

Cedarhurst - Big Spring

Cedarhurst is located about four miles east of Chester between Route Nine and Highway #72. The original inhabitants on the land around the Big Spring were the American Indians. This campground was on a trade road on the way to the Catawba River and on to the ocean. Even today after a heavy rain it is not uncommon to find arrowheads and stone implements easily.

The British General Cornwallis is said to have camped near this spring and built a road along the Indian trade path. This road was later the main road from Monroe, NC to Columbia, SC. Some parts of the foundation are still used today for the main driveway for Cedarhurst and its stable.

Mrs. Ellet, in her Women of the Revolution, eluded to the fact that Peter Wylie lived at Big Spring during the American Revolution.

In one family description of the spring itself, it is said that James Atkinson had it walled in with rocks and built a wooden overflow to collect the water for use. When this overflow was measured it was said to have been 39 gallons of water per minute. In later years, when a hydraulic ram was installed in a cement cistern below the spring with an underground pipe leading to the cistern, the flow of water was again measured at 39 gallons of water per minute. Even with the flow of water to the cistern there was still an overflow that flowed out over the top of the spring and down a trough made of cement to form "The Spring Branch." Water is much in abundance in the general vicinity. On the surrounding 60 acres there are three more continuously flowing springs which have not been walled in but have a generous flow of water within ten yards of their origin.

It is said that the original land grant containing Big Spring was only 54 acres due to the large amount of water present. This was considered a very small grant. After James Atkinson, Jr. acquired this bit of land, he acquired adjacent parcels until he owned over 6,000 acres. Today (1995) the land (66 acres) around the spring and the "Big House" are owned by Sarah Meador McLemore, great-great-great granddaughter of James Atkinson, Jr. McLemore. Her daughter and her family reside at Cedarhurst.

The current house was built between 1848 and 1850. 1848 is the date on the hardware on the outside blinds, and 1850 was the date painted on the chimney when the house was first painted. The home's construction consisted of white painted clapboard with dark green blinds and a cedar shake roof some of which still remained in the 1960s. It was built for Sicily Mobley Shannon Atkinson. This house was designed and built as an exact replica of the upper two stories of Sicily's father's, Edward Mobley, home - right down to the carved mantels, wainscotings, windows and door facings. Window, door and shutter dimensions were all the same.

Colors used on the front porch to paint wainscotings - blues, terra cottas and greens. Square blocks of wood were attached under the eaves as decorations and these same colors were used. The house was never painted exteriorly again. In the 1960's, the sides were covered with aluminum siding. The walls on the front porch were painted. When painting, however, the original colors bled through at first but later disappeared. The ceiling of the porch has the original paint, enhanced by red mud stains said to have been made by mud balls thrown by children of James Beldon Atkinson and Sarah Wood Atkinson. Apparently mischief prevailed over chores among the children while the elders had gone shopping in Chester.

There was an apple orchard in front of the house filled with fruit about ready for picking. The children had been told not to pick and eat the apples, but when the elders returned home, they found that many of the apples had been eaten but not picked. The children climbed the trees, eaten

provided, "This man asked me one time if I know anything about cotton. I said I should, I'd plowed, planted, hoed, poisoned, picked and ginned it for twenty years!"

However, the truckers and farmers have not had the place totally to themselves. "I've had everything from escaped mental patients, convicts and everything else in here," Mrs. Campbell recalled. There have been celebrities too, famous race car drivers, "...Arthur Smith's crowd and the Chief's [CBS mini-series] bunch." And to the amazement of many, the Southern Railway train regularly chugs to a stop across the road so the crew can scamper down a well worn path to retrieve the order called in from the Chester depot.

Campbell's is not only the eatery, UPS drop-off point, information center and art gallery (Lucy Adams' watercolors dot the walls) for Lewis Turn Out, it is also the fire department. Although Mr. Bud is the chief, it's Miss Edith who always answers the fire phone and keeps distraught callers on the line until she's sure which house or barn is blazing. Old timers love to tell about tiny Edith Campbell (who could barely see over the steering wheel) driving the big red fire engine. "I never drove it but one time," she recalled laughing her quick laugh, looking away. "A house caught on fire, and there was nobody here to go. I pulled it out and started to meet one of the volunteers."

Because the restaurant is truly mission control for the neighborhood, news — good and bad — arrives there first. When tragedy strikes, Mrs. Campbell turns the store over to a helper and commences cooking. Before nightfall, the afflicted family will be touched by her ministry of comfort borne in large stainless steel pans and Tupperware bowls.

Miss Edith is LTO's self-appointed humane officer, offering shelter to untold numbers of stray or abandoned dogs. Through the years, a steady parade of canines: Myrtle, Crazy, Weasel, Woodrow, Sickly, Ben, W.D. — as many as 22 at one time — have been taken in, fed, nursed and loved. "These dogs get treated better than I do!" their benefactor joked. If you want to rile Miss Edith, just think about mistreating an animal.

Despite being the probable holder of a world record for hours worked without time off, Edith Campbell has no regrets. There's no air of martyrdom, resentment or resignation about her — she's simply glad to be alive, busy and useful. Remembering the week Bud was in intensive care she said, "I'd walk those hospital halls and see all those poor sick people who'd love to trade places with me. I said then I'd never complain about working again."

