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TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS, MAY RIVER PLANTATIONS

CHARLOTTE INGLESBY *

These inscriptions were copied from family burial grounds along the May River in Beaufort County, South Carolina. This tract of land, now known as Palmetto Bluff, is owned by the Union Camp Corporation and is not open to the public. None of the plantation houses remains. The burning of Beaufort County's courthouse in 1853 makes research sparse.

MONTPELIER PLANTATION

Incised on the four sides of a small square tombstone are the Screven annals for four generations.

To the memory of / John Screven / son of James Screven / grandson of William / who died Sept 2 1802 / aged 51

To the memory of / Elizabeth Screven / wife of John Screven / daughter of Josiah Pendarvis / and granddaughter of Colonel Richard Bedon / who died April 5 1804 / aged 48

Lie interred Mary / William / Josiah and Jane / their infant children

This monument covering the dust of / their deceased parents / is erected in the most pious regard / to their memory by John Richard Sarah Benjamin Martha Eliza Mary and Thomas /their surviving children

Margaret Cowper,¹ writing to Eliza Anne McQueen,² tells of the Screvens in a letter³ headed "New Hope, Friday 5 o'clock, July 1796."

"It is not above five hours since we returned from an excursion that has been very pleasant . . . to the River of May. Monday having been dedicated to the necessary preparations of smartening up hats, caps, tuckers etc . . . at eight o'clock Tuesday morning we left New Hope on the Mary Anne and got to Mrs. Screven's at one . . .

We were very kindly received at the landing by Mr. Screven and in the Piazza by Mrs. Screven and Miss Screven and found in the Parlour a Miss Proctor and a bench of little girls (The two little Miss Screvens and Miss

* Bluffton, South Carolina

¹ Married John McQueen in 1810. Walter C. Hartridge, ed., *Letters of Don Juan McQueen* (Columbia, S. C., 1943), 84.

² Married Robert Mackay in 1800. *Ibid.*, 83.

³ Letter copied by the late Mrs. Franklin B. Screven of Savannah, Ga. from the original now lost. Privately owned.

Sarah Proctor) . . . Unfortunately neither our young intended Captive or his ever fascinating kinsman Joseph were at home—and to this disappointment we were obliged to submit with a good grace.

Mr. Screven is a very kind hospitable lively sensible old gentleman ⁴ and was very attentive to us all. Mrs. Screven seems likewise to possess all those good qualities and . . . calmness of manner. Miss Screven struck me at first sight as an exceedingly handsome genteel young lady. She possesses a desirable gift of calmness of manner and paints prettily I think. Miss Proctor is very neat in her person, speaks little, but is affable and very industrious and has all the charge of her father's house.

It is so dark I can no longer see so will finish this after tea when candles come.

The first evening we arrived we all took a walk—tolerably well agreeable. The next day, Wednesday, after Breakfast the Caravan and Chair were already [sic] and a visit to Mr. McKimmie their nearest neighbor was proposed. Mrs. Screven and Mary went in the Chair, Mama, Aunt Wright, Miss Proctor—who by the way is engaged to young John Screven—and Miss Screven and your Margaret rode in the Caravan.

Our time passed very agreeably . . . The same afternoon Messrs Bryan and Screven arrived and Miss Proctor went home, her little sister being sick, escorted by the latter and we saw him not til next morning when we heard he had been so unfortunate as to overturn the Chair he had the honour of driving . . .

We had intended to return yesterday but the wind was so contrary it prevented us . . . We left the landing just at six with repeated invitations to visit them again . . .

Mama will write in the Morning to Aunt McQueen.

I am always, my dear Eliza, your very Affectionate Friend

Margaret Cowper
GoodNight.”

John Screven concerned himself with the affairs of the Euhaw Baptist Church,⁵ acting as “messinger” in 1788. He served in the Revolutionary War as Colonel with the St. John Rangers in Georgia.⁶

Sacred to the memory / of George Hipp / born April 28, 1737 / departed this life Nov 12 1802 / aged 65 yrs and 7 mos

A low tabby wall separates George Hipp's grave from that of the Screvens. In 1756 his name with that of Jonathan Hipp is listed in the

⁴ He was 46 years old at the time of the letter.

