

840

SKETCHES OF PLANTERS, PLANTATION, AND LIVING ALONG THE GREAT ROAD

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The second version of the fire is from a letter by Mrs. E.H. B. Liatrop, a descendant of John Singleton:

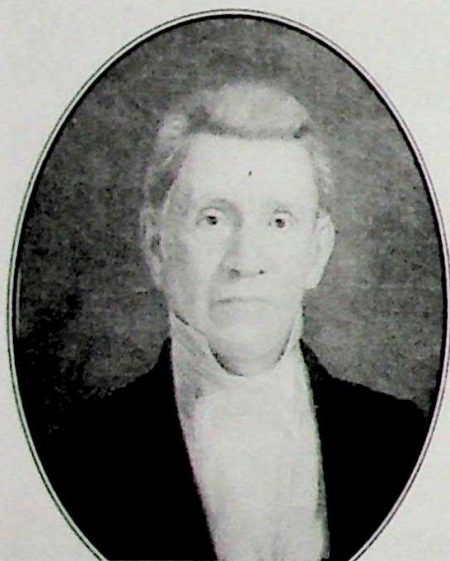
"... it (Midway)unfortunately was burned down by the stupid caretaker who sleeping in the kitchen & annoyed by mosquitoes, nailed lightwood strips to the windows & lighted them & driving off the mosquitoes barely escaped being burned too & the house was destroyed..."

What is fact is that after the fire nothing was left of the house except a stone foundation six feet high and the stable and carriage house complex.

Such a shame for Midway to have such an unhappy ending. One can only wonder if the results would have been different if John Singleton had bequeath his estate directly to his children or if Richard Singleton had been a little more sympathetic toward Julia McRa and her daughters.

HOME PLACE, SINGLETON HALL, HOME.

Home Place was the residence of Colonel Richard Singleton (1776-1852), sometimes referred to as Singleton Hall or simply Home.



Colonel Richard Singleton

Ann Newport Royall (1769-1854) wrote this description of Home Place in her travel book The Black Book:

"...contains many very handsome farms, one in particular, the property of a Mr. Singleton, is a great curiosity—being at once the largest, neatest, and the most beautiful I ever beheld. The man, and the land much have been well matched—for more taste, more industry, or more beautiful fields are not to be found in American, --high, rich and level. One field lay on the road, it was paled for about two miles on the road, and must have been laid off with the compass..."

Home Place was located two miles south of present day Wedgefield set back from The Great Road and adjacent to Midway. The house was located on top of a small hill overlooking fifty acres of formal gardens. These gardens were maintained by an English gardener who lived on the premises. A line of trees radiated from the house to the road, running like spokes of a wheel through the surrounding gardens, ending against the great hawthorn hedge interplanted with roses, that ran for four miles along The Great Road.

Home Place, while not as imposing as some houses, was large, strongly built and beautifully furnished. The structure sat on a stone foundation with nineteen white marble steps, guarded by crouching stone lions, leading to a broad front piazza with tall white columns. A wide piazza extended across the rear of the house and these steps were guarded by crouching greyhounds, the breed preferred by Rebecca Singleton.

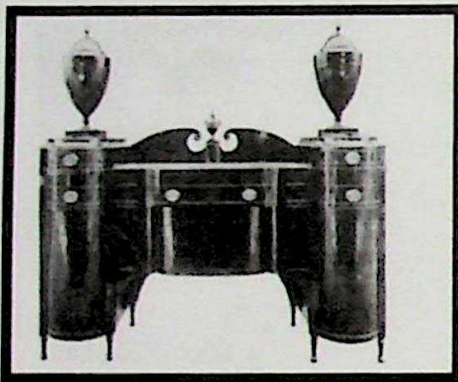
The land sloped gradually down to a one mile oval horse race track, encircling the grounds. The race track was built by John Singleton (father) before Richard Singleton built Home Place. One straight side of the race course passed so close to Home Place, Colonel Singleton frequently called out instructions from the piazza to the riders as they trained his horses.

The first level basement was tiled, housing a laundry room and a winter kitchen with a dumb waiter.

The second level consisted of four rooms, each twenty-two feet square, with ceilings of eighteen feet, opening onto a wide central hall. The two front rooms were the library and the parlor. The other two rooms were the dining and breakfast rooms. When dances were held at Home Place, the landing on the stair case accommodated the musicians. The newel posts at the foot of the stairs concealed boxes containing chalk, which the dancers rubbed on the soles of their shoes when the floor became slippery.

At the rear of the hall the mahogany stair case led to a gallery which crossed the width of the hall and gave access to the third level. On the third level there were four large bed rooms and two dressing rooms.

The outbuildings included of a summer kitchen, a smoke house, the house of the English Gardener, a hot house and the vegetable garden. Behind these buildings were the large stable and carriage house and a row of servant houses known as "The Street", a common name for such plantation settlements. Opposite the Gardner's house was the dairy, a square building with lattice on the top of the sides. It was built over a dry well sixteen feet deep, fitted with a wire safe with shelves that were raised and lowered by means of a pulley system. Meat and milk were kept fresh in this dry well and if the winters were cold enough, ice cut from a pond on the property, was stored there. On the opposite side of the house was the office where all the business of the plantation was transacted. Behind this structure was the school house.



Sheraton Side Board
with Knife Urns

Home Place was furnished with the best English furniture, silver, crystal and china money could buy. There was a tea set (no maker's mark) of fine grade porcelain with delicate coloring and very fragile. The border was a soft gray with gilt figures and a white center. There were numerous cut glass decanters, some used at Midway. Colonel Singleton even went so far as to make a distinction between the size of tumblers and wine glasses for his guests. The glasses for lady guests at Home Place being

slightly smaller in size but of the same pattern.

One of the most expensive items of furnishings was a double dinner set of china that was a service of twenty-four. A normal set of china being a service of twelve. The double dinner set was a service of twenty-four. The set at Home Place was made in a pottery founded by John Davenport in 1793 at Longport Burslem, in Staffordshire, England. The china was a robin's egg blue with Japanese figures of darker blue. The date of the china is uncertain but it was prior to 1806. After that date John Davenport became Official Potter to the Prince of Wales and added a crown to his maker's mark



High Chair

which was not on the Home Place china set.

Some of the furniture was made on site by an English cabinet maker in the employment of John Singleton of Midway but most of the furniture was imported from England.

Items of furniture in the dining room were a huge, solid mahogany breakfront, nine feet tall with a glass front that housed the double dinner set. The dining room table was also mahogany but the chairs were unique. They were made of three kinds of maple; curly, tiger and straight. There was a high chair constructed in the same pattern but with longer legs. In this dining room Richard Singleton had the pleasure of introducing his family to the split spoon, or fork, as an eating utensil.

There is an account of the fate of the silver and china of Home Place during the War. The china and cut glass were buried at Home Place and not one piece was lost. However, the silver was sent to Albemarle Plantation in Columbia owned by John Coles Singleton, son of Richard Singleton, for safe keeping. The Home Place and Albemarle silver was buried in three sites forming a triangle. Union troops unearthed one of the sites that held the Home Place silver. Because of the quality of the silver, the Union troops discerned there must be more. The troops strung the overseer by his thumbs until he revealed another site which after excavation, the troops were satisfied they had uncovered all of the silver. Whether by design or by chance will never be known, but the site revealed by the overseer contained only the Home Place silver. The Union troops left with all of the Home Place silver and none of the Albemarle silver.

Revenues from Home Place and the companion plantations had three principle sources; cotton, peanuts and shipping. Richardson Singleton inherited his father's shipping interest and expanded his fleet of river vessels. The mills in England and France could not get enough cotton to supply their new machines and Richard Singleton had more money than he could spend.

In appearance Richard Singleton was a large man, over six feet tall, with strong thick hands, and a pleasing manner. He had a massive heavy chin, a wide mouth and small eyes with a sleepy look. He was very careful in his

dress, requiring two hours every morning to dress and get ready for the day.

During this time, his wife sat by and read the Bible, the newspaper and correspondence to him. His hair was in a crew cut style, unusual for that day. He was a true "Southern Colonel" having obtained a courtesy title from South Carolina Governor McDuffie, his son-in-law.

Richard Singleton was surely the right man, in the right place, at the right time. The wealth he inherited from his grandfather, Matthew Singleton, and his father, John Singleton was enormous. The land was at peace, no British or Indians to worry about. Cotton was King. Richard Singleton was one of the wealthiest in the wealthiest per capita area of South Carolina.

Richard Singleton was destined to take his place among the best social circles in South Carolina and the nation. If he had lived in Europe, he would have been royalty with his family connections. He was related to the families of Pinckney, Brohun, Moore, Rutledge, Cantey, Marion, Manning, Richardson, Barnwell, Taylor, and Aiken of South Carolina. In addition he was related to the Travis, Cooke, Lewis, James, Tucker, and Cole families of Virginia.

Richard Singleton was married twice, first to Charlotte Videau (Vi-dou) Ashby (1784-1809) in 1802 and there was one daughter, Mary Rebecca, (1805-1830). In 1812 he married Rebecca Travis Coles (1782-1849) of Albemarle, Va. From this marriage there were five children, John Coles (1813-1852), Marion Videau (1815-1867), Sara Angelica (1816-1877), and twins, Matthew (1817-1854) and Richard (1817-1833). Some genealogical charts show a son named Tucker Coles (1819-1920) but unlike the three documented sons of Richard Singleton, Tucker Coles was not mentioned in the will of Richard Singleton. The sons of Richard Singleton each met untimely deaths.



