

## HUNSTANTON

ROBERTSON – RABB – STRANGE

HUNSTANTON is located just beyond the city limits of Winnsboro, on the Columbia highway. It is built along the Colonial type of architecture which is locally referred to as a "mosquito cottage." However, this house is no cottage; it contains eighteen rooms in its three stories and wing. The front makes an impressive appearance. A two-storied, gabled portico extends over the center. The pillars of the lower porch, which is just above the ground level, support the floor above. Two flights of semicircular steps at either end lead up to the main floor, the gabled roof of which is supported by four large wooden columns, directly above the massive brick pillars below. The first floor or basement is built of brick while the remainder of the house is constructed of the very best and most durable heart pine. The main body of the house is rectangular and is covered with a gabled roof. To the rear of this is a large back porch and the kitchen wing.

The exact age of the building is not known but it is shown on a map of Fairfield County in 1820. At that time it was the home of Major Robertson, Esquire, who called the plantation SWEET BRIAR. The property remained in the Robertson family until after the Confederate War. At that time it was transferred to the Rabb family. In 1906 it was purchased by C. E. Strange, Sr. Mr. Strange changed the name of the place from SWEET BRIAR to HUNSTANTON, which was the name of the family seat of his people in Norfolk, England. He and his family lived at Hunstanton until 1922.

In 1946 his son, C. E. Strange, Jr., made HUNSTANTON his home. When he acquired the property, it had been suffering from neglect and "absentee ownership." The new owner had always admired the place and desired to restore it to its former dignity. He did this in an excellent manner, retaining all the charm and refined simplicity that had made it an outstanding landmark.

The rooms of the interior are large and square, with high ceilings and fine woodwork. They were all redecorated and furnished with many fine old pieces, family heirlooms.

Either Thomas G. Robertson or his father built the house. The family were natives of Halifax County, Virginia, having come there from Wales among the first settlers of Virginia during the Colonial period.

Their first home in Fairfield was about one and a half miles from this building, on a country road, between this and the Woodward estate.

At the beginning of the War Between the States Thomas G. Robertson was active in the maneuvers in the Charleston area. He was an old man and later during the war retired to his plantation for the remainder of the conflict.

In 1865, when Wheeler's men came through, retreating from Columbia, Mr. Robertson was told by them that the Yankees would be close behind. He proceeded to hide foodstuffs, hams, meat, flour, meal, and the family valuables between the heavy, hand-hewn sills of the basement ceiling and second-floor rooms.

Before this was completed, word was received that the enemy was fast approaching. Mrs. Robertson warned her husband that he should leave and



HUNSTANTON

hide because he might be recognized as one who had taken an active part in the earlier operations around Charleston. He responded that he would take her advice, flee to the woods, and hide in a place "where the Devil himself could not find me."

Shortly after he left the house, the invading Northerners appeared on the scene. They pulled down the fences, rode through the yard and gardens, trampling the rare plants and flower-beds. Some of the men dismounted to raid the place and to take toilet privileges in the yard without respect to themselves or the ladies of the household.

Young Thomas Woodward Robertson, a mere lad, had in his possession a precious bag of sugar that he was trying to hide away when the scavengers made their unexpected appearance. He threw the bag on the porch floor and sat upon it, using his large dog, who lay close to him, to help conceal his treasure.

Some of the Negroes welcomed the Yankees, among them a brazen young wench who readily accepted and returned the embraces and familiarities of some of the soldiers. She, with some of the other traitors, led the foe into the basement rooms and showed them where her master and his faithful people had carefully hidden the necessities and treasures.

About that time Mrs. Robertson noticed from a window a body of soldiers leading her husband and his prized, matched grey carriage horses from the stables. She interceded for him and complained of the rank indignities and indecencies taking place, demanding the release of the old man and insisting that she be given a guard for the safety of her family. Her husband was released and a guard was posted, but the looting continued and the horses were confiscated along with all the other stock and supplies.

After ravaging the house, some of the soldiers brought in jugs of molasses and emptied them into the grand piano and onto the priceless Brussels carpets, but the building itself was spared from the torch.

The family carriage was pulled out from the carriage house, its top was torn off, and it was piled high with hams, meat, silver, and household treasures. Some of the plantation stock was hitched to it and, when last seen, it was being driven off by two bummers with jugs of liquor in one arm. The Negro girl who had shown them where the valuables were hidden was sitting between them, in high spirits, thoroughly enjoying their familiarities and obscene language.

After the departure of the army the only food that the family and faithful Negroes had for three days was excess corn left by the horses and scraps from the army mess.

## RURAL POINT

ROBERTSON — DOTY

RURAL POINT is located on the eastern outskirts of Winnsboro. The house was built by Judge Robertson in 1852. In 1890 the property was purchased by William R. Doty, a native of Lancaster, Kentucky. Ever since that time, it has been the home of the Doty family.