

GATHERING GASTONS  
By Mary Kell Wade

1760 - 1770

The earliest records of Gastons settling in Craven, later Chester County, South Carolina, are of John Gaston, eldest son of William Gaston of Clough Water, near Ballymena, Northern Ireland, and his sister Mary with her husband James McCluer (McClure).

Their plats and grants for land recorded in S. C. Archive Records are: John Gaston - plat for 100 A Craven, 1760/02/22; 100 A Craven, 1765/10/26; 100 A Craven, 1767/05/06; 100 A Fishing Creek, Craven 1767/11/20; 100 A Craven, 1768/02/01; 150 A Fishing Creek, 1768/02/23. For James McCluer - 100 A on Rocky Creek, 1760/01/15; 100 A Craven, 1764/01/28; 100 A between Fishing and Rocky Creeks, 1766/01/24; 100 A Craven, 1767/05/06. Other grants are recorded for them in the 1770's.

John, later known as Justice John, because he was the King's Justice of the Peace for this backwoods area, was also a farmer and District Surveyor as evidenced by his signature as D.S. on most early area plats. He and his wife Esther Waugh settled on Fishing Creek a few miles above its outlet into the Catawba River. The McCluer's also settled on Fishing Creek.

His brothers Robert and William were settled in Craven by 1768. Robert and his wife Margaret Logan purchased land on Little Lynch's Creek in present day Lancaster County from Wm. Stran in 1768. William, who married Ann Harbison, has a plat recorded in the S. C. Archives for 100 A on Fishing Creek 1768/03/24. About the same time his sisters Elizabeth married to John Knox, Jinny married to Charles Strong, and Martha and her husband Alexander Roseborough were settled in the same Fishing Creek-Rocky Creek area.

Two other brothers, the Reverend Hugh Gaston and Dr. Alexander Gaston visited this area, but did not settle here.

The youngest brother, Dr. Alexander Gaston, studied medicine in Scotland, and served as ship's surgeon in the British Navy. He obtained land in New Bern, North Carolina, before 1765, married Margaret Sharpe and settled there as a physician. An ardent patriot during the American Revolution, he was killed by Tories, August 20, 1781, in front of his wife and two young children. One of these children became outstanding in North Carolina history as Judge William Gaston of the North Carolina Supreme Court.

In 1766, the Reverend Hugh Gaston of Root Presbytery, County Antrim, Ireland, came for a visit to his brother Justice John. Ordained in Ballywillin in 1748, he had already become known to Presbyterians in both Ireland and America for his book, A Scripture Account of the Faith and Practice of Christians, printed in Dublin in 1763. His plans were possibly to become a minister in this country, but these were ended by his untimely death in 1766. His wife, the daughter of Reverend James Thomson of Ireland, and his large family did not come to this area, although some of his grandchildren later settled in the Northern and Western states. (An article on John McCreary written by W. H. Edwards published in the June 1983 Bulletin stated that Margaret, the wife of John McCreary, was the daughter of Rev. Hugh Gaston. This article was written in the early 1900's and he did not have access to research done later. It may have been family tradition. The article, Robert Gaston of Little Lynches Creek, Dec. 1982, Bulletin, documents her as the daughter of Hugh's brother Robert. Dr. Chalmers Gaston Davidson, of Davidson College, N. C., author of the book, Gaston of Chester, has kindly shared his notes and opinion with me on the family of the Reverend Hugh. His notes contained a MS genealogy of the Gaston Family in the papers of Mrs. Dick (?) Daly of Dublin, Ireland, a descendant of the Reverend Hugh. M.K.W.)

The following letter, appearing on page 4, Gaston of Chester, is printed with permission from the author, Dr. Chalmers Gaston Davidson. Written by John Gaston to Rev. Hugh's widow in Ireland, it explains the untimely death of his brother.

Charles Town June 3, [8?], 1767

Dear Sister,

It is with a heavy heart I take my pen in hand to give you the news of your dear husband's and my brother's death.