⁵ Leah Townsend, *South Carolina Baptists, 1670-1805*. (Florence, S. C., 1935), 45.

⁶ *Roster of Revolutionary Soldiers in Georgia*. John T. Hancock, publisher, 1941.

muster role of *The Uhaws Company On The South Side of Port Royal River*.⁷ It would appear that the family lived here.

However, Hipp owned land in the May River vicinity. Devil's Elbow barony, owned by Sir John Colleton, lay between the Okatee, the Colleton and the May rivers according to a map made by James Peart in 1786. Before 1777 Colleton sold some of this land. George Hipp acquired 284 acres.⁸

St. Luke's parish was established by an Act of the Colonial Assembly in 1767. A group of May River planters obtained from the Legislature an Act of Incorporation on 29th of February, 1788 and that year built the first parish church.⁹ George Hipp and James Garvey were elected church wardens.¹⁰ Known as St. Luke's¹¹ the church is shown on Mill's Atlas of 1825, Beaufort District, as being on the Euhaw Road which ran from the Savannah River to Coosawhatchie.

MORELAND PLANTATION

This stone was erected /to show the spot / where Mrs. Hannah Screven / and her infant son John / were interred / This amiable lady / attempting to rescue her child / was killed by the falling of her husband's [residence] / on the ever to be remembered day / 8 Sept 1804

Hannah, whose single grave seems not to be in a burial ground, was the daughter of Richard Proctor of Moreland Plantation and married young John Screven.^{12,13}

No mention is made of where she and her young son are buried, but now after 166 years, "the spot" has been located.

From the record in a family Bible Hannah and John Screven had four children.¹⁴

⁷ *S. C. Hist. Mag.*, LXX (1969), 230.

⁸ *S. C. Hist. Mag.*, XIII (1912), 123.

⁹ Frederick Dalcho, *The Episcopal Church in South Carolina (Charleston, 1820)*, 387-388.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ William Hort, John Bull (who gave the land), Jacob Guerard, Richard Proctor and John Cole were the first vestrymen.

¹² James Barnwell Heyward, *Genealogy Pendarvis-Bedon Families of S. C.*, 1670-1900. (Atlanta, Ga., 1905), 88.

¹³ *Ibid.* "They spent much time with his half-brother, Joseph Bryan, who inherited and lived on the north end of Wilmington Island, Georgia. During the great hurricane in September, 1804 his first wife, Hannah Proctor, and her youngest child were killed by the falling of the residence at a place called Betz on Wilmington Island, Georgia."

¹⁴ Photostatic copy. Children were: Amelia, 1797-1833, James Proctor, 1799-1859, Martha, 1801-1834, John, 1803-1804.

Later John Screven married Hannah's younger sister, Sarah Ann Proctor, one of "the bench of little girls." There was no issue of this marriage. John, known as Major Screven, carried the rank he held in military service in Georgia. He acquired considerable property and lived in Savannah for many years. He and his wife, Sarah Ann, are buried there in Colonial Cemetery.

OCTAGON PLANTATION

This stone / marks the spot / where are deposited the remains of Theresa Halsey / wife of Samuel Breck Parkman / Born 20 October 1791 / Died 27 October 1837 / and two of her children / Samuel Fairchild / born 25 May 1819 / Died Oct 2 following / Catherine Halsey / Born 10 March 1821 / Died 5 June 1829

Consecrated to the memory of / Samuel Breck Parkman / and his four children / Allathena Phoebe born 29 Sept 1817 / Caroline born 15 March 1823 / Theresa born 5 Nov 1824 / Whitney born 14 Sept 1827 / All of whom perished on board the S S Pulaski / when it sank as the result of a boiler explosion / on the night of 14 June 1838 / on their passage from Savannah to Baltimore / Mr Parkman was born / in the city of Boston 11 May 1787

It is not known when Parkman acquired Octagon Plantation. With its octagon shaped house, it was owned by a Mr. McKimmie in 1796 as is verified in a letter of that year¹⁵

Samuel Breck Parkman removed to Savannah, Georgia before 1817. On April 4, 1817 Parkman assumed control of a shipping firm whose fleet plied between Savannah and Liverpool. He served Savannah as alderman, 1825-28. In 1827 he bought a handsome town house there.