Rebecca Travis
Coles Singleton

Richard Singleton, the first son to die, was a twin of Matthew, who died in 1833. On the way to White Sulphur Springs, the Singleton family stopped overnight at an inn operated by a Mr. Thayler. Richard, was taken ill and died of congestive chill at the age of sixteen. A coffin was made by the resident

carpenter and the next day Richard was buried in the garden until the family could return the remains to South Carolina. The next winter Richard Singleton took a wagon for the return of the remains. Upon opening the coffin he found the body was mummified. Colonel Singleton returned to Home Place and had the body placed in his parlor and said it should not be buried. The family asked Wade Hampton II and W.B. Taylor from Columbia, South Carolina to talk to Richard Singleton. Finally they were able to convince him that the body should be removed from the Home Place to the family cemetery.

John Coles was the second son to die. He owned Albemarle Plantation located south of Columbia across from present day Veterans Hospital. In August, 1852 he was called home from a trip to Virginia because of damage done to his crops by a freshet on the Congaree River. From his efforts to save the crop, he contracted fever and died at the age of thirty-nine.

Matthew was the third son to die. Matthew, the surviving twin, took up the double name of Matthew Richard in remembrance of his deceased twin and settled at Headquarters Plantation which he re-named Kenningston. Matthew Richard died at the age of thirty-seven in 1854 from pneumonia.

Tucker Coles, the fourth son, lived to be 99 and little is known about him other than he was a member of the congregation of Holy Cross Episcopal Church.

Richard Singleton was the father of three daughters, Mary Rebecca (1805-30), Videau Marion (1815-1867), and Sarah Angelica (1816-78).

Mary Rebecca accepted a proposal from George McDuffie, later to be Governor of South Carolina, on the way to White Sulphur Springs in 1828. Mary Rebecca married George McDuffie June 13, 1829. They settled at Home Place even though George McDuffie owned a cotton plantation, Cherry Hill, over looking the Savannah River in Abbeville District. George McDuffie continued to make Home Place his residence of choice even after Mary Rebecca passed away in 1830.



Mary Rebecca

George McDuffie died at the age of sixty at Home Place and is buried in the Singleton Family Cemetery.



Videau Marion

In 1831 Videau Marion met and later became engaged to Robert Marion Deveaux, a planter from Pineville, South Carolina while at White Sulphur Springs. Videau Marion married Robert Marion Deveaux March 31, 1835. They settled at Pine Isle Plantation in Pineville, South Carolina but maintained a summer home, The Ruins, in Stateburg, South Carolina, a few miles from Home Place.

Ah, but the third daughter.

No small family wedding for Sara Angelica. In 1838 she had one of the most, if not the most, famous weddings ever to take place in South Carolina. She married Abraham van Buren son of the President of the United States and went on to become the first and only acting First Lady of the White House South Carolina has produced.



Sara Angelica

Richard Singleton had a passion for Thoroughbred horses. His father, John Singleton, a founder of the famous Charleston Jockey Club and the Stateburg Jockey Club, was an avid breeder of Thoroughbred horses. Although not as extensive as the stables at Midway which held one hundred horses, Richard Singleton still had stable of considerable size. His horses raced at New Orleans, Louisville, Saratoga and of course Charleston. To insure his was the best, Richard Singleton imported horses, jockeys, and trainers from England. The most famous of his horses were Redgauntlet, Ariel, and Nondescript. No breeder in the country was better recognized as a breeder and owner of fine horses.

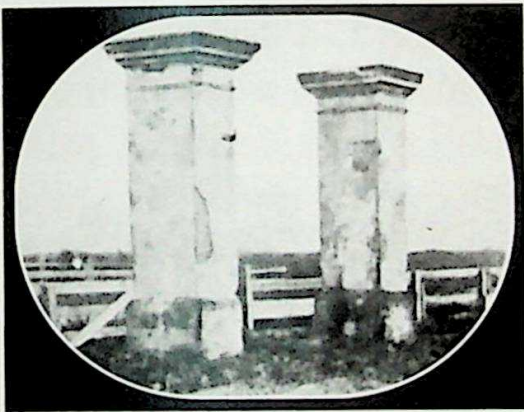


Ladies Pavilion at
Charleston Race Course

The South Carolina Jockey Club was founded in 1793 as part of a fifteen track circuit in South Carolina with the purpose of having a grand finale race week at the end of the season in February. In 1827 Richard Singleton's horses accomplished a feat achieve by only one other person at that time; each his horses won their race at the grand finale race week. General Wade Hampton II in 1800 had accomplished the same feat. After that, one other person was able to duplicate the feat: a neighbor and relative of Richard Singleton, Governor James

Burchell Richardson in 1833. After fifty years as a member, Richard Singleton was given the rare title of Honorary Member. These feats were accomplished at the New Market Course which is now under Interstate twenty-six.

In 1835, part of the Gibbs plantation was acquired by the South Carolina Jockey Club and the Washington Race Course was created. The Italianate ladies Pavilion was designed by Charles F. Reichardt, the builder of the first Charleston Hotel.



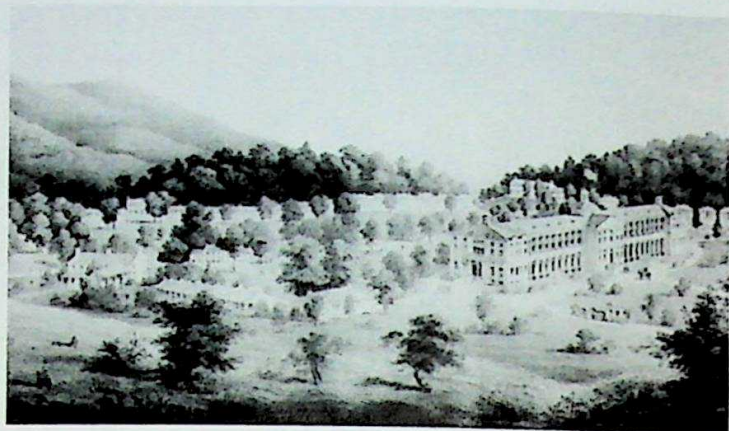
Gates at Charleston



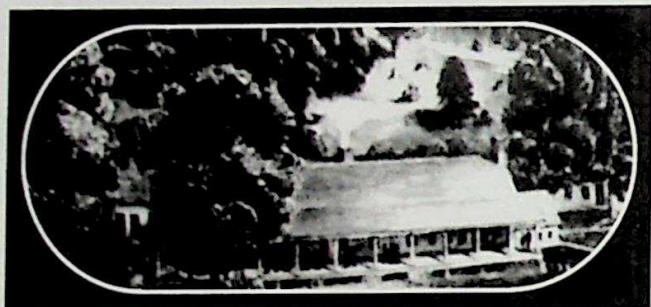
Gates at Belmont

The South Carolina Jockey Club is gone, turned into Hampton Park now and cars drive where horses once raced, but the gates survive and are now part of the Belmont Race Track in Belmont, New York.

John Singleton took his vacation at Tivoli, New York. Richard Singleton and his family packed up and made a seven hundred fifty mile trek to White Sulphur Springs, Virginia (later West Virginia) each summer. At first the route took them down to Charleston, then up to Fayetteville, North Carolina, Richmond, Virginia, Staunton, Virginia, and finally to White Sulphur Springs. Later a route was opened going through Asheville, North Carolina and Abingdon, Virginia and on to White Sulfur Springs. This new route reached the cool mountains earlier and was shorter, but still made for a long trip.



Old White



The Tavern at White Sulphur Springs

Although there were a number of resorts built around springs in Virginia, White Sulphur Springs was the most social of all. James Caldwell was the developer of White Sulphur Springs. There was already a tavern on the property and Caldwell built a dining hall three hundred feet in length (capable of seating twelve hundred for dinner), a ballroom with

lodging above and an eighty stall stable at each end. The building was referred to as The White or the Old White.

The resort quickly expanded to six thousand acres consisting of both large and small cottages. The small cottages were in rows, such as Paradise Row, the first to be built (a favorite for newly weds), Alabama Row (second to be built), Wolf Row (for bachelors and where noise and liquor were always present), Spring Row (in front of the fountain), South Carolina Row Baltimore, Florida, and South Carolina Row (Richard Singleton and John Laurence Manning owned houses on this row). There was a row literally named for every southern state.

For thirty years Richard Singleton was the bright and shining example of what a "Spring-Going Southern Gentleman" should be and do. He was the

outstanding social figure at White Sulphur Springs, the spring of springs, known today as The Greenbriar. By the decade of the 1830's White Sulphur Springs attained a period of prominence as planters, judges, lawyers, and merchants, from the southern states began to congregate in the mountain village in the summer months of July, August, and the first part of September.

Based on this description from George W. Featherstone in 1834 it would seem impossible for Caldwell not to be wealthy:

“... there wasn't any room for them here, the place was packed to the gates. There wasn't a bed or a mattress or a blanket or a bench or a row of three chairs that did not have its nightly occupant...”

In addition to this great demand for rooms in the hotel, Caldwell had a unique fee arrangement for guests at White Sulphur Springs that contributed to his cash flow. The Old White complex included the inn and private cottages on the grounds. If a patron rented a cottage or stayed in Old White, they paid a daily rate for room, board, and to use the springs. If a patron owned a cottage and stayed in that private cottage, the rate was the same. This was after having to pay \$100 to \$200 for the privilege of building the private cottage and bearing all construction costs.

What the cottage owner got for his money was no waiting to check in and always being assured of accommodations. The inn was in a perpetual state of overcrowding and one could never be sure of accommodations, no matter his social or financial status. In addition to the above charges the owner, when not in residence, had to let Caldwell rent the cottage and Caldwell kept the rent. The cottage owner was also responsible for the damage done by the hogs that were allowed to run rampant over the grounds even though Caldwell owned the hogs.

