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S.C. - Homes, Historic - York County

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SECTION TWO

## Bratton House Has Colorful History

### Homestead Erected In 1845 Has Stood Tests Of Time

By ELIZABETH REED

Through the ages three has been a magic number. There are three houses at Brattonville, marvelously preserved, and perhaps unique in being the only group of homes as old as they are in the county.

Last week's story told of the Revolutionary home at Brattonville, built by Col. William and Mrs. Martha Bratton about 1776. This week's article will tell of the homestead and next week's story will concern the third home of the group—the brick house.

Many people have asked how to reach Brattonville. Once the center of a thriving and independent community, it is now on a sandy country road and not seen by many travelers. Brattonville is reached by turning to the left at a point beyond Bethesda church about midway between Rock Hill and McConnellsville and going about a mile and one half. It is on a road that once was the main thoroughfare between Yorkville and Chester.

King George III of England made the grant of land where Brattonville stands. This grant is, in the possession of Mrs. R. M. Bratton of York, great granddaughter of the Col. William Bratton, builder of the Revolutionary house.

#### The Homestead

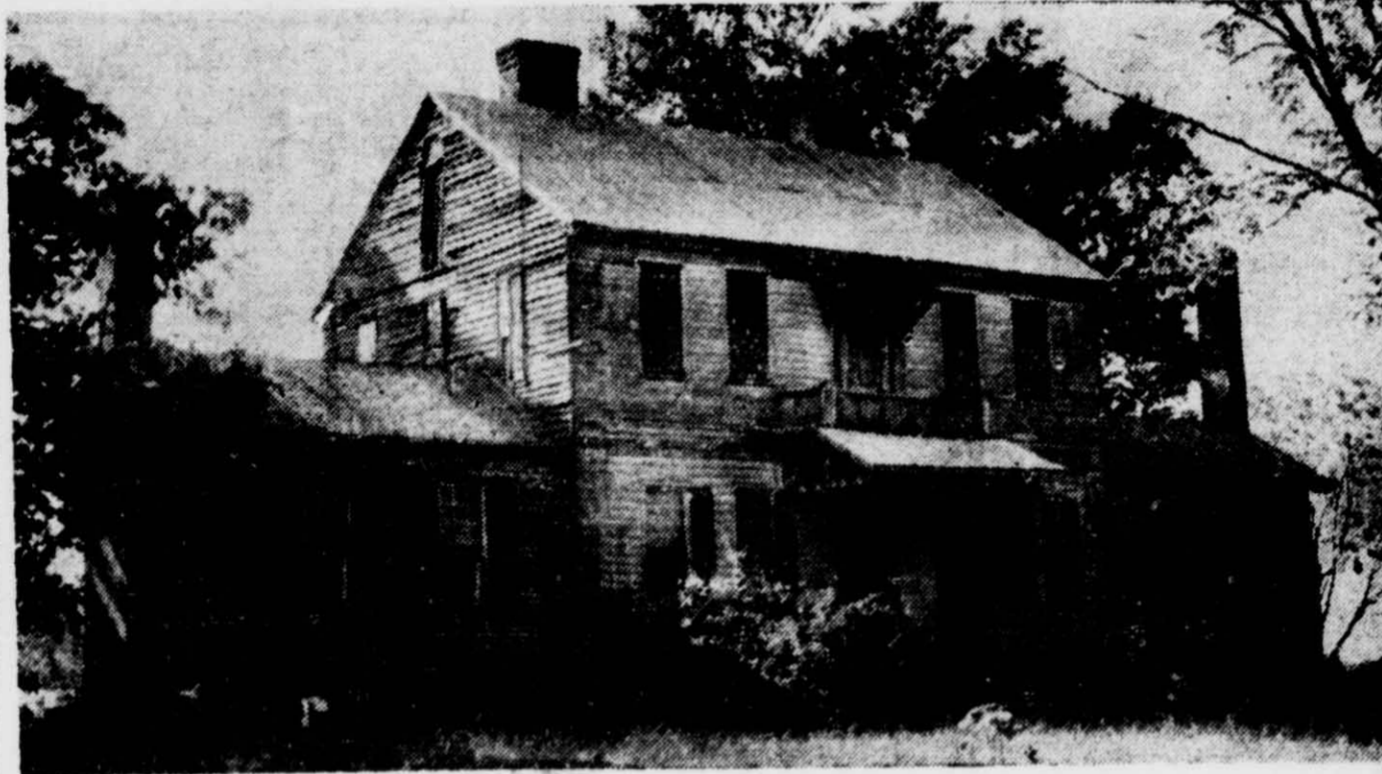
The second in the series of three Bratton homes was built in 1845 by Dr. John Bratton, son of Col. William Bratton.

