

BLINK BONNIE

JONES — ROBERTSON — KIRKLAND

BLINK BONNIE, in the Longtown section of Fairfield, commands one of the most majestic views in the county. From its spacious veranda portions of several counties, towns, and settlements may be clearly seen without the aid of binoculars. In the summer the varying shades of green melt away into purple tints where the heavenly blue of the sky meets the horizon. Several glistening creeks, the Wateree River, and Lake Wateree cut their own patterns through the forest. The panorama from this point is a challenge to any artist who might try to capture it on canvas.

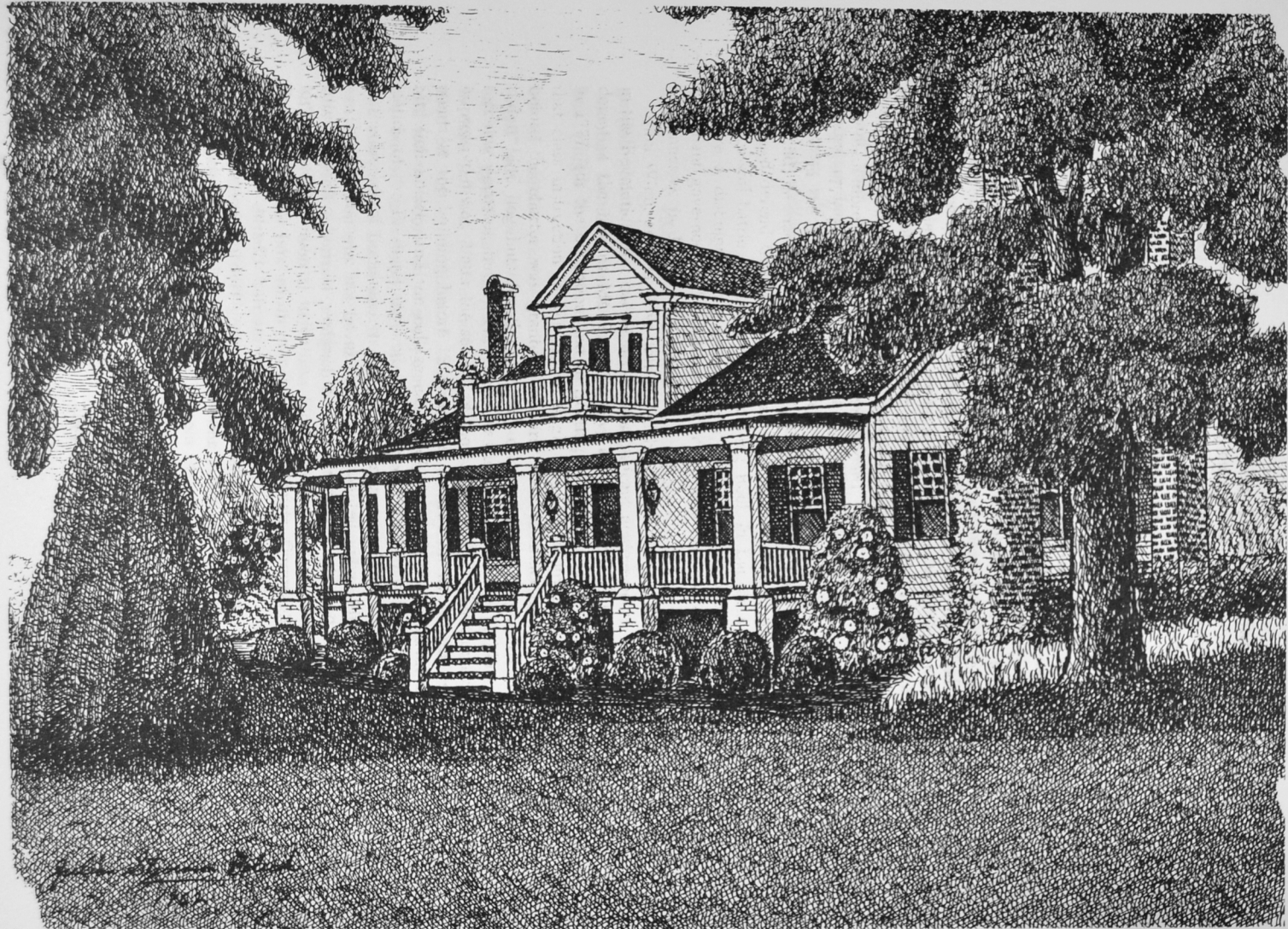
In 1822 a Camden banker, Darling Jones, built this house for a summer residence. The design and construction of the commodious home show that the builder had all the good taste and hospitable traits of the era.