As good a promoter as Caldwell was, he was really a poor businessman. He could not seem to stay out of debt and was always in need of funds. First he asked Richard Singleton to take over a mortgage of \$12,000; then another for \$10,000 and finally another \$8,000. Thus Richard Singleton ended up with a

\$30,000 mortgage on Old White and became an unwilling partner in the Old White complex. Not unexpectedly, none of the money that Richard Singleton “loaned” to Caldwell was ever paid back.

Richard Singleton was one of the first to build a small cottage on the grounds. He and his family occupied it for the first time in August, 1825. This cottage



Henderson Cottage

was located between the ballroom and a row of log cabins known as Carolina Row. At the time the cottage was described as the prettiest cottage on the place.

It did not take long for the “cottage” situation to turn into competition.

Steven Henderson of New Orleans built the first

cottage on a grand scale at White Sulphur Springs in 1835. He married into one of wealthiest Louisiana sugar plantation families and was considered to be almost as wealthy as Wade Hampton I of South Carolina who was thought to be the wealthiest man in America. The cottage Steven Henderson built stood in the middle of Louisiana Row. Ruth Woods Dayton in her book Greenbrier Pioneers and Their Families, describes the Henderson cottage as:

“...in Louisiana Row, on the side of the hill and partly hidden in the trees is the large three-storied white brick house, with long double porches high above the ground...”

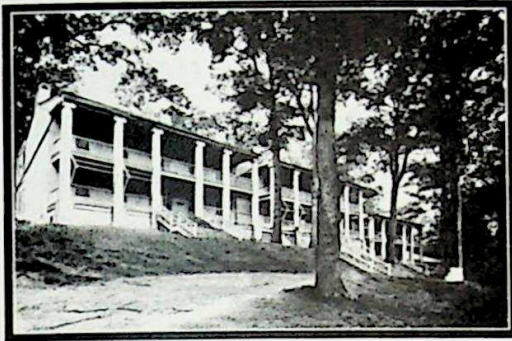
“...it overlooks the twelve-columned spring house, the dome of which was then surmounted by a hand-carved wooden statue of Hygiea, goddess of health, a gift from Mr. Henderson in 1835...”

The house Steven Henderson built was remodeled in 1932 and christened by Mrs. Woodrow Wilson. The cottage still stands and is known today as the President's Cottage Museum.

To Richard Singleton, the most important thing about the Henderson house was that it overlooked the Singleton cottage.

The wealth of Steven Henderson came from sugar. Richard Singleton felt "obligated" to show that cotton money could take on any challenge sugar money could present.

In 1838, Richard Singleton and Wade Hampton II of Millwood Plantation in Columbia built three identical private cottages on Carolina Row.



The Columnades



The Guest House

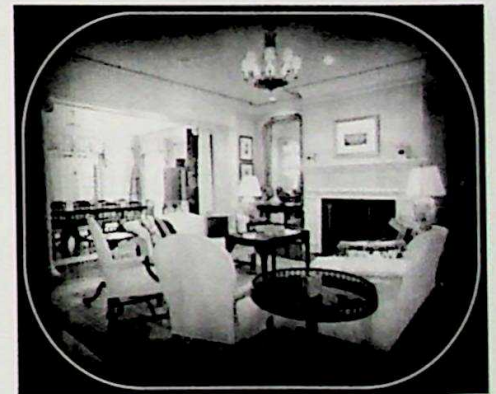
The first two cottages were side by side with the third cottage located a little below them. The first cottage belonged to Richard Singleton, the second cottage to Wade Hampton II and the third cottage was for guests of the two families.



Dining Seating 22



Stairs To Second Level



Parlor

Each house was identical, having a double porch supported by six masonry columns and two stories over a basement. The six columns gave the cottages their collective name, the Colonnades.

The rooms on the first floor had what would become known as an “open concept” with no walls separating the rooms. The first floor consisted of a library and a parlor across the front and a dining room across the back of the cottage with dual access from the library and the parlor. The upstairs held the two bedrooms. Fireplaces on each end of the house provided heat. Outbuildings included a stable and a kitchen.

But most importantly, the Colonnades overlooked the grounds of the Old White including the cottage of Steven Henderson.

In 1839 President Martin van Buren with his family spent the social season in the guest cottage. This was the time that Angelica Singleton, daughter of Richard Singleton, became engaged to Abraham van Buren, son of President van Buren. Today the guest cottage still stands at the Greenbrier, on South Carolina Avenue, now known as the Colonnade Estate House. The other two cottages no longer exist.

Richard Singleton and Wade Hampton II were the undisputed arbitrators and had final say so on all matters pertaining to social matters at Old White. In this capacity Richard Singleton was involved in a family situation that would be remembered for a long time and create more bad blood between the McRa and Singleton families. The incident was particularly complicated for Richard Singleton because one of the parties was the nephew of his wife (J.W. Stevenson), while the other party was his own nephew (Powell McRa, Jr.). The incident is related this way by Perceval Reniers in his book The Springs of Virginia:

“... the early morning crowd never knew what happened in the faro room that night. In the morning the word flashed round that one of those fierce, periodic gambling storms had broken and that one of the bucks had fled on the early coach for Lexington. It was young Stevenson. He had been seen cheating at cards, they said. Who had seen him? That was the mystery. Powell McRa had passed the charge, acting, he said, for a friend of his whose identity he would not reveal. He denied that he himself had witnessed the lapse. It was a peculiar and delicate situation

and everyone was walking on eggs. But already the case had gone to its judges, Colonels Hampton and Singleton, as a matter of course.

The arbiters took their time; the thing was serious, it could mean death on the field of honor..."

Stevenson was found innocent of all charges and Colonel Singleton with the support of Wade Hampton banned Powell McRa from White Sulphur Springs for life. This created more bad blood between the Singleton and McRa families and would lay the ground work for the subsequent law suits that Richard Singleton would endure until his death.

Richard Singleton continued to return to White Sulphur Springs each year, even after his wife's death. September, 1852 was the last trip to White Sulphur Springs for Richard Singleton. His last stay was not a good one. For most of the time he was confined to his bedroom.

Colonel Richard Singleton died in a train accident in 1852 and thus avoided witnessing the demise of all he, his father and grandfather had built. Colonel Singleton and his grandson, Robert Marion de Veaux, were returning from a visit to True Blue Plantation in Calhoun County, near St. Matthews. Colonel Singleton found the passenger coach crowded when he changed at Kingville and went into the baggage car. There was a wash out at a small creek just outside of Kingville, the baggage car was wrecked and Colonel Singleton and his grandson were killed. Grandfather and grandson were buried in a double grave at the Singleton Cemetery in Wedgefield.

In a letter dated December 9th written by his daughter, Videau Singleton Deveaux, the accident was described this way:

".....the next evening, Thursday, but it poured in torrents all day, and on Friday, even before it cleared away, they attempted to come home, hearing that the bridge over the Congaree might be washed by the threatened freshet. They passed that bridge in safety, but within a mile of Clarkson's Tenant (the Depot to the Plantation) in crossing a little ravine, the rain had washed the foundation of the trestle work over it, and though the Engine and tender passed safely over, the first car in

which they were fell in and the other cars on them, and life was taken, and limbs were broken in an instant..”

The Singleton estate had begun to unravel before Richard Singleton died. He was heavily in debt by the time of his death. At his death he owned outright or controlled over twenty thousand acres making him the proverbial “land rich and cash poor” planter.

Perceval Reniers in his book The Springs of Virginia summed up the situation of Richard Singleton this way:

“...the hardest hit was the biggest frog in the puddle, Colonel Singleton. The man who had once sent his agent to buy thoroughbreds at the King's Sale in England was now so pressed for cash that the carpenter who made the verandah couches had to dun him for eighty dollars. Once he had maintained a great stud and swept the field at the Charleston Races; now he had to keep small tradesmen waiting for their money. Bashan, the animal moulder of New York, clamored loudly to be paid for the concrete lions that crouched so imposingly at the top of the Colonel's steps...”

There are two accounts handed down as to how and why Home Place, indeed all of the Singleton plantations, was lost to the Singleton family. The first and most often told story is:

Powell McRa, Jr., nephew of Richard Singleton, owned a Thoroughbred that could no longer race. McRa was going to “put down” the horse. Richard Singleton sought to insure the horse was well cared for the rest of its life and gave Powell McRa a note for the purchase price of the horse plus compound interest. In 1872 McRa's widow, Julia, found the note and went to court to collect the note plus compound interest. She was successful and under the laws at that time the heirs were responsible for debts against the estate. The amount was so large as to be beyond the means of the grandson, Richard Richardson Singleton, who had

inherited Home Place and he was forced to sell the house to settle the debt.

As a point of discussion, the most expensive horse sold during the period of the note was Bertrand. His price was \$3,250. So it is difficult to establish a sales price even with 20 years of compound interest that could by itself caused the Singleton empire to crumble. No evidence has ever been found of a note such as the one described in the stories.

During the Civil War Richard Singleton invested \$300,000 of Singleton money in Confederate Bonds. The McRa family who lived in the North were so incensed at this that they sued the Singleton family and forced all of the plantations to be sold.

It is not true that Richard Singleton had anything to do with the investment; first of all, Richard Singleton was deceased by the time the first Confederate Bond was issued. It is true that some of the Singleton money was invested in Confederate Bonds. But these funds belonged to Mary Martha Singleton McRa and were under the control of the Court. The Court in its wisdom issued an order to the Court appointed committee that the funds could only be invested in State of South Carolina bonds. During the Civil War the state of South Carolina ceased issuing bonds and the Court then decreed that the funds should be invested in Confederate Bonds only. The amount was far less than \$300,000.

As is often the case with family accounts of events, there is some element of truth in all of the stories. In this case some of the Singleton fortune was lost to law suits filed by the McRa family and others, but more of it was lost to foreclosure by creditors.