He landed in Charles Town the twenty and first day of August last. My brother wrote from there to me for a horse to bring him to my house, and another to carry his clothes. The man who got the letter for me forgot to deliver it and carried it fifty miles past me -- which caused my brother to stay in Charles Town till the fifteenth or sixteenth of September. When I got the letter I sent down a horse for my brother, and agreed with Capt. James Patton, one of my neighbors that was going to Charles Town to bring my brother's clothes back in his waggon. I would have gone down to accompany my brother from town, but was obliged to go and survey land for some people whose Warrents were in my hand at the time. Not withstanding I got affairs so ordered that I got time to go about thirty miles to meet him. My brother-in-law, James McClure went with me -- we came home by the Revd. William Richardson's, our minister, and stayed there all night, and the Revd. Mr. Richardson gave my brother a list of twenty and two vacant congregations, and gave him directions how to go from one to another of them and told him there was a large field to labor in -- and was much rejoiced that he had gotten another fellow-laborer in that part of God's vineyard -- and so were many vacant congregations glad to hear of his being come to this country. But all these joys and expectations were soon to be blasted. My brother came home with me from Mr. Richardson's on Wednesday, the 24th of September, and stayed at my house till the Sabbath following, when my brother, my family, and me rode to our meeting house together. My brother preached there that day which was his last sermon.

He complained a little on Saturday evening that he seemed to have caught a cold when he went out to the top of the hill before my door to see if he could get a view of the country and stayed out till the sun was set. He was troubled a little with cough and complained of a pain in his head. He went after Sermon with brother James McClure and sister Mary to their home. He had appointed to preach at a meeting house fourteen miles farther up Fishing Creek the following Friday. The next Sabbath, at Sermon, I heard he was so much indisposed he was unable to keep his appointment. My wife and I went to brother McClure's to see brother Hugh. He did not complain much of anything but a great pain in his head. He said he wondered that his strength was gone with so little sickness. He felt he had a great drouth, and when he lay in bed did not eat much. When changing his shirt we saw his back full of red spots, like one that had measles. He washed and shaved himself and seemed indifferent well, only complained that his strength was so much gone. He took physic which the doctor sent him. My wife and I went home that day which was Monday. I came again myself to see him on Thursday next -- he was then so bad that he did not know me until midnight.

The next day we got him to rise up with our help, and I opened a vein in his foot, and gave him a little of the

British oil inwardly and he seemed much better, and recovered his senses and his speech, and we were in hopes he was then in the way of recovery. About sunset he told me he had a mind to take some medicine the doctor had sent him. I advised him as he was then weak, and the night coming on, to let it alone until the next morning, which he consented to do. About dark he fell into a sound sleep which he had not done for three or four nights before. We thot that all danger of death was over. I went to bed having been up all the night before. About midnight they came in and wakened me, and told me he had gotten worse -- they knew it by his breathing. He never wakened, but went off as if he had been in a sleep. He died about an hour and a half before day on the 20th of October last [1766]. He went off the easiest of any one I ever saw depart this life. He was buried on the 21st day of October at our meeting house on Fishing Creek. My eldest daughter, Margaret, died a little time after him, and left four children behind her. She was buried by my brother. My brother's death was lamented by all in general, even by those who never saw or knew him, for it was thot that if he had lived to go home to Ireland he would have been the means of bringing more ministers with him to the Province, knowing what great need there is for ministers here, and what large salaries they get.

I received three letters from you, two from your brother James Thomson, and one from Cousin William. I also received a letter from a gentleman in Boston, addressed to my brother, which says he had sold five pounds Stirling worth of my brothers book, and he had the money ready for him whenever he pleased to send for it. The gentleman's name I think was Moody.

Dear Sister, I understand by your writing and your brother James letter what circumstances you are in -- in respect of your family affairs, my brother Hugh never told me how it was with him. If you and your family will come to this Country, brother-in-law James McClure and I would do what we could for you in helping to clear land and help to get you settled. There is about 20 pounds Stirling here for you and if you do not come I will send it to you by the first safe hand. I desire that you and your brother James and any of the family that can write, would please write me frequently, if you do not come to this Country, and let me know how all is with you, and my honored Father, and all friends.

I conclude with love to you, and all your family and all the rest of our friends with you.

I remain your loving brother until death,

John Gaston

If any descendants of these early Gastons are interested in a special event planned in this area for November, 1983, please, send a stamped addressed envelope to Mary Kell Wade, P. O. Box 6, Fort Lawn, South Carolina 29714.

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Edgefield Marriage Records:

- \*Franklin Hendrick of Chunnennuga, Macon Co., Ala. and Sallie F. Cloud, daughter of Mrs. Susan B. Cloud of Edgefield, July 19, 1866, by Rev. W. G. McMichael at the residence of James R. McCord, Jackson, Georgia.
- \*Thomas J. Harris and Mary Cloud, second daughter of Mrs. Susan B. Cloud, Oct. 22, 1854, by S. Posey, Esq.
- \*William Cloyd and Susan Kennedy, Feb. 27, 1834.

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