

A Sketch of Mount Dearbourn
By Daniel Green Stinson of
Land's Ford, Chester County, SC
Printed in the Chester Reporter, November 6, 1873

My first visit to Mount Dearbourn was in August 1805; I was then eleven-years of age. From the top of the hill, just down the slope towards a valley, were a number of small log cabins; a good many countrymen were in them as labourers. Some had left their farms. Several of the Barrack houses on the Mount were then finished, the house afterwards used as a guard house was then occupied by Jerry Dunce, a Dutchman, who was clerk under Col. Senf. I was struck with his writing and talking both at the same time. There were a good many mechanics brought on from Philadelphia. Robert Jackson, an Irishman, had the contract for the carpenter work. At this time there were a good many of the Northern men sick; one had died and was buried while I was there. This year Robert Jackson lost his wife and child. They appeared to be carrying on a considerable amount of work. There were a number of workmen, several wagons hauling lumber and some hauling bricks from the brick yard for the buildings, the construction of the works was under the direction of Col. Senf who was removed in the year 1807, and Captain Alexander McComb, an engineer, took control of the works. He carried on the works very rapidly, but left in December of 1808, and took the workmen to Fort Moultrie, to repair th works about Charleston. At this time the barracks were finished. They were in two rows leaving a wide street between the rows, which were made perfectly level upon the top of the Mount., the houses being near the slope of the Mount. There was a basement story under them with a chimney in the middle of each house, fireplaces in the basement and in the rooms above each room had a door from the outside, and stairs from the upper rooms down to the basement, which answered as a kitchen. The arsenal was in the hollow nest of the Barracks. It was about one hundred feet long, forty to fifty wide, with basement and two stories, built of brick. The officer's houses stood upon the north square facing the street. It was a two story brick building with basement, roof very steep until within about six feet of top, it then rose with a perpendicular wall of tree feet, then another roof rather flatter, banistered around forming an observatory with stairway leading to the top of the the building, with a trap door on top. Some distance in the rear of the officers house was the Magazine, a round building, the wall about six feet thick, looked very much like a sugar loaf, with a large round stone on top of the building, in the rear of which was the cannon shed. The officers' house was laid off with a great many rooms but only a few were finished. The original plan of the works was for fortifications on the surround eminences, distant about a half of a mile; when finished and properly manned, was thought to be another Gibraltar, nothing but starvation could take it. When McCombs left to go to Charleston with the workmen, Captain Ross Bird, of the United States army, came on and took command of the post. From this date the recruiting of

regulars commenced, the enlistment was for five years; some served out their time without getting into a single battle. In the year 1809 there were probably a regiment or more, Colonel Smith, Major Laval of cavalry, and a great many young men, Lieutenants and Captains; it was a school of instruction both for officers and men. Strictest of discipline; guards daily mounted; tattoos and reveille beat night and morning. United States flag suspended above the observatory. Some of the young officers were most of their time out through the country with a Sergeant and drummer and fifer recruiting. After the declaration of war, there were some enlisted for eighteen months. At another period they were enlisted for the war, as they were prepared they were sent off, some to Charleston, others to Canada, and some to the Western Army. Captain Bird was said to be an excellent drill officer; he drank liquor a little freely; he was continued from the time he came in 1808 to December 1812 as an instructor at the post but not promoted, at which time he was sent to the Western Army. A Mr. Troy, of Salisbury, North Carolina, came for his sister, Mrs. Bird and removed her to Salisbury. Bird, near the close of the war, resigned his commission; he was very much chagrined at his not being promoted—sent in his resignation to the Secretary of War, complaining bitterly of his treatment, and closed his communication in the following terms:

But, sir when the time shall come when I shall throw off this mortal cell of humanity, and take my flight into another and better world, in my passage, I will tip the wink of Venus and hang my hat upon Mars, and be ushered into the presence of Washington, to who I will make report of what an ungrateful and imbecile set of officials are now at the head of the government of the United States of America.

Your most obedient and humble servant

ROSS BIRD

Whenever they wished to remove any of the troops to any other point, they obtained wagons from the farmers in the surrounding country to transport them. The last that was moved were Colonel Hamilton's Regiment, the third Rifles and Captain William Campbell in whose company were enlisted Aaron Quay, James McLure, Jrs., and Collin Rodgers. This enlistment was for the war. They were moved by wagons from Fishing Creek. Abraham Gill's were one of the wagons. They got to the City of Washington late in the fall of 1814. The war closing in 1815 they were there discharged. After the close of the war in 1815 Simon Beckham, who had been a Lieutenant in the regular service in the war in Canada, came on with authority to take possession of the public property about Mount Dearbourn; he sold some and shipped off the remainder to Fort Moultrie and other Forts about the city of Charleston. From this time no one had any charge of the public works, the buildings were torn down and the bricks carried off, until the only building left standing was the officers house. About the year 1850 the right of the lands were transferred from the United States to the State of South Carolina, and by the state sold to Daniel McCullough, who recovered the officers house and built a very valuable Cotton Factory, which

spun a good deal of cotton into yarn. Sherman's raid through the State burning houses and destroying property, burned the Cotton Factory, also the brick building which was once the property of the United States and were occupied by her officers during the time they occupied Mount Dearbourn as a military post. Near this place they also turned William Robinson's family out of doors and burned his fine house. So now there are only a pile of brick remaining. The Southern West Point is as if there never was such a place. In December of the year 1812 I was on the Observatory, the scene was magnificent. The falls of the river being confined to a very narrow channel whose waters came tumbling down over large masses of huge rock, foaming from shore to shore and making a noise like the rumbling of distant thunder, which could be heard for several miles. The channel of which is walled in by perpendicular heights, as it were, rocks, upon rocks, with a few shrubby spruce trees, where there were soil enough in the crevices for them to live. The river appeared to be just under me. Could be viewed for miles both below and above from this point the country for many miles in every direction. I have been at the great falls of Niagara, that is on a large scale, but for solemnity and grandeur of the scene it is not surpassed by that of Mount Dearbourn and surroundings when viewed from this observatory.

The march of Sherman's army through South Carolina, burning of Columbia, burning houses everywhere in his march, destroying the last remnant of Mount Dearbourn, was inflicted as a punishment upon the State for loving the Union less and the Constitution more than her Northern sisters.

OCTOGENARIAN

[Daniel Green Stinson]