A Kelley family was living at Home Place when the house caught fire and burned in 1876. Fortunately most of the furnishings had already been moved to Blackwoods, the new home of Richard Richardson Singleton. Strange as it may seem part of Home Place survived until 1926 according to this article in the January issue of The Sumter Daily Item:

"Wednesday evening the house of R.R. Mathis was completely destroyed by fire. The fire had made such rapid progress before being discovered that very little of the furniture and clothes was saved. The loss was only partly

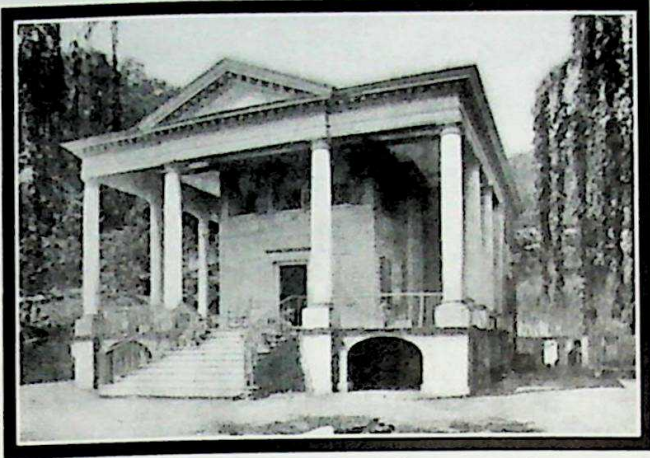
covered by insurance. With the burning of this house went the last of what was the finest antebellum home in this section—the old Singleton mansion, historic “Home Place”. The house in which Mr. Mathis lived was made up of the two offices which were part of the original place. These were rolled together and other room added to make a dwelling many years ago when the mansion was burned. This place was purchased by Mr. George Dew and after his death his son-in-law Mr. Mathis. It was interesting after the fire to examine the remains of the burned building and not the construction of the framework as revealed in the remaining bits of charred timbers. Of heart long leaf pine as solid as when built a century ago, the sills and stringers were mortised to fit and joined together by round wooden pegs. No nails were to be found in this part of the structure....”

Richard Singleton bequeath a life interest in Home Place to his son John Coles, then to the eldest of John Coles sons, Richard Richardson Singleton. John Coles died in September, 1852 two months before Richard Singleton. Home Place went directly to Richard Richardson Singleton.

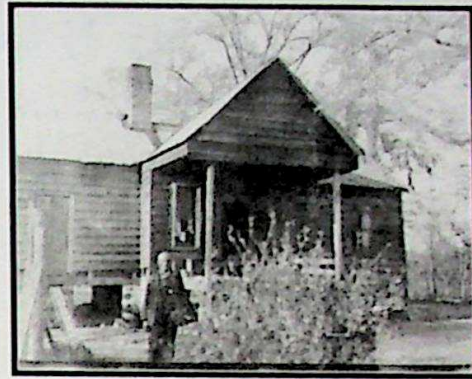
Richard Richardson Singleton (1840-1900) received his early education from schools in Columbia and was enrolled in the University of Virginia when The War broke out. He returned to Home Place and enlisted in Wade Hampton's Legion. He was wounded at Averysboro, North Carolina. Upon his return to Home Place after the war he apparently suffered from his lack of planting skills, lack of a labor force and lack of management abilities. As a result he extended himself, financially, to a point he could not meet the terms of the notes. In other words, he was forced into bankruptcy.

Home place was sold out of the family at a Sheriff's Sale.

BLACKWOODS

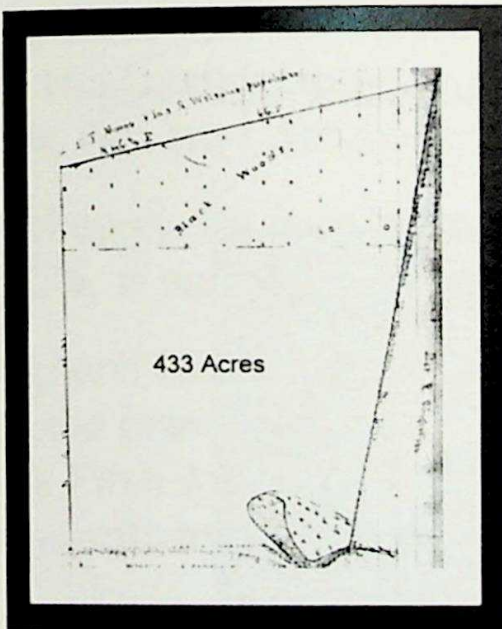


Singleton Blackwoods



Ramsey Blackwoods

There can be some confusion concerning Blackwoods. The first to use the name was Willis Ramsey (1778-1854). Willis Ramsey was one of the early settlers of the High Hills of Santee and his plantation of one thousand plus acres was named Blackwoods. The Ramsey Blackwoods was sold in pieces with the home site of four hundred thirty-three acres going to Richard Singleton. Richard Singleton kept the name Blackwoods for the tract. When Richard Richardson Singleton obtained the tract he kept the name Blackwoods for the house he built on the tract. The Ramsey Blackwoods was still standing and being lived in well into the twentieth century. It was finally abandoned and fell in upon itself.



Plat of Blackwoods Tract

The subject of this sketch is the Blackwoods of Richard Richardson Singleton.

Richard Richardson Singleton lost Home Place bit by bit as various mortgage holders foreclosed but he managed to salvage a tract of land on which he built a house. Both the tract of land and the house were known as Blackwoods.

On April 14, 1874 Sheriff John M. Tindal released the Blackwoods tract to Richard R. Richardson Singleton:

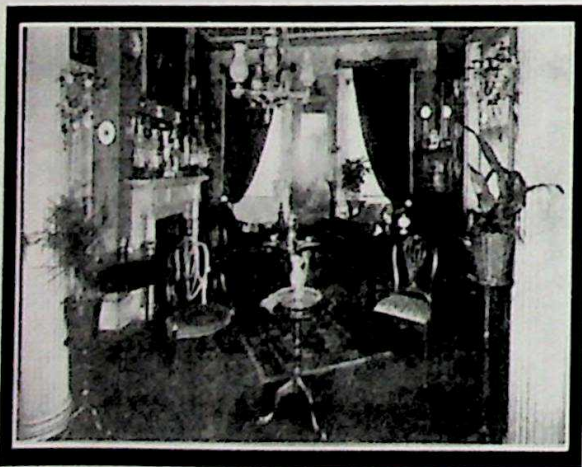
"... therefore know all men by these presents that I, John M. Tindal, sheriff as aforementioned in consideration of the premise and also in consideration of the sum of one thousand dollars to me in part paid and in part secured to be paid by the said Richard R. singleton, have granted, bargain, sold and released and by these presents do grant, bargain, sell and release unto the said Richard R. Singleton that parcel of land in the said county and state containing (433) four hundred and thirty three acres, more or less being separate of "The Home Place" the plantation or tract of land on which Richard Singleton deceased resided at the time of his death..."

The architectural style of Blackwoods was odd. The wrap around piazza seemed to dwarf the house itself. Although smaller, the structure was said to be similar in design to Home Place.

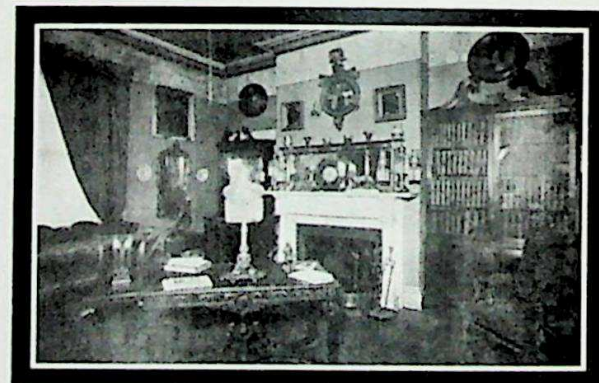
The first level was ground level with graceful arches and ran the width of the house.

Wide steps led to the second level entrance. The front door was flanked by windows. Four columns were across the front of the house and four columns down each side of the piazza.

Wrought iron hand rails were on either side of the front steps and between the columns around the porch.



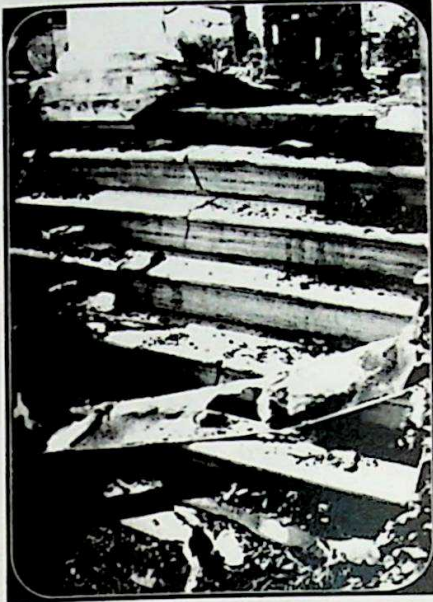
Drawing Room



Library

Although the house was proportionate in design, the piazza was large for the house, extending half way down each side of the house. At this point the house was expanded to equal the width of the porch.

There is one local story that the marble steps from Home Place were taken for use as the entrance steps for Blackwoods. A sketch of Blackwoods that was used in an auction brochure seems to show nine marble steps. There is a photograph taken in the 1960's that states the steps are from Blackwoods, but this photograph seems to show only five marble steps. The same story goes on to say that the steps were bulldozed when the fire remains were removed, never to be seen again.



Blackwoods Steps?

In descriptions of Home Place, the number of marble steps is placed at thirteen not nine. Since Richard Richardson Singleton did not own Home Place at the time Blackwoods

was built, it does not seem likely that the Home Place steps would have been moved. The only sure thing is that the steps no longer exist.

