

A
FAIRFIELD
SKETCHBOOK

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with
INTRODUCTION
by
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and

SECTIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

by

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II. History of Winnsboro Bryan Roberts
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LONGTOWN

by

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LONGTOWN, the easternmost settlement in Fairfield, and the oldest in that part of the county, is perhaps the least chronicled. It is probably due to its antiquity that much of LONGTOWN's early history has been lost, for many of its oldest and grandest homes have been destroyed by fire and other ravages of time and war.

"Through the wooded land ran a picturesque Indian trail" is the way one historian described the beginning of LONGTOWN. This was the Indian fur-trade route from North Carolina and the Piedmont area of South Carolina that followed the western slope of the Wateree River south to the Santee River and Georgetown, Charleston, and Savannah. LONGTOWN is said by Fitz-Hugh McMaster in the HISTORY OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY (Columbia 1946) to have first been known as LOG-TOWN because of the log houses built along the Indian trail, the name later becoming LONGTOWN. In any case it has been well named, for it is hard to define the limits of LONGTOWN.

The "town" of LONGTOWN is that area which borders the Ridgeway-Camden Road and covers the area from near Fairview, the old Ridgeway Hunting Club, southwest to the Kershaw County line, and east from the Wateree River to Dutchman's Creek, and west to the old Winnsboro Road.

The earliest settlers in LONGTOWN came from North Carolina and Virginia, and were Quakers, Episcopalians, French Huguenots, Presbyterians, and Baptists; about the same time came Swiss, Dutch, and German Roman Catholics, Dutch Huguenots, and Lutherans from across Broad River on the west side of Fairfield County. Printed records indicate that Nicholas Peay came from Hanover County, Virginia, to Pine Tree, now Camden, about the time of the Revolutionary War, and built MALVERN HALL in LONGTOWN. About the same time Charles Tidwell came down the Indian Trail to LONGTOWN from the area of Jamestown, Virginia, and settled in the Bryant Hill section of LONGTOWN. His grave at Bryant Hill Cemetery, with his birth-date of 1690, might well be the earliest gravestone extant in the county.

LONGTOWN was also discovered by the German and Swiss settlers of Richland and Lexington Counties before the Revolution, for we have the record of Colonel David Myers of the Brick House, Bluff Road, near Columbia, owning plantations along the Wateree in Fairfield County soon after 1786 when his mother was reimbursed for a "black horse taken for public service" for the use of the Continental Army. His father, Jacob Myers, was paid for "144 days militia duty in 1787-88." Colonel Myers' son, John Jacob Myers, M.D., lived at SOLITUDE plantation in LONGTOWN, noted as a "luxurious and imposing structure and the scene of lordly hospitality, many celebrities being entertained there." Dr. Myers represented Fairfield County in the state House of Representatives in 1840-41. He served as assistant surgeon to a regiment which escorted the Marquis de la Fayette from the North Carolina border to Columbia on his visit to South Carolina in 1824. It is reasonable to surmise

that from this and the foregoing statement that General de la Fayette was entertained at SOLITUDE in Fairfield County, as well as in Camden and Columbia.

Other early LONGTOWN settlers were the Machettes, Wagners, and Zieglers from Holland, Germany, and Switzerland, and the Robertsons, Harrisons, Dixons, Picketts, Reeves, Stewarts, and Joneses through Virginia and North Carolina from England, France, Scotland, and Ireland. The Tidwells were English and the Peays French Huguenots. McMaster writes, "Before the Confederate War much wealth was accumulated, finer, larger homes were built, and so the name of LOG-TOWN became LONGTOWN." There was an academy near the Kershaw County line, with Professor McCandless (or McCandlers) in charge. He was said to have come from Georgia and was an "educator of high type." Boarding students came from Camden and Liberty Hill with day scholars from the entire LONGTOWN area. The professor had many visits from the irate mothers, whose sons he is said to have whipped on frequent occasions.

