

Older citizens of Lancaster will remember the late Dr. J.F.G. Mittag, who died in this city on April 8, 1890-38 years ago. Below we reprint an account of his death, taken from the old Lancaster Ledger of date April 9, 1890, furnished The News by Mrs. R.R. Riddle of this city. The boarding house at the corner of Dunlap and Main Street, known as "Mittag Inn", and owned by Mrs. Riddle, was named for Dr. Mittag. The account of the death of Dr. Mittag follows:

Dr. John F.G. Mittag of this place, the venerable scholar and philosopher is no more. He passed peacefully to rest about 10 o'clock on Tuesday night last, the 8th day of April, 1890. He was sick but a few days. His mind was clear to the very end. He met death bravely, dying as he had lived, a philosopher. When the hour of death was approaching he asked everyone to leave his room except his daughter, Mrs. C.C. Clyburn, and Mr. L.C. Payseur. He then directed Mr. Payseur what disposition to make of his books, manuscripts, photographs of noted literary men, curiosities of travel, collections of foreign coins, etc. Afterward this he said: "I am no infidel. I believe in God. I believe in a Mediator. I now put myself in the hands of my God." He slowly reached up his hands and closed his eyelids, then placing his hands on his breast he died without a struggle. His remains were interred in the Catholic cemetery on Wednesday afternoon. Rev. A.L. Stough of the Baptist church read the burial service and offered a prayer at the grave. A large number of our citizens were at the burial. *[Those buried in the Catholic cemetery were moved - will have to find where and when.]*

Dr. Mittag was born in Hagerstown, Md., October 21st, 1803. He was the third child of John G. Mittag. He was educated at Washington, Pa., where he was a schoolmate of Hon. Henry A. Wise of Virginia, and graduated with great honor, foreshadowing the distinction he afterwards obtained as a linguist. He came to South Carolina in 1827. In 1828 he was admitted to the bar in Columbia by the State Supreme Court. He was married in 1828 to a daughter of Capt. Wm. McKenna of this place. Shortly after his marriage he was elected Commissioner in Equity for Lancaster County and served until 1834 when he went on a trip to Europe. He spent nearly a year, traveling in different parts of the old world. In 1836 when the President called for Volunteers to the Florida war, Dr. Mittag was among the number that went from this county. He returned to Lancaster, and here in the quiet of our little town he has pursued his studies ever since.

In March, 1867, when our people were on the verge of starvation, Dr. Mittag by his appeals in behalf of the suffering of the South and of our district by his influence in his Northern home and by his visit and personal appeal to friends in Boston, New York and other Northern cities, awakened a sympathy in that quarter which resulted in the necessary aid being extended. Corn, bacon, flour, money was liberally given and the hearts of the people felt the warmest gratitude not alone to the donors but to Dr. Mittag for his earnest efforts in the cause of humanity. Let us revere his memory.

In 1868, Dr. Mittag was appointed Auditor of Lancaster County, and afterwards held the office of Probate Judge.

Dr. Mittag was a fine linguist. He spoke nine languages and could write in as many more. He carried on an extensive correspondence and often

in writing to his friends he would translate his letters into several languages. He learned the Chinese language during the latter years of his life and what is most remarkable learned it without an instructor. He was very fond of Chinese and had several correspondents to whom he never wrote in any other language.

While Dr. Mittag was master of both legal and medical professions yet he never practiced either. At one time he followed portrait painting and was second to none in this art. Take him all in all he was a remarkable man, and Lancaster should feel honored that his bones are buried beneath her soil. *Moved to*

The Hagerstown (Md.) Mail, speaking of his death and the distinction he obtained as a linguist, says:

"Few men now living have possessed greater national facilities in this respect, and it is a fact that a few weeks before his death, Judge Alvey received a letter from him written and translated into four or five different languages, including Chinese. As a Greek scholar he had no superior in any country, and during his long and laborious life he executed many translations for various publications and institutions. There was no scientific subject with which he was not familiar, and even the discovery of the telephone was foreshadowed by him several years before it was put into practical use."

(The "Mittag INN" was bought by R.R. Riddle Feb. 1926.)

This was copied from a clipping in the possession of Mrs. Clyburn Wilson, the former ~~Cath~~ Riddle.

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CLOUD OVER CATAWBA by Chalmers G. Davidson, published under the sponsorship of the Mecklenburg Historical Society, May 20, 1949. Pages 124-125: "It was Alex McIntosh's custom, during cotton growing weather, to take his family to the Catawba Springs. The Springs were the closest approach to a spa the Carolinas afforded.... on the porches of Catawba Springs, Sinklers, Deas and Hegers from Charleston learned to know Polks, Lockes and Caldwells of the Piedmont... Phifers and Forneys from Alabama... Lattas and Springs from South Carolina.... Mr. Mittag, the portrait painter from South Carolina, found business brisk."

Supplied by
Miss Nancy Crockett
Route 4
Lancaster, S.C.

There is an interesting article on Dr. J.F.G. Mittag entitled
"A Noted Philosopher"
reprinted from New York by the Lancaster Ledger, 5/20/57 (1857)