughty held the check rein in later life.

In the early days of the school when Miss Berry wanted to borrow her mother's horses, the boy who was sent for them was often met by Aunt Martha's flat refusal: "No, you can't have our carriage horses. Not today. Go back and tell her."

Without a doubt the next time Miss Berry came over to the house she would find a very special treat that Aunt Martha had prepared for her; for, in that, as in many other things, she imitated Miss Berry. When she thought she had been too hard on a person she would "turn right round" and do something very special extra for her, or him, and the delights of Aunt Martha's culinary masterpieces had great power in the soothing of ruffled feelings.

When Miss Berry's work for the School took her away on frequent journeys Aunt Martha would suffer much anxiety about her food, "Nobody but me knows what to fix for her," she would say, and no matter how late the hour when she came Aunt Martha would "stir around" and soon have something to set before her that would make her forget she was ever tired. "I always have to take care of m" she would proudly say. She did not approve of Miss Berry's going away so much and would complain, "You sho do tote your self around a lot."

Alice Wingo, Berry College Archives
In her part, Miss Berry spent much anxious thought in planning for Aunt Martha's comfort. She wanted her never to be without the little indulgences that made her happy. They both loved presents of good breads and she would divide with Aunt Martha. Nothing was too good for her mammy. Once when Aunt Martha was having trouble with her eyes, Miss Berry telephoned her oculist that she was going to bring her favorite aunt for him to see. And always she was her favorite aunt.

Aunt Martha had many individual tastes and habits showing the aristocrat that was in her. She had pride and independence. She did not like to accept favors without making some return. One who persisted in sending her gifts would find little packages of choice homemade cookies coming his way.

She would seldom allow people to take snapshots of her, but when asked if she would not like to have a picture of herself and her clock made for Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford she agreed readily, for he had made her clock run for her and this was all she could do for him. She wanted to look her very best and inquir anxiously if her kerchief was straight and her apron smooth. She had the clock taken down from the mantel and put on a little table beside her so as to make a nice picture, and when Mrs. Ford wrote that they thought it was fine and like it very much she was "pow'ful proud" and pleased.

Since Miss Berry's death her main interest is listening to her radio and at night hearing her clock strike. Most of all she enjoys the sermons over the radio, but she likes to listen to ball games, too, and many other things. Her interest in the war is personal. When she hears the Solomon Islands mentioned, "That's where Miss Frances's son Sandy is." (Miss Berry's sister Frances) Midway Island was where that Berry boy was during the Jap attack—-that boy Will who used to work with the flowers at Oak Hill. Burma is the place where Miss Frances's other son is and North Africa is where one of the Berry boys has gone—one who used to drive the School car and bring her her dinner. Yes, she had taught the girls to cook and now they were cooking for her.

After Miss Berry was gone the sisters came back as they had done before—now to see her, for she was their mammy, too. The day of the funeral they came
to men like they and many other friends, one of them the president of the
board of trustees (of the school), to whom she said: "I don't have anybody to
like care of now. She took care of the school, and I took care of her. And
she never was any trouble at all."

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