

The Brick House at 143 York Street

The Brick House at 143 York Street in Chester has been home to five generations of the same family, and is loved by three more generations of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

It was built before 1855, by Absalom Houser of handmade red brick with only two rooms upstairs and two down, connected by center halls. There were no porches and no blinds.

In 1858, it was sold to James Hemphill, attorney, who added blinds and double story galleries. He lived there with his family until he sold it in 1859, to Joseph Lucius Gaston who moved in with his bride, Margaret Brice Hemphill Gaston. Two children were born to the Gastons, Janie and Joseph Lucius, Jr. The children were still small when Captain



143 York Street

Gaston was killed in The Civil War in The Battle of Seven Pines, leaving Margaret to carry on alone. She, however, had a large close family, and it is said that at least fifty people spent as much as a year at a time under her roof during the ensuing years. She added four more rooms to the house, two upstairs and two down, extending the center halls.

Lucius Gaston, Jr. grew up to marry Josie Bell and became a noted doctor in Montgomery, Alabama. He was called "Big Uncle Lucius" by all of his great nieces and nephews, but had no children of his own. Janie Gaston married George Williams Gage, a young attorney, later a justice on the South Carolina Supreme Court. The Gages lived with Mrs. Gaston and raised their six children in The Brick House. Judge Gage added the wing at the back containing the kitchen and a large bedroom above.

Mrs. Jane Brice Hemphill, mother of Margaret Hemphill Gaston, spent her last days as a member of this household.

After the death of Janie Gage in 1935, the house, inherited by Robert Gage, was sold to Cody Quinton. Mr. Quinton replaced the front galleries with four square columns and painted the house white. He added a downstairs bathroom and several closets enclosing the back porch.

In September 1983, Eli Hugh McAngus bought the house for his wife, Margaret Hemphill Howell McAngus, namesake and great granddaughter of Margaret Hemphill Gaston. It was a homecoming for the whole family connection. The house had not lost the spirit of the Gastons, Gages, and Hemphills who had lived there for so long. Their descendants hold treasured memories and feel at home there.

2004 Update

I now have three grandchildren, Maria, age 18, a college student in Orlando, Florida, Thomas, age 16, and Phillips, age 3. My son is employed in Atlanta, Georgia, my daughter has obtained her Master's degree and still teaches 5th grade at Lewisville Elementary School, and I am a supervisor at the Chester County Nursing Center.

I have enjoyed my stay in Chester and the wonderful friends that I have made. Among the people that have been an inspiration to me are Harriett Stringfellow and Lillian Brooks. I could not close, of course, without mentioning my good friends, Jerry Stringfellow, Tracy Hamrick and Ann McKeown. They were always there for me.

Rudell ("Rudy") Maffett Hare

About the Author

Rudell Maffett Hare was born in Saluda County, SC, and received her education in Columbia. While in school there, she met her husband, who was also a student in Columbia.

The following passage is taken from a letter that I wrote to my brother soon after I moved to Chester. It expresses my sentiments upon my return to the home of my grandmother:

"After Mac went to bed tonight I sat on the porch of 143 York and conjured up the old memories of nights spent here as children on our way to Blowing Rock. The sounds are the same. The Jones house across the street looks the same. The lightening bugs are still here on summer evenings, but I have to close my eyes to see the red brick, the double galleries and the elm limb swinging to the ground. I loved those hot nights when we caught lightening bugs and listened to the grown ups talk as we sat on the steps until were sent up to bed to those hot rooms with mosquitoes buzzing around our heads. I believe there were more mosquitoes in those days.

Fannie and Jim Davidson's house next door has undergone a few changes since Susan and Douglas Marion took it over, but it is essentially the same, and the Marion's are good neighbors and wonderful friends. Douglas is Jim's great-nephew, and they love the house.

Yesterday, Chalmers gave me a small painting of Jane Brice Hemphill that Big Uncle Lucius had painted in Alabama during her lifetime. He said Big Uncle Lucius was especially fond of his grandmother. She was living in this house at the time the picture was done, and Chalmers thought that this is where it belonged. Her hard life shows in her face, and she is far from beautiful, but she will hang in my library (Mama Janie's old parlor reduced in size) beside a picture of Mama Janie and under a pastel that Sissy Davidson Sims did of this house as it used to be. Grandma Gaston's portrait hangs in my living room (Mama Janie's old dining room) over the same piano that came up from Charleston when Grandma was a bride.