Austin Ford Peay, the son of Nicholas Peay of MALVERN HALL lived at FLINT HILL in Fairfield County. He was known as the "wealthiest man in that section." When he made a trip to Camden or Columbia, he travelled at night with a mattress put in his carriage in order not to lose sleep and to be fresh for his day in town. This could well have been the origin of Mr. Pullman's first railroad sleeping cars. When in 1809 there was an embargo on the export of cotton, Mr. Peay decided to take his cotton to market. He went in his carriage, escorted by a long wagon train to Philadelphia from FLINT HILL. It is recorded that his cotton was sold for \$25,000.00, a handsome price. He died at FLINT HILL in 1841 and was buried on his plantation, now flooded by the Wateree power development. The gravestones in this cemetery can be seen at low water. In the United States Census of 1860 the farms of the estate of N. A. Peay are listed at \$253,000.00, by far the largest in Fairfield County.

MELROSE, called the grandest plantation house in upper South Carolina, was built at LONGTOWN above the Wateree by Austin Peay's son, Nicholas Adamson Peay. It has been described as a "massive structure of brick, stone, and marble of thirty rooms, broad piazzas and wide halls." It is said by descendants of his slaves to have had a garden on the roof with a pool in which fresh fish were kept for use at the table. The mansion was equipped with a water system supplied by fresh springs below the hill on which MELROSE was situated. Water was pumped to the roof by a hydraulic ram. Colonel and Mrs. Peay, the former Martha Cary Lamar, died before the Confederate War. Colonel Peay had served in the Seminole War in Florida in 1835. He represented Fairfield County in the state Senate in 1856, and died in office the next year.

When Sherman's Army invaded Fairfield County, MELROSE was one of the few plantation homes burned in the southeastern part of the county. The story is that a Union soldier rode his horse up the marble steps, through the piazza of MELROSE into the front hall. Tying his horse's reins to the ceiling candle chandelier, the Federal soldier rambled through the house and found the wine cellar where he lingered and imbibed too long. Soon other soldiers

set fire to Fairfield's finest mansion, and the drunken soldier and his horse were consumed in the flames.

WISTERIA, the Tidwell-Myers family home, just across from the present Harrison-Dixon home in LONGTOWN, is said to have been saved by Nicholas Peay Myers, an intrepid Confederate son of the Peay-Myers families in LONGTOWN. Family tradition admits that Nick, a brave young man, acted as a spy for the Southern cause. He is reputed to have saved many helpless women and children, and even to have ambushed a few Yankees. He was wearing a Union Captain's uniform and insignia when he ordered the Yankee soldiers away from WISTERIA and saved his home from the torch. It is said that there were "Yankee skulls" in the attic at WISTERIA until Mrs. David William Tidwell (the former Mattie Myers) had them buried with the family and slaves at Bryant Hill Cemetery some time before WISTERIA was accidentally burned about 1935.

WISTERIA was one of the fine LONGTOWN plantation houses and was full of history, lore, and tradition. There were grease spots on the walls and even the ceilings of some of the upstairs closets where the Myers and Tidwells hid their hams and pork shoulders before Sherman's raid. These same bedrooms were papered after the war with Confederate money, it having become valueless, and paper being scarce.

LONGTOWN's Baptist Church was a great force in the early years when MELROSE commanded the area. It has been the burial place of some of the earlier families. The church building no longer remains, however, the Presbyterian Church which flourishes today has generally been supplied by the pastor of Ridgeway's historic Aimwell Church. Its cemetery is now the burial place of many influential LONGTOWN families, some of whom had been among the earliest settlers.