Fortunately, Richard Richardson Singleton was able to move all the furnishings from Home Place to Blackwoods. If the furnishings had not been moved, they would probably have been lost in the fire that destroyed Home Place in 1876.

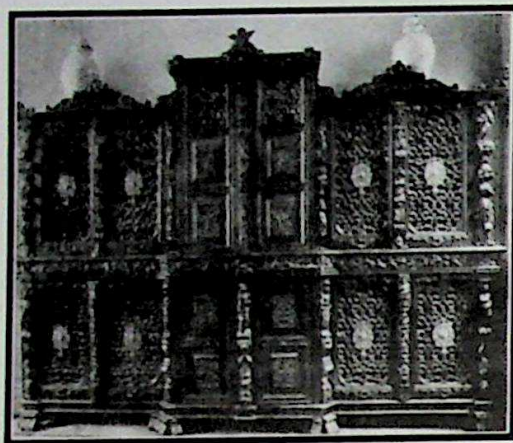
Although the furniture of Home Place avoided being destroyed in the fire of 1876, it was not to remain in the Singleton family.

Richard Richardson Singleton died in September, 1900. In November, 1900 one of the premier auction houses in the country was hired, James P. Silo owner of the Fifth Avenue Art Galleries, 366 Fifth Avenue, New York, to auction the contents of Blackwoods.



Auction
Announcement

The sale was so large, 703 items, that a three day period was required to sell all of the items. The sale included mirrors, art objects, silver, china, engravings, and paintings. A catalog was issued with a list of the items to be sold *"...from the famous Singleton mansion "Blackwoods near Sumpter, South Carolina..."*



Oak Book Case

Some examples of the objects offered were:

A Charles 1st book case described as *"having been commenced in 1640 and finished in 1650. Numerous drawers and door compartments, the pilasters are of swags of fruit, surmounted by apostles, angels, female figures and satyrs boldly carved. The center frieze is rich decorated with fantastic hunting panels, studded with lions' heads in fine carved relief. Panels on*

center doors designate "Faith", "Hope", "Justice" and "Truth". The wing doors are pierced and carved and embellished with massive chiseled ormolu mounts, displaying coat-of-arms, motto and Order of the Garter. The whole being surmounted by carved scroll molding, and cherubs".

A bust was described this way:



Marble Bust

"Life size Indian Girl (American). Head and shoulders partly draped. Head dress—starred bands, plumage, and American Arms. Medallion necklace and pendant containing relieves of Washington, Franklin, Jackson and others. On cylindrical revolving pedestal of green-veined Italian marble, on octagonal plinth".

Thus were most of the heirlooms of Home Place and some from Melrose, and Midway not only moved out of the Singleton family but out of the state.

A few pieces ended up in museums but for the most part the heirlooms went into private collections, whereabouts unknown. But why sell such family items at all, and particularly so soon after the death of Richard Richardson Singleton? There are some hints as to why, but they do not tell all of the story.

Two years after the sale this article appeared in the Watchman and Southron January 15, 1902 issue:

"...Mrs. R. R. Singleton and Misses Elise and Lucy Singleton will leave for Charleston soon, where they will reside in the future..."

And then there is this letter dated 1935 from Elise Broun Lathrop to her cousin Decca Coles Halsey (daughter of Richard Richardson Singleton) that would seem to indicate that Blackwoods had to be sold due to mortgages:

"...I heard of the sale of Bl. Woods, which brought I hear 6 or 7 thousand dollars and & Mrs. Simpson who had refused to sign away her right when poor weak Lucy began her crazy mortgaging received about two thousand dollars. When you told me to my dismay that Bl. Wo. was all gone I wrote Mrs. Simpson and asked since she had always regarded Lucy as very incompetent why did she not stop her when she first began her unfortunate mortgaging..."

Unfortunately, if there was an answer from Mrs. Simpson it is not recorded.

Mrs. Simpson was Annie Elise Singleton nee Mrs. William Dunlap and Lucy was Lucy Champe Singleton nee Mrs. John R. Ball.

This wedding announcement in the October 9, 1915 seems to tell a different story about Lucy Singleton:

"...the bride is the daughter of Mrs. and Mrs. Richard R. Singleton, a member of the prominent and well-known Singleton family of South Carolina, and has spent the greater part of her life, with her mother at the old home place "Blackwoods". For the past several years, most of her

time has been spent in the management of the farming interest of the Singleton estate..."

The Singleton Blackwoods was destroyed by fire, but the date is uncertain as is the true story of what really happened to Blackwoods after the death of Richard Richardson Singleton.

FORK



Fork

The Fork was one of the plantations that Richard Singleton purchased in his lifetime. The plantation was located in Richland County (Lower Richland). The size of the plantation is not exact.

In the booklet Historical Sketches Along the Wateree River, the acreage of Fork is given as four thousand with one thousand being in Sumter County and the remainder in Richland County. The acreage is not documented but based on the number of slaves and the known acreage of Headquarters which adjoined Fork, four thousand acres would be reasonable. At the same time it would be unusual for a plantation to be split by the river and keep the same name. Also the Fork Plantation is identified in the will of Richard Singleton as being in Richland County.



Rebecca

What is certain is that Fork was bequeath to the children of Angelica Singleton van Buren by her father, Richard Singleton. He left his wife, Rebecca, and his daughters, Angelica and Videau Marion, the profits for Fork for the life time of Rebecca.

Videau
Marion

Angelica

The bequest read this way:

"...also all my lands comprising what is called and known as my Fork plantation in Richland District, together with all the negro slaves and other personal property thereon as I may leave at the time of my death, shall be kept together and managed by my Executors upon each estate where the property may be found respectively, and worked for the joint and common benefit of my wife, Rebecca, and my daughters Marion de Veaux and Angelica Van Buren, to each of whom shall be paid by my Executors one third of the annual profits of the two estates aforesaid. But upon the death of my wife I bequeath the annual profits of the True Blue Estate and slaves thereon to my daughter Marion de Veaux during her natural life, and the annual profits of the Fork aforesaid and the slaves thereon to my daughter Angelica Van Buren during her natural life..."

There is only a brief description of the house which appears in the booklet Historical Sketches Along the Wateree River.

The house is described as:

"...the main house was a large two-story wood structure built from Cypress. It was situated on a raised brick basement and several of the rooms were wainscoted in walnut..."

By some accounts Richard Singleton built the house on Fork Plantation for Angelica so she would have a place to stay when she visited during the winter months. Richard Singleton certainly would not have hesitated to build a house for Angelica, but the location is a little puzzling. Angelica was always in the thick of the social scene and as far as the Singleton family was concerned, that was at Home Place.

When Angelica inherited Fork Plantation in 1852, the inventory was valued at \$116,609. The inventory list stated the assets as:

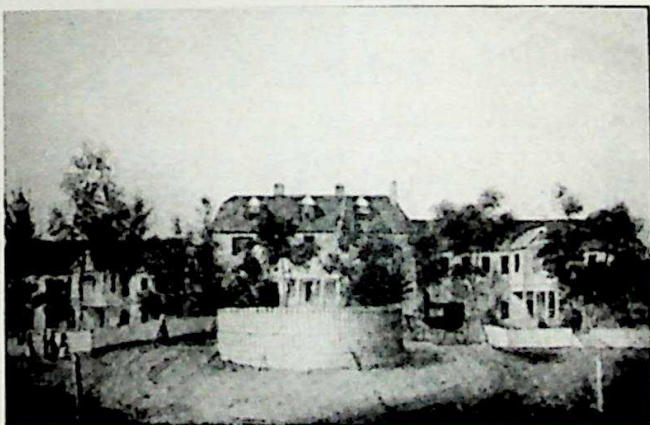
Slaves	230	\$ 105,516.00
Tools		31.00
Plough Stocks and Hoes	45	45.00
Blacksmith Shop Contents		500.00
Mules	22	2,890.00
Stockminder	1	50.00
Wagons	5	400.00
Horses	4	375.00
Cows	70	560.00
Sheep	62	124.00
Hogs	57	\$ 228.00
Hogs for Fating	10	\$ 90.00
Corn	7,000 Bushels	\$ 3,500.00

Foder and Hay	40,000 pounds	\$	400.00
Peas	300 bushels	\$	150.00
Potatoes and Slips	1,200 Bushels	\$	600.00
Blood Horses	10	\$	1,100.00
Furniture at White House		\$	50.00

There were two slaves on the inventory identified as boat hands which may indicate that there was a ferry dock at Fork on the Wateree River. The entry of "furniture at the White House" is somewhat puzzling in that this inventory was taken eleven years after Angelica left the White House but perhaps some furniture was sill on loan to the White House.

Angelica Singleton was a unique person who, at least on the surface, lived a dream life. There is much written about a few aspects of her life and other aspects are all but ignored.

Angelica, along with her sister Videau, only one year older, spent most of her early years at boarding schools. At the age of eight Angelica was enrolled in the South Carolina Female Collegiate Institute in Barhamville, South Carolina, located in the Sand Hills two miles northeast of Columbia. The young ladies at this center of learning were described as

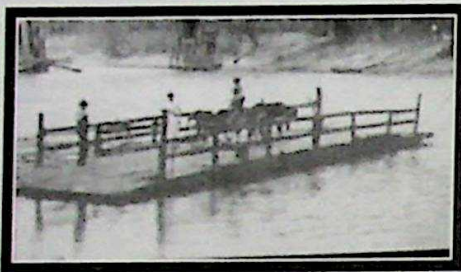


SC Female Collegiate Institute

“thoroughbreds” an acknowledgment of their social status. One rule at the South Carolina Female Collegiate Institute was that the students could entertain young men in the parlor but only if they were brothers or cousins. One former student made the comment that every male student at South college had a sister or cousin at the Institute.

