William Sproul (1732-1806) moved from Pennsylvania to Augusta County in the early 1750's. He had emigrated from County Tyrone in Ireland in the early part of the 18th Century. He settled first in Bells Valley near Craigsville. In 1765 he bought some 170 acres, near Middlebrook, from John & Mary Trotter and built his house near the spring. This was a two story log structure that lasted until the early 20th Century, when it was deemed unsafe, and torn down. The present brick house, Locust Grove, was built between 1806 and 1809 by John Sproul (1784-1848), William's son. Subsequent owners were Archibald Alexander Sproul, Sr., William White Sproul, William White Sproul Jr., and currently by John Alexander Sproul (1997).

William Sproul was married twice. In 1757 he married Jane Ewing and they had five children. William Jr., moved down to Newport, on Moffetts Creek and built a house closely resembling Locust Grove. William Jr., known as "Squire Billy", was an early Sheriff, and "High Magistrate" of Augusta County.

William Jr.'s son Samuel Brown Sproul (1806-1878) moved to Austin, Texas around 1850, and later to Selma, Texas, near San Antonio. Samuel had 12 children.

After Jane's death, William married Susanna (last name unknown) in 1773. She bore William seven more children, one of whom was John. John married Matilda Scott, daughter of Archibald Alexander Scott, the first pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church. Another son, Joseph went to Missouri, and some of his offspring ended up in California.

The Reverend Mr. Scott was born in Scotland about 1747, and emigrated to America as a young boy. After studying the Classics with Mr. Finley in Philadelphia, and Theology at Liberty Hall (now W & L) he was called to the church in 1779. He continued in that capacity until his untimely death in 1799. John and Matilda named one of their sons Archibald Alexander Sproul, after his grandfather.

Archibald married Eugenia Bumgardner, of Bethel Green, daughter of James and Matilda McCorkle Bumgardner. Arch & Eugenia had nine children, although only three left progeny. Archibald, along with several of his Bumgardner in-laws, served in the Confederate Army, but was sent home in planting and harvest seasons to raise grain for the Army. He was paroled at Appomattox. Throughout his life he was very active in the affairs of Bethel Church, serving as Chairman of the building committee for the present structure, as well as an Elder, and Superintendent of the Sunday School.

During General Hunter's occupation of the Valley in June 1864, two sick Yankee soldiers were left at Locust Grove to be cared for. They had Typhus (Typhoid?) Fever, and as a result, Arch's
brother, Col. William Sproul, a sister Matilda Sproul, and his oldest son, James Bumgardner Sproul contracted the fever and died. Four farm workers also died.

John A. Sproul (1862-1923) lived in Clifton Forge, and was a prime mover in developing the Clifton Forge Covington Telephone Exchange (Later CFW). Fanny (1872-1932) lived with him and kept house for him. Neither ever married.

William White Sproul (1863-1941) married Katherine Lapsley, (1896-1962). She was a sister of the Bethel Minister, Robert A. Lapsley. "Will" lived at Locust Grove his entire life. He was prominent in the affairs of the community, and served a term in the Virginia Legislature. After his service in the legislature, Will was a member of the State Board of Agriculture for several years, and was a member of the Board of Visitors of Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

"Will" and "Kate" had six children, all of whom left offspring. William Jr. (1907-1987), and electrical engineer, was associated with the Westinghouse Corporation, becoming a vice president of that company in the 1950's. He was instrumental in locating the Westinghouse Air Conditioning plant in Verona. He married Helen Turner, and they lived in the Pittsburgh area for many years. After retiring, he and Helen moved back to Locust Grove. Bill and Helen had three children, the youngest of whom is John Alex who occupies Locust Grove today (1997).

John Morgan Sproul (1909-1959) was a farmer and rural mail carrier. He operated the Locust Grove farm after his father's death. He was an active member of Bethel Church, and like his father and grandfather, was for many years and Elder and superintendent of the Sunday School. His wife, Elizabeth Knight grew up in New Jersey. She became a pillar of the community, and after her husband's death, quite successfully continued to operate the farm. They lived on the Locust Grove property, but across the road from "the big house". John and "Jimmie" had six children. After John's death she married Theodore Webb, who had a house and farm near Summer- dean.

William White Senior's son, Archibald Alexander II (1915) was in the insurance business. In 1940, on the eve of World War II, he joined the National Guard. As a Captain in the 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Division he was in the first wave ashore on Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944, during the Normandy invasion. He was wounded July 14th, but after several months was returned to duty only to be wounded two more times before the end of the was. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for valor during the landing. He was subsequently awarded 3 Bronze Stars, and 2 Purple Hearts.

After the war he remained affiliated with the National Guard, rising eventually to the rank of Major General & Commanding Genera of the 29th Division.