At 61, is she dreaming of retirement, putting her feet up? "I never even thought about it. Most times when people retire, that's when they leave the world, and I'm not ready to leave yet."

Joanna Gilmore Angle

About the Author

Joanna Gilmore Angle, a native Virginian, is a graduate of Radford College and holds a master's degree from The University of Georgia. She was the producer, writer and host of "Palmetto Places", a SCETV series featuring small South Carolina towns, and also has a consulting business specializing in the preservation of antique structures. She and her daughter, Elya Katherine, live at Cedarleaf, their restored 19th century raised cottage.

the apples still attached, and left the cores hanging from the trees. The apples, though, had not been picked!

Much of the interior of Cedarhurst remains the same. The double front doors have never been re-painted. The floors have never been oiled, stained, painted or waxed. Most of the woodwork



Cedarhurst

remains with the original finish. Cracks in the plaster caused by the Charleston earthquake were repaired only to have more cracks emerge from hurricane Hugo.

The house is built mostly of heart pine and chestnut gathered and sawed on the plantation with brick for the chimneys also made on the plantation. With very thick plaster interior walls and ceilings, the house is well insulated. The two front rooms and both the upstairs and downstairs halls have wainscotings of wood painted to look like paneling.

One of the reasons that the house at Cedarhurst has remained so much unchanged is that the family finances were such that "modernization" was not feasible - only repair work to keep it from falling down. Now many years later what many people thought was not a good thing has been a blessing. History has been preserved for a generation who can appreciate it.

The floor plan consists of two large front rooms, two shed rooms and a dining room well off the back, each having large open fireplaces. The kitchen, which no longer stands, was in a separate building connected by a covered way or "dog trot." There is a central hallway divided by a door which led to the back porch with another door to the dining room. There are two large rooms upstairs but these have no fireplaces. Since these rooms were for the children, they were afraid of fire. In the west room there is a mantel which was set into the plaster at the chimney, but above the baseboard with no hearth or fireplace. There are no stairs to the attic, just a trap door (a ladder is needed to reach it). There are glass gable windows.

The current house at Cedarhurst has been continuously inhabited by descendants of James Atkinson, Jr. since it was built.

Sarah Eugenia McLemore Floyd

About the Author

Sarah Floyd is the daughter of Sarah Elizabeth Meador McLemore and Robert Young McLemore. She and her husband, August McDaniel (Dan) Floyd have two children, Sarah (Sally) McLemore Floyd Kay and Augustus McDaniel Floyd, Jr. and one grandson, Hunter Davis Kay. They live at Cedarhurst.

History of The Up-to-Date Club Chester, South Carolina 1897-1983

In 1897, the clubwomen's movement reached Chester. Three clubs appeared in quick succession: The Up-to-Date Club on September 28th; The Sin Nombre Club in October, and The Palmetto Literary Club on December 17th.

Mrs. Paul Hemphill, at Tate Springs, Tennessee, had met women who had formed themselves into clubs for various purposes. She thought, "*Why cannot Chester women do something along this line for self-improvement?*" As there were no phones in those days, she invited Mrs. John G. White to go with her to invite ten other married women to come to her house on September 28, 1897, to organize "*to keep in touch with the best current function and to know the newest in everything.*" There were three main objectives: study, service and sociability.

Mrs. Paul Hemphill, its organizer, was also its first president. Mrs. David Hemphill was vice-president; and Mrs. John G. White, secretary and treasurer. The charter members of The Up-To Date Club were: Mrs. A. M. Aiken, Mrs. James Brawley, Mrs. A. G. Brice, Mrs. S. M. DaVega, Mrs. J. W. Dunovant, Mrs. W. A. Eudy, Mrs. David Hemphill, Mrs. Paul Hemphill, Mrs. S. M. Jones, Mrs. D. N. McLaughlin, Mrs. B. M. Spratt, and Mrs. John G. White.

Since books were the main thing, a committee was appointed to order twelve books to cost twelve dollars. These books were to pass from member to member from month to month, and in this way each member would read twelve of the latest and best books in the year. At the end of the year a book for each member to keep was to be drawn by lot.

Following this the committees for other improvements were formed, namely:

Committee on Music: Mrs. A. M. Aiken & Mrs. A. G. Brice

Committee on Art: Mrs. David Hemphill & Mrs. W. A. Eudy

Committee on Current Literature: Mrs. D. N. McLaughlin & Mrs. Paul Hemphill

Committee on Decorations and Practical Housekeeping: Mrs. S. M. DaVega & Mrs. John G. White

Committee on Fashions: Mrs. S. M. Jones & Mrs. J. W. Dunovant

Committee on Facetiae: Mrs. James Brawley & Mrs. B. M. Spratt

The club met at the homes of the members, rotating in alphabetical order, on the second Thursdays of each month at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Thus, all twelve charter members were to be active from the start.

In 1931, the club was still exchanging books in this manner, but at the end of the year donating them to the Chester Library.

In the minutes of the sixth meeting, February 10, 1898, we read, "*Every meeting seems to join us closer intellectually and socially. And every meeting missed makes us feel as the wearer of a necklace of twelve pearls who loses one pearl.*"

At the beginning of the second year, September 1898, seven of the books, bought for circulation and then ownership by lot, were fiction, three were biographies, two were histories, and two were of travels.