HEADQUARTERS, KENSINGTON

When Richard Singleton purchased the four thousand four hundred acre tract known as Headquarters from Edward Croft, it is not known for sure if there was a house in existence or if Richard Singleton built a house there. The house on the property was described as very functional, but it was comfortable enough to accommodate Richard Singleton when he needed to stay for an extended time to manage his plantations on the Richland County side of the Wateree. The house was two stories, narrow and straight up in design sitting on a foundation of sandstone. The exterior siding was probably cypress.



River Ferry

It is hard to visualize it today, but in the days of Richard Singleton, the Wateree River swamp was clear cut. Headquarters was located almost directly across the Swamp from Home Place and could clearly be seen from there. To facilitate his trips back and forth across the Wateree River, Richard Singleton owned a private ferry which docked at the foot of Headquarters.

As mentioned earlier, the majority of the farm land Richard Singleton purchased was located in Lower Richland and Calhoun Counties. The principle reason for large land holdings in the area was that "cotton was king" and there was no better cotton land than the land in Lower Richland. Headquarters was chosen as the site from which Richard Singleton managed his properties because it was centrally located.

At the death of Richard Singleton, Headquarters went to Matthew Richard Singleton (1817-1854). He was born Matthew Singleton, a twin to Richard Singleton (1817-1833), but changed his name to Matthew Richard when his twin died an untimely death.

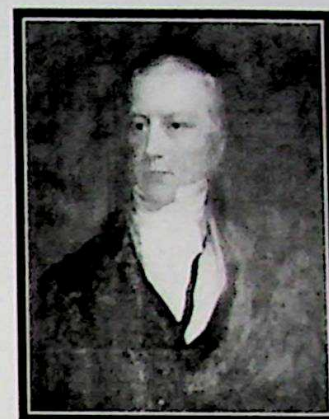
Matthew Richard went on to graduate from South Carolina College in 1837. Shortly after graduation, Matthew Richard was appointed military attache' to the American Mission in London.



Matthew Richard
Singleton

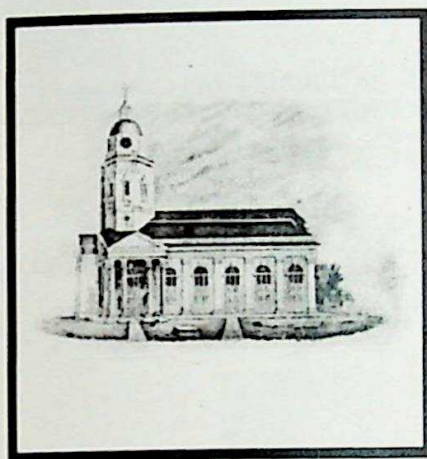
The leader of this mission was Andrew Stephenson (1784-1857), an uncle.

Matthew Richard took full advantage of the opportunity to travel extensively in Europe. He was particularly interested in French Revival architecture. This type of architecture incorporated English, Italianate, and French styles and can be hard to identify as such. However, it allows for much latitude for the builder to be creative.



Andrew
Stephenson

Matthew Richard returned to Headquarters in 1847.



St. Phillips
Episcopal Church
Charleston SC

Three years later on the 28th of February, 1844 Matthew Richard was married to Martha Rutledge Kinloch in a ceremony conducted by the Episcopal Bishop Christopher Gadsden. The marriage took place at Saint Phillips Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Matthew became a prosperous, innovative planter. Two of his better known projects were importing Haw (Crab Apple) trees for the purpose of developing an inexpensive, renewable source of fence posts and importing Karkul Sheep aka Broad Tail or Fat Tail sheep. This breed of sheep has been described in a papers written by Sir John Barrow thusly:

"...the tail which is short, broad, flat, naked on the underside and seldom less in weight than five or six pounds, sometimes more that a dozen pounds; when melted it is frequently used as a substitute for butter and for making soap..."

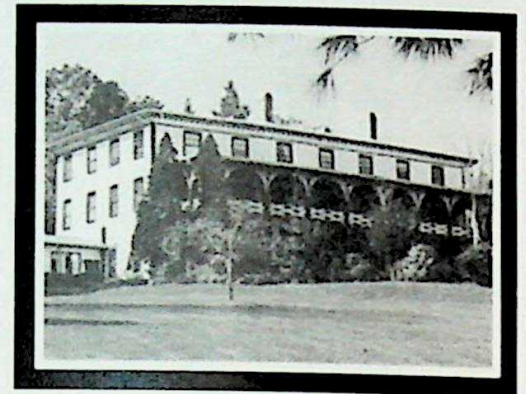


Karkul Ram

The breed is ancient goes back as least to the 1400's. The soft, tightly wound pelt, also called Persian Lamb, is used to make hats, felt and carpet. The meat and milk provide substance for many people in the world.

The reason Matthew Richard imported this particular breed of sheep is not documented but it probable that he intended to cross this extremely hardy Karkul breed with those breeds already in this country for a more productive breed. There is no evidence that Matthew Richard was successful with either the Haw tree or the Karkul projects.

Matthew Richard was an entrepreneur in addition to being a planter. One of his major investments was at Flat Rock, North Carolina where he invested in a new hotel, the Farmer's Hotel. The hotel was completed in 1853, shortly before the death of Matthew Richard, by Henry T. Farmer. The hotel served as a stage stop on the Buncombe Turnpike as well as hosting guests who spent summer months at Flat Rock. The hotel still stands today but under the name of Woodfield Inn.



Farmer's Hotel

Martha (Mattie) Rutledge Kinloch (1818-1892) was an unusually strong woman for her time. She would have undoubtedly fit well into modern times as a



Mattie



Mattie

business woman. Born the eldest child of Mary and Frederick Kinloch on April 18, 1818, she spent most of her childhood at her family's plantations near

Georgetown and Charleston. She was well educated and was fluent in both the Italian and French languages as well as being proficient with musical instruments.



Acton

The grandfather of Mattie was Francis Kinloch (1755 –1826) who owned Acton, a summer home located in Stateburg, South Carolina, just across the Wateree River from Headquarters. Francis Kinloch also owned Kensington Plantation, a rice plantation in Georgetown.

An inventory taken for estate purposes listed assets of headquarters valued at \$134,247.00. The assets were listed as:

*Slaves	251	\$121,600.00
Mules	32	3,055.00
Horses	5	1,010.00
Sheep	93	465.00
Plough Stocks	38	57.00
Wagons	5	400.00
Blacksmith Tools		250.00
Hoes and Spades		20.00
Cradles	5	20.00
Carts	4	120.00
Canal Boat	1	500.00
Corn	25,000 Bushels	2,500.00
Potatoes	1,200 Bushels	600.00
Peas	300 Bushels	150.00
Brick and Tyle	120,000	1,100.00

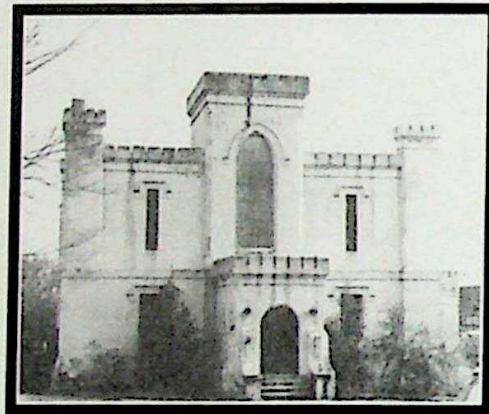
** Of note in this inventory are two slaves listed as “boat hands”, presumably these two slaves were used to operate the ferry and canal (pole) boat that are in the inventory.*

Before his marriage Matthew Richard was living at Headquarters and he continued to live in the house for another nine years after his marriage to Mattie. By 1851 the family had grown to three children, Cleland Kinloch (1844-1920), Helen Coles (1846-) and Richard Richardson (1851-1921).

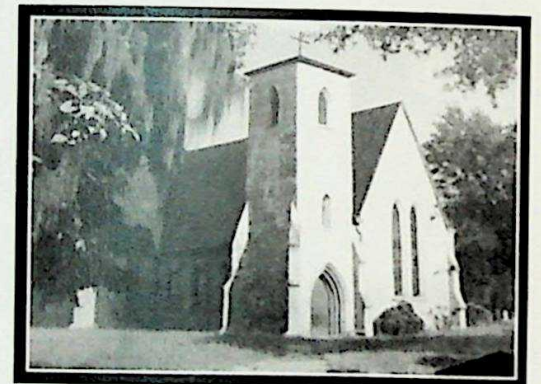
The original Headquarters house became too small to accommodate the family and Matthew Richard began construction of a larger house. Construction on the house was begun in 1852 and completed in 1854. The Charleston architectural firm of Edward C. Jones and Francis D. Lee was hired to build the house. Jones and Lee had done work in the area before; the Episcopal churches St. Marks and Holy Cross and the Orangeburg County jail aka the Pink Palace.



St. Marks Episcopal
Church



Pink Palace



Holy Cross Episcopal
Church

Matthew Richard changed the original house from a modest one to a palatial mansion of twelve thousand square feet and twenty-nine rooms.

Mattie Singleton christen the new house Kensington after the ancestral home of her family. Kensington was a magnificent house, meant to impress and it did that well.

The two questions that have been debated for years are what happened to the original house and the style of architecture used at Kensington.

It is universally agreed that when Matthew Richard built Kensington, he incorporated the existing house into the new one. But how he did this is not agreed upon. The most aggressive theory is that the existing house was literally pulled in half and a new "middle" was inserted. This theory is supported by different levels in the floor between the central hall, dining room and the wings of the house. There is a three inch step down between these levels. The popular story of how Matthew Richard did this is that he hitched a mule team to the original house and literally pulled it in half to form the wings of the new house.

R.M. Boyd, the engineer of the remodeling of Kensington in 1986 gives this opinion on the subject:

"...the house is built over and around another building which was probably known as Headquarters Office..."

