

MAYFAIR

ALSTON — COOK — CHAPPELL — BRUCE — McMEEKIN

MAYFAIR was designed and built by Colonel William Alston in 1824. Colonel Alston was a member of the prominent and powerful Allston and Alston families who controlled and planted most of the famous rice plantations on the Waccamaw River in Georgetown County. These people were avid politicians, social and civic leaders, supplying South Carolina with two governors. Governor Joseph Alston, son-in-law of the Vice-President, Aaron Burr, was governor of the state during the War of 1812. His only child died in the summer of 1812 and his wife, Theodosia, was lost at sea in the same year. His early death some few years later in 1816 was attributed to grief and melancholia brought on by the loss of his loved ones. Governor Robert Francis Withers Allston was chief executive of the state in the stormy days just prior to the War Between the States. He was a scholarly, wise, and widely traveled man and did much to promote education, culture, and art in South Carolina. He died while still in his prime and before the war ended.

After MAYFAIR was completed Colonel William Alston presented the house and plantation to his daughter, Mrs. Burrell Cook, as a wedding gift. The Cooks entertained lavishly and were leaders in the social and political activities in Fairfield County, Mr. Cook having served several terms in the State Legislature. This family held the place from 1824 until 1883 when it was purchased at auction by Thomas Chappell.

The family of Thomas Chappell resided here until 1945. At that time it was purchased by his granddaughter (Mary Douglas Chappell), Mrs. R. C. Bruce. Mrs. Bruce repaired and partially restored the home occupying it at intervals for several years. Recently MAYFAIR was sold to Mr. Silas McMeekin of Columbia, South Carolina, a relative of the Chappell family and a native of the Jenkinsville-Monticello community.

This is quite an elegant house and reflects the Lowcountry influence of the builder both in style and design. The stairs, mantels, woodwork, and the entrance are especially beautiful. The carvings and decorative designs are among the finest to be found in the county. The back stairway is enclosed. The reason for doing this was to protect the young ladies of the household from exposing their ankles and limbs as they descended the stairs.

CHAPPELL PLACE

RUFF — CHAPPELL

A short distance from the main crossroad at Jenkinsville is a delightful old country home. Surrounded by broad green fields with wooded hills in the background is the old Ruff or Chappell house. The building itself is deceiving; on first glance it appears to be rather small and of a fairly late vintage. The deception is due to a room that has been added at one end

of the porch on the front which was originally an open porch. The present porch is quite spacious and has been screened for summer comfort which gives it a modern appearance.

In reality this is one of the oldest homes in the county, having been built in 1795 by Daniel Ruff, a member of one of Fairfield's pioneering families. The drawing-room is the main feature of the building. It is a large broad room, lighted and ventilated by long windows and decorated with a most handsome mantle of excellent proportions and design. The room is wainscoted to the chair-rail which is of a more simple design. The furnishings, for the most part, are lovely old family pieces that are all in fine condition.

The big yards surrounding the house are accented with well-placed shrubs and flowerbeds. A semi-circular boxwood drive leads to the front door. A rare desert willow is out-standing among the shrubs adorning the grounds. It has a beautiful spiny foliage and a delicate pink blossom growing in large clusters at the ends of the branches. There is but one other plant like this in the state (so the owners of the house have been told.)

In early days the second floor of the building housed frames of "silk worms" and weaving equipment for making silk cloth. One ancient mulberry tree still remains on the grounds where once there was a grove. The tender leaves of these trees were gathered and fed to the silk-worms who spun themselves into their silken cocoons which were processed and woven into fine fabrics by the industrious people who lived here when this great country was in its infancy.

During the ante-bellum period this plantation also produced quantities of cotton and it was during this time that the property passed from the Daniel Ruff's son, Silas Ruff to the Chappell family.

When Sherman's troops came through in the declining days of the Confederacy the Chappells were living here. Their hams, other foodstuffs, and valuables were successfully hidden from the plundering hordes in the stairs. Several steps were carefully removed, the goods concealed under them, then, replaced in such a manner as to leave no traces or marks of having been disturbed. A fine saddle-horse also escaped the soldiers. It was taken into the woods near the house and hidden in a deep ditch. Miss Sallie Chappell, then a very small girl, hid her beautiful doll under a pile of leaves near the yard fence. When the intruders were leaving one of the soldiers discovered this little treasure. He picked it up, hung it on the clothes-line and called back, "Little girl, I found your doll!"

This little girl later became the mistress and owner of the plantation. She lived here and attended to the farming operations as long as she was able, living to a ripe old age. She never married and during her last years had to leave the old home that she had loved and cared for for so long and live with relatives.

After being vacant for a quarter of a century her nephew, the present owner, Mr. Douglas Chappell, and his family moved into the house and restored it. The house is now in excellent condition, well cared for, and a place of beauty and serenity. Mrs. Chappell is a great-great-granddaughter of the original owner and builder of the grand old house.



CHAPPELL PLACE