In 1854 when the Episcopalians in Ridgeway were building St. Stephen's Chapel, Colonel N. A. Peay offered to give \$100.00 on the condition that the new church be built east of Ridgeway on the LONGTOWN Road "for the convenience" of his sister, Mrs. John Myers, the former Sarah English Peay. Colonel Peay was not an Episcopalian, and it was understood that Mrs. Peay was not to know of the gift as she, the devout member of another denomination, would not approve. Colonel and Mrs. Peay are buried in LONGTOWN's Baptist Cemetery, with one of the most imposing monuments in the state. Until the days of the Confederate War Mr. Richard Matchette of Dutchman's Creek and the LONGTOWN Myers attended Saint Stephen's in their colorful native Dutch costumes. Contemporaries describe them: "the men in knee-length pantaloons with big silver buckles and matching silver buckles on their shoes and belts; long flowing coats with wide leather belts and silver buckles; and broad-brimmed, low-crowned black and white hats. The ladies wore long skirts that touched the ground, colorful blouses with full sleeves, bright bonnets with flowing bows, under which their long, blond, tightly plaited tresses hung over their shoulders — and some below their waists, so long was their beautiful hair." The Dutch Episcopalians were devout and loyal Huguenots and Protestants.

WISTERIA was perhaps most noted for its fox hunts, although it is recalled that "the hounds disturbed Mrs. Tidwell's fine Wagnerian ear." Her descend-

ants have inherited her ear for music. There were eight Tidwell sons, and more horses and hounds, and so with a few friends a fox hunt was easily organized at WISTERIA. It began with a pre-dawn breakfast served by Hence, a slave born at WISTERIA; the menu: steak, eggs, hominy, and biscuits, for the day would be a long one, especially if the fox happened to be a red one. The hunt crossed Tidwell Flats toward Wateree to the east of Dutchman's Creek to the north and west. If a grey fox was hounded around Bryant Hill Cemetery, the chase might be a short one, but if it was red, the hunt would go as far as FLINT HILL or BUCKHEAD or even across the river to Liberty Hill. However, no matter what time the fox, whether red or grey, was stopped by the hounds, the hunters returned to WISTERIA to find one of Mrs. Tidwell's and Hence's magnificent WISTERIA dinners ready for them.

Dutchman's Creek is another historical landmark of the early influence of the German-Swiss-Dutch families like the Myers, Matchettes, Zeiglers, and others who settled in this part of Fairfield County and gave their name to the creek.

History records the many wild animals of the Wateree-to-Broad-River area of Fairfield. They are listed as deer, foxes (red and grey), raccoons, wildcats, opossums (our only marsupial), cottontail rabbits (hare), grey and flying squirrels, wharf and blue rats, wood and muskrats, minks, weasels, leather-winged bats, moles, and mice. Among the one hundred or more birds mentioned, many are still native to the area; others are extinct or are today rare, like pileated woodpeckers, blue and white herons, and wild turkeys. Deer are said to have been common in the area until 1880, and about the same time Mr. Hugh S. Wylie is reported to have said that he saw "Not thousands but hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of wild pigeons in flight. They would darken the sky." He adds that wild turkeys were plentiful as well. Both the great naturalists, Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon, described seeing wild pigeons in such numbers as this earlier in the century in various parts of America.

But alas, WISTERIA burned in 1935 and the Tidwell lands are now a part of the extensive Bowater Paper forests. Time, war, and fire have taken many of LONGTOWN's ante-bellum mansions — and its finest, like MALVERN HALL, SOLITUDE, MELROSE, and WISTERIA. However, many of the descendants of these early Fairfield County families remain, some nearby and others scattered throughout the state and the neighboring states. LONGTOWN has a proud heritage and a long, rich history, full of thrilling facts and colorful fancy.

Among the families that settled at LONGTOWN before and during the Confederate War were the Rosboroughs, Walkers, Hunters, Parkers, Boyles, Rions, Edmunds, Ollevers, Mobleys, Stuarts, Spurriers, Boyds, Hamiltons, Rochelles, Crowders, Haynes, Mellichamps, Boulwares, Bolicks, Moores, Crumptions, Dixons, Gozas, Wilsons, and Martins. The above-mentioned families are only those who owned lands along the main roads that pass through the section.