"...this would have been an office type building at least two stories tall..."

In a paper by an unknown author, this opinion was given:

"...evidence that the house used components from an earlier building is found in the relatively simple upstairs bedrooms and the basement wings with wide wooden mantels..."

And again in the same paper:

"...the original house was probably split in to and reassemble around the core of the dome structure, with the carriage porch and dining room added on..."

TRUE BLUE

The crown jewel of Richard Singleton's empire was True Blue Plantation. True Blue was down the road a piece from Kensington, across the Congaree River in Calhoun County.

In the inventory taken January 1853, after the death of Richard Singleton the chattels at True Blue were valued at \$121,384.

Slaves	247	\$112,630.00
Mules and Cattle	36	\$2,5815.00
Sheep	105	\$1,351.00
Cattle	60	\$480.00
Stock Hogs	140	\$420.00
Killing Hogs	33	\$297.00
Blood Stock Horses	6	\$900.00
Wagons and 2 Carts		\$400.00
Corn	4,500 Bushels	\$2,250.00
Fodder	10,800 Pounds	\$40.00
Peas	600 Bushels	\$300.00
Bordering Hoes	80	\$20.00
Grubbing Hoes	40	\$20.00
Spades	12	\$6.00
Shovels	12	\$6.00
Axes	30	\$15.00
Blacksmith Shop		\$250.00
Plough Stocks	26	\$52.00

True Blue was a five thousand five hundred fifty-three acre cotton plantation located in the midst of prime cotton land. John Singleton, bequeathed True Blue to Richard Singleton, at the time a two thousand five hundred acre tract. John Singleton had acquired the land from William Doughty prior to 1817. Doughty had acquire the land through his marriage to Rachael Porcher.

Richard Singleton added to the original acreage until True Blue contained twice the acreage that John Singleton bought. True Blue was named for the indigo plant which was the original crop grown there. Amazingly, the name True Blue was never changed by any of the owners. The house burned in 1886 but True Blue must have been an exceptional place. In 1887, Richard I. Manning, the second husband of Ann de Veaux (grand-daughter of Richard Singleton) wrote *"I consider True Blue to be the garden spot of the world"*.

Richard Singleton bequeathed a life interest in True Blue to his daughter Videau Marion Singleton(1815-1867). But the life interest would not be effective until after the death of Richard and Rebecca Singleton. When he wrote the will Richard Singleton assumed he would be the first to die so he provided that his widow and his two daughters would share equally in the profits of Fork and True Blue until the death of Rebecca Singleton. Then each daughter would have sole use of the profits from one of the plantations; Angelica from the Fork and Videau from True Blue.



Videau Marion
Singleton

Upon the death of the daughters their eldest child would receive fee simple title to the respective property. Rebecca died before her daughters, so upon the death of Richard Singleton, the daughters immediately gain ownership of the plantations.

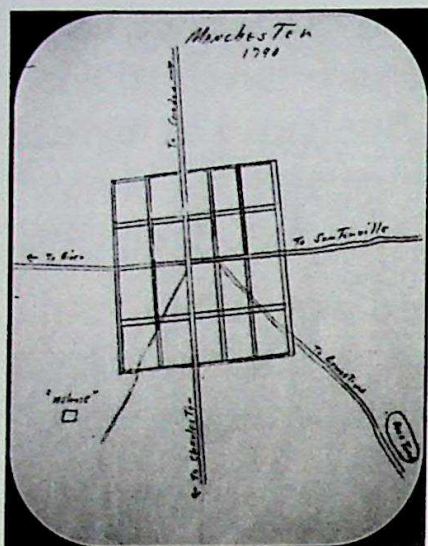
Things went smoothly for Angelica as far as Fork was concerned. She was mostly an absentee owner and had a stable marriage.

Not so for Videau.

Videau never shared her sister's social ambitions but the two sisters remained close all of their lives. After one social season in Washington, Videau came back to South Carolina and to her fiance, Marion de Veaux (1812-1843).

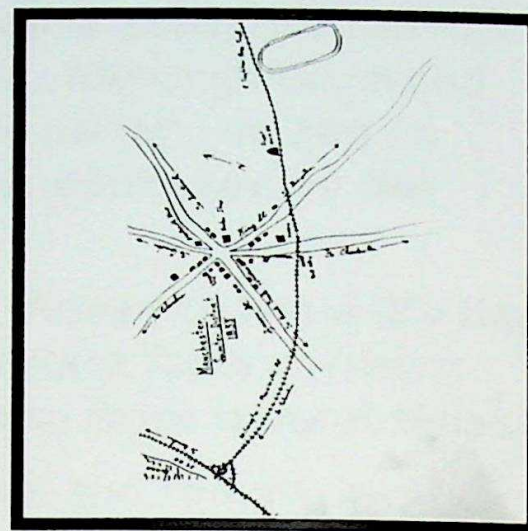
MANCHESTER.

As a town, Manchester was an important part of the story of The Great Road.



Manchester Circa
1790

Manchester was located four miles south of present day Wedgefield on both sides of the Great Road. Actually, Manchester was developed on part of the original home place of Matthew Singleton, by his son-in-law Isham Moore. There is no record of why the name Manchester was chosen for the town. But Manchester was almost never mentioned without the words, wicked and sinful being in the same breath.



Manchester Circa 1855

The very first lot sold was by Isham Moore to William Thurtle, December 4, 1802. The lot measured two hundred twenty-five feet on Main Street (the Great Road) and five hundred fifty feet deep. The selling price was \$700.



Isham Moore

The town was one mile square. The land on which Manchester was built was laid out according to a regular plan. There were three major streets, Main, King, and Queen. Other streets were Baker's Alley, Depot Lane, and Center Street. Streets were sixty feet wide; alleys twenty-seven feet wide, lots were one hundred feet by two hundred fifty feet. There were a total of two hundred fifty lots in the town of Manchester. King Street was really The Great Road, right through the middle of town. A road, sometimes called Gilman's Road, led from Manchester to Georgetown by way of Nelson's Ferry.

In his book Statistics of South Carolina written in 1826 Robert Mills gives this brief mention of Manchester:

"...Manchester is a small settlement, situated about nine miles south of Stateburg. This village, with Stateburg and Sumterville, form nearly an equilateral triangle..."

The history of Manchester is a varied tale. Actually the history of Manchester is similar to a three layer cake.

The first layer would be that of the social scene. The early inhabitants of Manchester were wealthy planters who owned plantations up and down the Wateree River. Manchester was the place where they came for amusement and entertainment. They moved their families to Manchester in the summer to avoid the "fevers" of the low swamps where their plantations were located. Manchester was the scene of beautiful homes, beautiful people and never ending rounds of parties.

The second layer was akin to Manchester being the Dodge City of South Carolina; a wild, reckless life in search of romance, immorality and tragedy. Many stories are told of the entertainment at Manchester during this time. These stories say entertainment was of an endless variety: cards, billiards, cock-fighting, horse racing, ball and battery, fist fighting. The card tables were frequently brought out soon after breakfast and gambling went on until after nightfall. Drinking was indulged to excess; even to the point children were given a quantity of whiskey each day for health's sake. The same children were said to have learned to play cards before they could read. And on the turn of a card plantations were lost and great fortunes were gambled away until there was nothing left to gamble. The name Manchester became a by-word of all that was wicked and sinful and was often compare to Sodom and Gomorrah.

In time Manchester settled down and became the business center of the area. In fact Manchester became the seventh largest city in South Carolina. In a paper by Belton Geddings he writes that Manchester had a number of stores, including the first post office in the area, a tailor shop, a shoe shop, a seldom used school house and of course taverns. Strangely enough, never a

church. What few services held by circuit riders were in the school house. But then not so strange because St. Mark's Episcopal Church was to the South, Holy Cross Episcopal Church was to the North, as was High Hills Baptist Church and The name of some of the stores were Barnard and Moise, Bracey (lumber, bricks, and building materials), Duke Goodman, Howard and Hall (Howard was also a doctor), Moore and McDonald, Monk, Sprink and Phares (furniture makers), Pitts and Royal (freighters), and Williamson and Whittle (shoe makers).

Trade became the lifeblood of Manchester. The river trade made a contribution, the traffic on The Great Road, from Charleston to Camden, was seemingly never-ending and every one, rich or poor, used the road if they were traveling east to west, or west to east. There were huge, four horse, wagons coming down from the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee loaded with chestnuts, apples, wheat, corn, whiskey and potatoes. The drivers lived in the wagons and sold their goods along the way. Usually they sold their wagons and horses, keeping one of the horses for their transportation back home. One of the most unusual sight along The Great Road was herds of hogs and sometimes flocks of turkeys.

The hogs and turkeys were raised and fattened in the mountains on the crops of chestnuts and acorns, so whatever price received was all profit. There was no market at all in their mountain homes, so the sale of the hogs and turkeys, even at a low price, was welcomed. All of these wagons, flocks, herds, and freight had to pass through the main street of Manchester.

Manchester continued to be a viable inland river port. The majority of the boats were match boats made to fit into each other, as many as eight at a time, so that when empty so they could avoid the toll charges at the locks. These boats were propelled men using long poles with hooks at one end to catch limbs to pull the boats along and to push against the bottom. The cargo going to Charleston in the Fall consisted mainly of cotton and rice. Most of the boats came back with goods purchased in Charleston. Upon arrival at the Manchester wharves, the goods were transported to a large warehouse owned by the Singleton family on a bluff overlooking the wharves.

From this warehouse the freight was transported by wagon to various settlements and planters in the area.



Manchester Race Track

Through all of these layers, horse racing remained popular. The track was at south of town, built in a Carolina Bay, known as Raccoon Savanna, ideal for a race course because it was level and almost perfectly round in shape. The track is clearly shown at the top of the 1855 map.