On the civilian side, he continued in the insurance business, and branched out into real estate. In the 1960's, he, along with his brother Bill (Westinghouse V.P.) and other industrialist, organized Virginia International Corporation, speculating in oil, cattle and timber in Indonesia. The oil venture was especially successful. Later, the company was sold to Alaska Interstate Company for a nice profit.
In 1946 Arch married Margaret Pratt, of Coventry, England, whom he had met during the war. They have three children.

Will and Kate also had three daughters. All married prominent and successful men, although none lived in Augusta County after their marriage: Frances (1903-1962) married Frank Taylor and lived in Richmond and Arlington, VA. Katherine (1904-1961) married Dan Stickley of Harrisonburg and Mary Cornelia "Nina" (1919) married Douglas Wise, and lives in Baltimore.

Archibald Alexander Sproul Jr. (1868-1910) was a graduate Civil Engineer, and worked for the company building the railway tunnel under the Hudson River. While in New York he met and married Mary Isabella Cotton, a school teacher, from Mamaroneck. They had one son Arch A. Sproul III (1901-?) ("Bunkie"). Neither Bunkie nor his mother ever lived in Augusta County, but visited frequently during vacations. Bunkie attended Augusta Military Academy and Washington & Lee. He was a mining engineer with the Vanadium Corporation, and spent several years in Peru. Later he lived in Golden Colorado, and consulted on engineering projects in many areas including Israel. He married a Margaret Smith, and they had three children, one of who was Arch A. Sproul IV and a grandson A. A. Sproul V. All of Bunkie's descendants have lived in the Southwestern part of the U.S.

Eugene E. Sproul (1870-1929) was also an engineer working on the tunnel in New York. He was killed in an accident in the tunnel. He had not married.

Hugh Bell Sproul (1873-1929). The youngest of A. A. Sproul's nine children, attended W & L. He volunteered for services in the U. S. Army during the Spanish American War. Thereafter he went into the insurance business in Staunton. January 3, 1901, he married Agnes Erskine Miller (1877-1966). One year later his wife's father and grandfather James Mason Miller Jr., & Sr., died. Her uncle M. Erskine Miller had died four years previously and the combined estates were left to Agnes and her five siblings. Since the only male heir was A. Erskine Miller, who was a cadet at VMI, and not yet 21, Hugh was designated co-executor of the Miller Estates, along with Edward Echols, (The latter was a brother-in-law of M. Erskine Miller.)

The Miller Estates were rather extensive and included coal mining interests in West Virginia, real estate in West Virginia and Virginia and other properties. A holding company was formed to manage the various properties for the equal benefit of each of the six children. The Erskine Coal and Land Company was chartered in 1903. Hugh became the president and general manager, Edward Echols vice president, and A. Erskine Miller secretary and treasurer. Under Hugh's adept management the Company prospered. In 1921, The Erskine Coal and Land Company, which had been chartered in West Virginia, was liquidated and all assets assumed by The Erskine Co., Inc., which was chartered in Virginia.

While managing The Erskine Co., was his principal occupation, Hugh found time for other activities. He owned and managed several farms in Augusta County, and a flour and feed mill at Swoope. He was a director of The National Valley Bank, and was on the Board of Visitors of Washington & Lee and Mary Baldwin Colleges. He was president of the Augusta County Fair Association. He was a member of the first State Highway Commission, and was thought by some to be the front runner for the Democratic Nomination for Governor in 1925. However, after a heart attack, he was advised by his physician not to run.

Dr. Sproul was a Flight Surgeon in the 15th Air Force, U.S. Army Air Forces in Italy, during World War II. He practiced Obstetrics and Gynecology in Staunton 1984 - 1967, and Surgical Pathology from 1967 - 1985. He played a significant part in the development of the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport, and for 10 years was a member to the Staunton City School Board.

After Hugh's death in 1929, He was succeeded as President of The Erskine Co., by A. Erskine Miller. He died in 1961, and was succeeded by Hugh B. Sproul, Jr. In 1988 his son, Hugh Sproul III became president, followed by Dr. A. Erskine Sproul in 1991. The Company liquidated in 1996.

From the early days, the Sprouls were educated people. The Washington & Lee Alumni roster lists 14 Sprouls going back to A. A. Sproul, class of 1851.

Others attended VPI, Davidson and other colleges. Many of the women attended Mary Baldwin, Sweetbriar and Farmville & Madison Teachers Colleges.

As of April 1997, W. W. Sproul Sr. has 20 grandchildren, 37 great grandchildren and 5 great-great grandchildren.

Hugh B. Sproul has 13 grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren and 7 great-great grandchildren.

A. Erskine Sproul M.D.
April 30, 1997

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{some errors noted – ed.(wws-2005)}