The house stands today firm and stately in a large grove of gigantic oaks planted many years ago by Bratton hands. The main body of the home is of pine boards, two and one half stories in height. On either side are wings with chimneys at the ends. Joined to the rear of the main body of the house by a breezeway is the very large brick dining room with mammoth cupboards in the corners and a seven foot fireplace at one end.

The main body of the house is centered by a well proportioned door outlined with glass panels at top and sides. The hall contains a stairway decorated with hand carved scrolls leading to the upper floors. The very large living room or drawing room was to the left of the front door. It has been divided into two rooms each of which are much larger than the average room.

When the house was erected it had a tall columned two story front porch in the Colonial fashion. A cyclone took the porch away a number of years ago and a small entrance porch has replaced it

### The Homestead At Brattonville



This well-proportioned and beautifully balanced home at Brattonville was the center of an independent and thriving community before and after the War Between the States.—Staff Photo by Roberts.

Significant is the fact that in all its history the house has never had a lock for the front door. Instead the original wooden bar is used to close the door.

In the yard is the brick office of Dr. Bratton, still in perfect condition. Not so well preserved, however, as are some of the other out-buildings, all of which were of bricks. The brick kitchen to the right, where innumerable meals were prepared by willing black hands, has fallen down within recent months.

The big brick dining room is an interesting feature of the home. It is separated from the main section of the house by a covered two story passageway and could easily seat 50 or 70 persons—as it often did. For it was a community dining room and from its long tables were fed the members of the Bratton families who lived in the old Revolutionary house, the homestead, and the newer brick house up the road a few feet.

#### During the War Between the States

The Bratton family had stored up a quantity of white sugar, wax candles and coffee during the days just prior to the War Between the States. As the war continued and no hopes of its termination seemed in sight use of these valuable

commodities was discontinued and tallow candles and brown sugar substituted. And the precious supply was guarded with care. Finally reports came that Sherman was headed toward York county on his march North. A piece of wainscoting was removed from an upstairs bed room, the supply of valuables taken into the attic and a heavy dresser placed in front of the wainscoting.

At about the same time the family silver and money belonging to the estate was placed in boxes, loaded in a carriage and carried by a faithful slave into the woods where they were buried.

While the war was in progress, word came from Thomas Bratton in the Army in the west that he was to get married. He asked his mother to make a wedding suit for him. He little realized that the household by that critical period of the war afforded very little with which to make a wedding suit. However, the female heads were put together and every resource was explored. The only possibility was the handsome embroidered broadcloth piano cover. It was removed and the pattern laid carefully on it. But the cover was just too small to cut a suit for a man, and so, sadly, that idea was abandoned. Soon, however, word came that a load of blockade materials had arrived in Columbia and the family wagon was loaded with wheat and driven the long miles to Columbia to return with sufficient Confederate gray to cut the wedding suit.

Two months later the bride and bridegroom arrived by wagon drawn by a scrawny mule from far away Mississippi. Thomas deposited his bride with his parents and went back again to the battle field.

Mrs. Bratton remembers hearing her mother tell of life at Brattonville during and after the War between the States. Dr. John Bratton had 14 children, the youngest of whom was Napoleon Bonaparte Bratton and the father of Mrs. Bratton.

When a son or daughter of the family married he or she did not think of moving away on their own just then. The young couple more likely moved into the Revolutionary house—the size was ideal for a young couple. About the time the first baby had arrived another son or daughter was ready to be married and so they moved into the much larger and more spacious brick house where perhaps three or four other couples, brothers and sisters and their wives or husbands lived.

When the big bell tolled for meal time, mothers wended their way with their small flocks to the big brick dining room. Each

of them carried a small split basket. As the Negro servants scurried from the brick kitchen in the yard to pass the hot breads before they were cold, each young mother took an ample supply to place in the split basket for between meal snacks for her brood.

On the ground floor of the huge brick dining room was the shoe shop where all the shoes for the plantation were made. Above the dining room was storage space for foods.

About 1837 a boarding school was established in the Bratton homestead for the education of Bratton youth and neighboring youngsters. Teachers in the school were Mrs. Catherine Ladd and Prof. and Mrs. Pucci, teachers of violin, harp, piano and painting. The story is that the school was so prosperous that on at least one occasion commencement was held at Yorkville.

In 1839 the Battle of Huck's Defeat was celebrated in a grand style.

Dr. John S. Bratton sponsored the celebration which was attended by 1,500 persons and four military companies. Col. W. C. Beaty of York was the speaker.

In the days of stagecoaches Brattonville was the regular stopping place. A stable stood near the houses for use of stagecoach horses. Later it was the seat of Brattonville postoffice, now discontinued.

This is one of a series of stories on older York county homes and one of four on Bratton homes in the county. The fourth and last of the Bratton homes will be discussed next week.