The demise of the river traffic was caused by the completion of the Manchester and Wilmington Rail Road around 1846. It became considerably cheaper and faster to move freight by the rails rather than the rivers. The rail station was located 3/4 miles from Manchester and the Middleton Depot was located three miles from Manchester.

A fire in 1855 destroyed a most of the town. In 1871 another railroad took a route through Wedgefield and eliminated the Wilmington -Manchester line. The railroad already had drastically reduced the profitability of the river traffic and the freight wagons. When the Wilmington-Manchester line was eliminated, this spelled the end of Manchester as a trade center and Manchester was slowly abandoned.

The name Manchester has come down as a by-word of all that was wicked and sinful. As in all stories there is perhaps some truth, but Manchester grew to be the seventh largest city in South Carolina and should be given some respect for the business center that it became, not the evil reputation it became burdened with.

Today there is nothing to mark the existence of Manchester except one lone historical marker on Highway 261 and even that is several miles east of the location of the town of Manchester.

WEDGEFIELD.

Wedgefield, two and one-half miles from the Wateree River Swamp, was the highest point on the railroad between Wilmington, North Carolina and Columbia, South Carolina—eighty feet higher than Sumter.

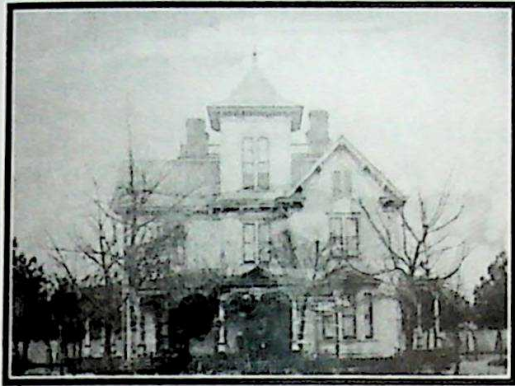
William Rees came to the Wedgefield area from Virginia in 1760. Over time he acquired large tracts of land from Wedgefield to Cane Savannah, both by grants and by purchasing land, eventually owning two thousand one hundred fifty acres. He chose to make his home at Wedgefield Plantation so named because of a wedge shaped field on which his house was built. The house was located ½ mile east of present day Wedgefield.

The granddaughters of William Rees, Mary J. Moore nee Mary Margaret Rees (1832-1859) and Julia V. Reynolds nee Julia Vaughan Rees (1829-1900), inherited the Wedgefield tract. When the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad acquired the old Wilmington-Manchester Railroad route, it built a new direct route from Sumter and Columbia. This proposed route ran through the northern portion of the Wedgefield tract. Julia Reynolds sold the northern portion of the tract to the railroad and the village of Wedgefield formed around the station. The building of the railroad, while it was a death blow to Manchester, created Wedgefield as a town.

In 1897 MacDonald Furman wrote an article in the Watchman and Southron which described Wedgefield as having eight general merchandise stores, a millinery store, a medical doctor, two resident cotton buyers, a train depot and a post office. There was a hotel, the DuPont House, and two cotton gins, two blacksmith shops, and a wheel wright shop. Unlike Manchester, which never had a church Wedgefield had six churches. There was also a public graded school which operated nine months of the year.

Icing on the cake was that Wedgefield had its own brass band with twelve members.

In 1873 James Henry Aycock arrived on the scene, the Singleton empire was in shambles as a result of the 1870 judgments being levied and mortgages were foreclosed. James Aycock married Henrietta Leanora Brogdon from Clarendon County and moved from Wayne County, North Carolina to Wedgefield.



Aycock House Circa 1900

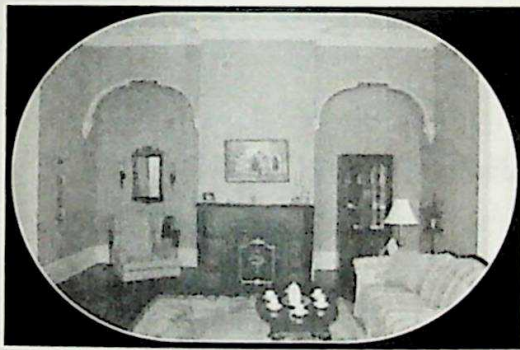


Aycock House Circa 1940



Aycock House 2012

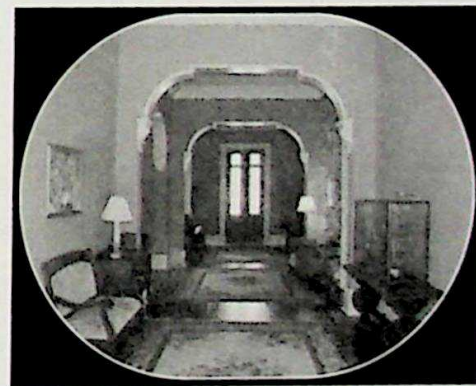
At a later date, in 1879, James Aycock would build a Victorian architecture style house on the same site. The Aycock house still stands today on the south side of the road from Wedgefield to Sumter. The house was six thousand square feet with five bedrooms, three baths, parlor, and dining room. One of the most impressive features of the house was the curved stairs that led from the wide central hall to the second level.



Parlor



Stair Way



Central Hall

MacDonald Furman wrote this about the arrival of James Aycock:

“...The land around there was so poor it would hardly “sprout peas”. Some folks around there thought they had caught a sucker when he bought a great body of it. Did they not grin though? He told the writer some years after that the received more for rent than the entire place cost, when purchased...”

James Aycock became the “King” of Wedgefield eventually owning and farming nine thousand acres, mostly Singleton land. He built a state of the art mercantile house measuring fifty-five feet by one hundred six feet, two state of the art cotton gins and a gin house.

The mercantile store was the social center of Wedgefield. The building stood on the corner of the road to Sumter and The Great Road which, as it had done in Manchester, served as main street for Wedgefield.

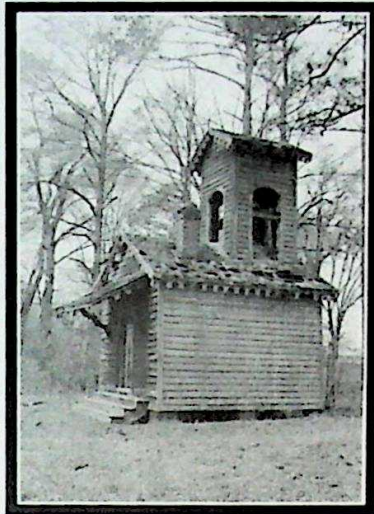


Mercantile Store

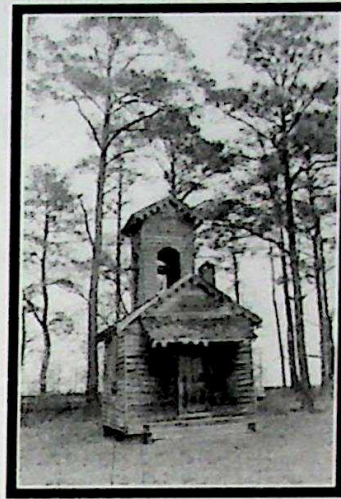


Mercantile Store

One of the most iconic buildings constructed by James Aycock was the bell tower located about four miles east of Wedgefield on the Sumter highway. It was called the bell house and held a large, very valuable, sweet toned bell. The building was also used as an office of the overseer, Peter Melette, where the laborers were given checks to be traded or cashed at the Aycock mercantile store.



**Aycock Bell
Tower 1958**



**Aycock Bell
Tower 1958**

The lumber for the building and all the trim around the eaves was grown and milled on the plantation. The contractor was Bob Carr.

James H. Aycock had the bells cast containing quite a lot of silver which gave the bell a melodious sound which could be heard for several miles. Each bell weighed one thousand two hundred pounds and used to call the plow hands to the field, to let them know when it was time to break for dinner and to quit the fields at the end of the day. It is said that the plow mules got so use to the bell they would start braying and turn their heads toward home when it rang around 11:30 and at the end of the day, knowing it was time for them to come to the stables.

The bell had an inscription on two sides:

*The Meneely Bell foundry,
Meneely & Co. West Troy, N.Y.
Made A.D. 1878 For
James H. Aycock, Esq.
Wedgfield Farms, Sumter, Co. SC.*

and on the reverse:

*Fair Bell, Bode Joy and
Increase
And Oh, May All Thy Sounds
Be Hallowed to Peace.*

Actually, there were two identical bells and bell houses. The second bell was located on Benyo Plantation which also belonged to James Aycock. This was located three miles north of Wedgfield on the Great Road. This bell was destroyed in a 1903 fire. The heat from the fire must have been intense because one witness was quoted as saying the bell melted like *"a spilled pot of hot lead."*

An article in the Watchman and Southron dated January 5, 1910 gives this account of the fire:

"...The barns and stables on J.H. Aycock & Sons' Bnyo Plantation, near Wedgfield, were burned about 4 o'clock Monday morning, entailing a loss exceeding \$3,000. The barns contained a large quantity of corn, hay, cotton seed, cotton seed hulls and farming implements, etc, and it was all destroyed, also six mules and two cows. The origin of the fire as not been ascertained..."

The bell at Wedgefield was taken down from its perch in the bell house and placed in a shed to prevent it being damaged by falling. It seems that in time the location of the bell was forgotten.



**Wedgefield Presbyterian
Church**



**Wedgefield Baptist
Church**

James Aycock, in addition to being a planter and merchant, was also philanthropist, donating land for the Presbyterian and Baptist churches in Wedgefield as well as the public school.

The town of Wedgefield still survives to day, but it is more of a state of mine. Of all the stores, blacksmith shops, hotels and brass band mentioned by MacDonald Furman in 1897, only one viable store, Batten's, remains open.

The is one thing that Wedgefield can claim that is unique to