The kitchen and pantry area of the house are much changed and the back porch has been enclosed, but the upstairs is the same. The speaking tube is no longer here, much to my sorrow, and the closets have cut down on the size of two of the bedrooms.

You can still hear the trains in the night. Do you remember the skylight? On moonlight nights it lights up the whole upstairs hall, and at certain times of the day, it throws the sunlight all the way down the stairs; at other times to the end of the hall.

David Gaston died this week at Presbyterian Home in Summerville, and was buried here a few days ago. I guess that makes Chalmers our oldest living Gaston relative. He and Alice were here for the funeral. Chalmers writes that Chester seems more like home since we are in this house. You remember that he and his family lived here for two years while Mama Kate was building a small house across Walnut Street."

In conclusion, I will tell you about six weddings that have taken place within these walls.

In 1880, Janie Nixon Hemphill and Thornton Buford Stringfellow were married at the home of Margaret Hemphill Gaston. Janie and her mother, Sally Harrington Hemphill, came to live at The Brick House when Janie's father, John Nixon Hemphill, brother of Margaret Hemphill Gaston, was killed in The Civil War. The two little Janie's, Janie Gaston and Janie Nixon Hemphill, who were first cousins, grew up together in this house.

On December 21, 1881, Janie Gaston and George Williams Gage were married at the home of the bride's mother, Margaret Hemphill Gaston. Janie's wedding dress was described as having many shirrings, ruffles, sashes, and a quaint long-tailed satin bodice. We know that fruitcake was served at the reception and that the bride saved enough of it for each of her children- in later years to have a taste.

On February 26, 1903, Daisy Hampton Brown of Boston was married to John Nixon Stringfellow at the home of Mrs. Margaret Gaston. Daisy was on her way to visit her sister at Agnes Cobb School in Atlanta, and her father asked that she stop off in Chester to visit Mrs. Latimer. Mrs. Latimer gave a party for Daisy, and it was at this party that she met young John Nixon Stringfellow, son of Janie Nixon Hemphill and Thornton Buford Stringfellow. Daisy decided to extend her visit to two weeks, and she married Nick Stringfellow before she left.

On December 21, 1909, Martha Williams Gage and Madison Peyton Howell of Walterboro were married at the home of her parents, Judge and Mrs. George W. Gage. The bride wore a white wool suit and a white hat with an ostrich plume. The couple left on the train right after the wedding to travel to Walterboro where they would live.

On October 8, 1912, Mary Patterson (Patti) Gage and Edward Ladson Fishburne were married at the home of the bride. Patti wore a wedding dress of white satin and chiffon with an empire waist, and white satin shoes with small heels, pointed toes, and a rosette at the toe. At the reception, a chicken salad plate and fruitcake was served to two hundred guests. Children were included. Patti especially wanted the children.

On January 5, 2004, at five-thirty in the afternoon, Mary Ladson McAngus Gettys and Robert Allen Rifenberick were married at the home of her mother, Mrs. Eli Hugh McAngus at 143 York Street in Chester. Dr. Dwight Pearson performed the ceremony in the presence of the two immediate families and a few close friends of the bride and groom. The attendants were Harriet Howell Gettys Coleman and Adam Lowry Rifenberick. The family was not unmindful of all of the other weddings that had taken place in this setting, and it made this wedding very special to all those present. The house was beautifully decorated with red roses, calla lilies, magnolia leaves, smilax, ferns, and white candles. After the reception, the happy couple departed in a flurry of good wishes under a full moon and surrounded by happy family and friends. It meant very much to Bob and Mary to be married in this house where Mary's grandmother and great-grandmother had been married all those years ago. Bob made a replica of Margaret Hemphill Gaston's living room mantel to go in the new house that he and Mary are building.

Margaret McAngus

About the Author

Margaret Hemphill Howell McAngus was born in Walterboro, SC, is a graduate of Converse College, and is the wife of the late Eli Hugh McAngus, Sr. Her mother was Martha Williams Gage who married Madison Peyton Howell. Her grandparents were Janie Gaston and George Williams Gage. Her great grandparents were Margaret Hemphill Brice and Capt. Lucius Gaston.