

Stinson left his mark on Chester

■ Magistrate known for his kindness.

■ *Second of two parts.*

In 1819, Daniel Greene Stinson, 23, of Cedar Shoals on Fishing Creek in Chester District, recently married to Esther Gaston, was buying a farm and several slaves on credit. He had about eight years of schooling, more by far, than most of his neighbors.

The Yorkville Enquirer in 1871 said of him: "The religious art of Daniel Greene Stinson was very strict for he was raised Covenanter. Morally he was exemplary. Though raised in a still house he abstained from liquor. . . . He was a great talker, fond of company and seldom forgot a name, a face, or a date."

The above characteristics helped Stinson to become more than just a farmer. In an agricultural area there are not many opportunities to become a "public man," but Stinson was known as such far beyond his corner of Chester District. At Dr. Lyman Draper's request, he enumerated the offices he held in a short autobiography. First, in January 1819, Stinson became postmaster at Cedar

Shoals, Chester District, sharing the office (always a political appointment in those days) with John G. Walker.

In 1824, Stinson was appointed to the office of magistrate and remained at that post 20 years. He said that in his first two years he married about 100 couples. Stinson was conservative in sending very few cases to a higher level court. From sources other than Stinson, it was said that unless a man were an utter reprobate, Stinson preferred to counsel or to shame him into becoming a better citizen. In 1845, the law changed to allow only one magistrate to a "beat" (area covered by a local militia company). Stinson graciously stepped aside in favor of R.H. Fudge.

His neighbors called on Stinson for advice and assistance in many ways. Stinson said he administered his first estate in 1822 and, altogether, administered around 30 estates. "I had the care of about twenty widows." He also had the guardianship of two to 30 orphans, "some of whom I educated." Stinson added, "Some of the estates were large and complicated; hence, I was kept in the Court of Equity for more than fifteen years."

Everyone in the neighborhood asked him to draw up their wills. "A great many persons on moving from this country to the West and northwest and leaving legacies here employed me as attorney to collect and forward proceeds to them." He frequently arbitrated disputes among neighbors. Many of the disputes were over land boundaries. Stinson's 20 years as a public surveyor stood him in good stead in that regard.



Nearby history

LOUISE
PETTUS

Esther Gaston Stinson died in 1854 while her husband was attending a meeting in Buffalo, N.Y. A telegram was sent to him, but he did not receive it and found out about his wife's death only when he met a friend after arriving at the Kingsbury train depot.

There were eight children, two sons and six daughters. The first son died when he was 2. The other died while a senior at Franklin University in Athens, Ga. (now the University of Georgia). Stinson's second wife was "Mrs. Henkle, the daughter of Mr. Turner and Margaret Morgan."

The Civil War bankrupted Stinson. Even though he managed to retain a few acres of land, he was too old and feeble to work a farm. He and his wife moved to Rock Hill to the home of their son-in-law, Maj. T.C. Beckham. His obituary stated that he was "exceedingly fond of children, kind to the sick, white or black. Many sleepless nights he spent going from one negro house to another watching the symptoms of disease and seeing that medicines were properly administered."

Today, local historians are grateful to Stinson for collecting Revolutionary history from participants of the war. Through his efforts we have not only the basis for a considerable body of research contained in the Lyman Draper Manuscripts of the University of Wisconsin, but also the third volume of "Women in the American Revolution" by Mrs. Elizabeth Ellet, published in 1849.

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