Parkman's will, dated 10 August, 1832, is filed at the Chatham County courthouse, Savannah.¹⁶ No mention is made in his will of his plantation but it was usual for those May River planters, having a town house in Savannah, to file another will in Beaufort County concerning their South Carolina property.

Another stone in the Parkman lot on Octagon Plantation reads: Sacred to the memory / of Dr. Samuel Fairchild / who died 4 April 1826 / at the age of 52

¹⁵ Margaret Cowper to Eliza McQueen, July 1796. Privately owned.

¹⁶ In 1822 he set up a trust fund for his wife and children. The two surviving children were Lucy and S. Breck Parkman.

Samuel Fairchild, a physician, was a person of some importance as is shown by the following notices being published in both the Charleston and Savannah papers: "Died yesterday at his residence at May River, S. C. Doctor Samuel Fairchild in the 60th year of his age."¹⁷ This age does not agree with that on the tombstone.

Legal notices pertaining to his estate were signed by S. B. Parkman, Executor.¹⁸

LONGWORTH PLANTATION

The tomb of / Archibald Longworth / Born 22 July 1770 / Died 8 August 1817

This monument is erected/ by Archibald Longworth / to the memory of / his Dear Wife / Eliza Martha Rich / As a small mark of his affection for / one of the best of women / She died 21 August 1811 / aged 37 years.

The announcement of Longworth's first marriage reads: "Archibald Longworth was married on Wednesday 20 August 1800 on May River, St. Luke's Parish to the amiable Miss Elizabeth Rich,¹⁹ In a legal notice dated 1812 Archibald Longworth is designated as "planter of St. Luke's Parish in Beaufort District."²⁰

The Longworth family came South from New Jersey, Archibald, the oldest of the three sons known in South Carolina, was married twice. His second wife was Mary Magdalene Dupont, daughter of Josiah Dupont of St. Luke's Parish. Their marriage settlement was dated 19 December, 1812. Its legal title was placed in the name of Joseph Longworth to hold in trust for her.²¹

Archibald was to live only a few years after this marriage. A legal notice, dated 6 February, 1818, reads: "Part of the property belonging to the estate of the late Archibald Longworth, having been disposed of at private sale, the public sale will not take place at Beaufort, S. C. as advertised. The Negroes remain to be sold in families at private sale and also the Island upon application to the Executors."²²

¹⁷ *S. C. Hist. Mag.*, LXI (1960), 234.

¹⁸ *Savannah Georgian*, 1 May 1826, 1.

¹⁹ *S. C. Hist. Mag.*, XXVI (1925), 167.

²⁰ *S. C. Archives. Marriage Settlements. vol. 6, 181.*

²¹ *Ibid*, 184.

²² *Columbia Museum and Savannah Daily Gazette. Feb. 6, 1818.*

Of the other Longworth brothers, Nicholas, 1782-1863, clerked for a time in Archibald's plantation store. Later he went to Cincinnati. He was the great-grandfather of the Nicholas Longworth who was appointed Speaker of the House in 1925. Joseph remained in S. C. He was lost on the ill-fated SS Pulaski. DAB

In the upper part of St. Luke's Parish, now Jasper County, is an old burial ground. A vault there, said to be that of Edward, son of Archibald and of others of the Longworth family, reads: EML, 1841 EML Jr 1832 CL 1833

THEUS PLANTATION

If James T. Theus²³ is buried here with his wife and five children no stone marks his grave. This plantation was previously owned by Archibald Longworth. The two families share the burial ground.

²³ "The Theus family were among the first contingent of settlers to the Orangeburg District in South Carolina. There is a grant of land to Simon Theus dated 17 Sept., 1736 and it is generally thought that all Theuses in the South are descendants of the early settlers Christianus, Simon (or Simeon) and Jeremiah." Margaret Simons Middleton, *Jeremiah Theus*. (Columbia, S. C., 1953).