The main body of the structure is rectangular, with a wing to the left. Across the front is a wide, spacious piazza, supported by graceful, well-proportioned square columns. An outstanding feature of the house is the two enormous central hallways on the first and second floors. They extend all the way through the middle of the mansion. These served a dual purpose: first, they added greatly to the summer comfort of the three large, square rooms flanking the halls, and, secondly, they afforded ample space for entertaining on a grand scale. The decorations such as mantels, wainscotings, and cornices are simple but handsome. The walls and ceilings are plastered, and the formal rooms have elegant chandelier rosettes in the ceilings.

The left wing is off from the formal dining room and serves as a kitchen and family room. All the walls are paneled, and the cabinets are built of time-cured, mellow, red-heart pine.

In the back yard, to the left of the dwelling, is the unique old brick kitchen. This little building in itself is a gem. It consists of two rooms with large open fireplaces, ovens and warmers. One of the fireplaces still has its swinging cranes and spits. The floor is laid of brick. Due to the brick floor and the thick masonry walls, even on hot days the little house has a refreshing coolness, for it is well-ventilated with windows on the front and rear.

The little brick kitchen at BLINK BONNIE is still in use. Many discriminating South Carolina housewives, who pride themselves on serving rare delicacies, are well familiar with its trademark. Mrs. Kirkland, the present mistress of BLINK BONNIE, is a woman of many talents. She is not only a connoisseur of fine foods but also an artist in the preparation of them. Among her friends her artichoke relish and pickles became a legend. Now, during the artichoke season, the old kitchen on her plantation is a busy place, giving employment to several of the good cooks of Longtown, who under her careful supervision prepare the most delicious of all South Carolina relishes, Blink Bonnie Artichoke Pickles, Relish, and Iced Tomatoes. Some of the artichokes are raised on the place but the demand for her finished products has become so great that the farm people all over the county are planting artichokes to help meet the demand for this spicy side dish made famous by her recipe.



BLINK BONNIE

After the death of Darling Jones the place passed to his son, Abram Jones, who continued to use it in the same manner as his father. The Jones' entertained on a lavish scale, and this fine old home was the social center of the community where the Virginia reels, quadrilles, and cotillions were danced. It was probably an inspiration for the fabulous Peay mansion, MELROSE, which was built in the 1850's.

When the Confederate War ended, there was a great change at BLINK BONNIE. The war had cost the Jones family their fortune. The plantation was sold at public auction and was bought by W. O. Robertson, who with his family occupied the place for many years. When the Robertson family moved away, BLINK BONNIE was used as a stage house or "station." Then it was rented to a long succession of tenants. Finally, after falling into bad repair, it became vacant for some time, a sad reminder of bygone splendor.

This deplorable plight ended in 1950 when the plantation was purchased by the M. A. Kirklands. Kirkland, a native of Camden and a descendant of the Kirklands who were among the first settlers in this section before the Revolutionary War, had long admired the old place. He and his talented wife began a restoration of the house immediately after they bought the property. Today BLINK BONNIE again stands proud and majestic in all the magnificence and grandeur that made her famous in the past. The present owners still have plans to further glamorize and embellish the house and grounds.

DIXON HOUSE

HARRISON – MOORES – HARRISON – DIXON

This old landmark is sadly in need of restoration but it still stands, defying time, in spite of its sad plight. The front doorway is still beautiful and outstanding in design, giving the old place a lasting semblance of dignity and refinement.

The place belonged to Reuben Harrison, a Revolutionary soldier. In the period before the war he was associated with Thomas Woodward, the "Regulator," in keeping law and order. He was twice married; Lucy Burge was the first wife and Nancy Kirkland the second. He died in 1835 and left each of his eight children two thousand acres of land. In addition to this he built homes for his three daughters, leaving the home place to his widow for her life.

One daughter, Frances, married a Brevard. Her home was behind the Darling Jones House and was built similar to it. It was razed a few years ago but the fine old mantels and woodwork were saved and are now still in use in a house near Camden. Nancy, the second daughter, married a Rochelle, and their big three-story house stood on a hill near what is now "Fairview," The Alcoholic Rehabilitation Center. It finally fell into disuse and was taken down a few years ago. The third daughter, Mary, married Charles Moore, and their house is the only one left standing of the many Harrison homes.

About 1830 all of the daughters and their families sold their property and moved West. John Harrison bought most of his family's estate as his brothers and sisters moved away. He was a very rich man, owning thousands of acres of land and listed as one of the largest slave owners in the upcountry. He