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SOUTH CAROLINA

BRATTONVILLE

&

GREAT DAY

AT

BRATTONSVILLE

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Rock Hill, S. C.

BRATTONVILLE

The Palmetto Landmark for today is Brattonville, in York County. Between the modern county seats of York and Chester, there runs an old unpaved road. Near the former town is an old center of interest to those who are concerned with the story of the Up Country of South Carolina. At one time, nearly 200 years ago, there were settlers coming in from Virginia and Pennsylvania - Scotch-Irish who had not been many years away from the old world and who were fleeing from the Indians in the new. Among these settlers were Colonel William Bratton and his wife, Martha. They had land near the Catawba Indian Nation and there they built a house, a tiny little house, judging by others that were to come later, erected by their descendants. However, the young people had a grant for their new home and the acres surrounding it, and they planned a new life of safety for themselves and their children. The Colonel was still in his twenties and Martha was in her teens when their little house was finished.

Then came the Revolutionary War and the Colonel was called upon to use the military skill he had learned in Pennsylvania, as leader of a band of patriots in his community. For the first four years of the conflict, there was little fighting in the section, but the men were usually away somewhere else, adding their bit to the common cause of freedom. It was after Charleston had fallen into the hands of the British in May of 1780 that this section of the Up Country began to attract the leaders of the Red Coats. They sent out word that the people were to lay down their arms and give up the fight. To most of these Scotch-Irish Americans the invitation was less than useless. Some, however, agreed although with misgiving. The Brattons were among the former. Hardly had the news of the fall of Charleston reached the interior before Colonel Bratton with Major Winn, of Fairfield, and Captain McClure of Chester, had discovered a party of Tories and their friends at Mobley's Meeting House in Fairfield, and put them to flight. Over at Rocky Mount on the Catawba River - near the modern town of Great Falls - there was a strong force of Britishers sent up there to overawe these folks of the Up Country. At least, that was the intention. They heard about the affair of Mobley's and forthwith sent out a body of 400 cavalry with a number of Tories, who were also mounted, to chase Colonel Bratton's men. The orders read:

"To Captain Houk: (Pron: hook)

You are hereby ordered, with the cavalry, under your command, to proceed to the frontier of the Province, collecting all the royal militia with you in your march, and with said forces to push the rebels as far as you may deem convenient.

(Signed) Colonel Turnbull"

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BRATTONVILLE (Page 2)

The order to "push the rebels" was far more easily given than it was carried out. In the meanwhile, Martha Bratton was doing her part in the service. The Americans, always hard put to it to get supplied, had a small store of powder that the Colonel had hidden near their home. The royalists learned about it and sent in a raiding party. Then, says the historian Carden, "Mrs. Bratton heard of their approach, and seeing no chance to preserve the much valued treasure from their conquest, resolved that if the Whigs must lose, the royalists should not gain it. She therefore laid a train from the depot of the ammunition, and just as the royalists came in sight, she fired it."

The Colonel was over the line in North Carolina when he got news of Captain Houk's proposal to "push the rebels out" and forthwith he hurried home. Fifty of his 125 men dropped off by the wayside but with him in command was Colonel Lacey, and other leaders of the community.

It was Tuesday midnight, June 11, that Mrs. Bratton was rudely interrupted by the arrival of Captain Houk and his cavalry. Tradition has it that he seated himself upon the front porch and took young John Bratton, about five years old, on his knee as he questioned Mrs. Bratton. "Where is your husband?" he wanted to know and she promptly answered, "With Sumter's army." Then he tried to persuade her to influence the Colonel toward joining the British. Indignantly she refused and the captain was so angry that he pushed the youngster off his knee to the floor. Rising to his feet, he ordered that Mrs. Bratton be seized and taken prisoner. One of his men grabbed a reaphook hanging on the wall and pinned her head down to the bannister when Houk's second-in-command stepped forward and pled for her life. Strangely, his request was granted and Mrs. Bratton was released to hurry upstairs with young John and place him in the shelter of the big brick chimney. There she would wait, feeling certain that the Colonel would not be long in coming.

On leaving the Bratton home the British cavalry dismounted from their horses, and passing down a lane connecting the Bratton place with the house on the Williamson plantation, they prepared to camp. They were "very much fatigued," according to one of their number, and were anxious for a rest. Their rest was to be very short, however, for four hours later, Colonel Bratton and his men had arrived. Before rousing the British they had taken over all roads of exit except one toward North Carolina. The Americans were divided into two sections, led by Lacey and Bratton and when they had taken their positions, they all began firing. The British jumped to their arms, but without their horses they were at a disadvantage. Houk managed to mount his horse and "While charging backwards and forwards to rally his men to a new attack, received a mortal wound and fell dead." The fighting advanced from Williamson's place to the Bratton house and young John,

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BRATTONVILLE (Page 3)

hidden in his chimney, heard a bullet hit the stones near his head. Most of the British were either killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. This skirmish known as "Houk's Defeat" or the battle of Williamson's plantation was the first check to the British regular troops after the fall of Charleston and was the first occasion on which the regulars were opposed by American militia. In some respects it might be called a battle of brothers for on the side of the patriots were two brothers named Rose, two named Hanna, two named Adair, three Gills, three Rainey's, three Brattons, four Moores, and five Williamsons. A large granite monument stands today on the front of the little Bratton house, the same house that figured in the fight.

But we haven't finished the part that Mrs. Bratton played after the battle. Among the prisoners was the young man who saved her life the day before, and on her plea, his life was spared. In the pockets of Captain Houk, the Americans had found a list of their own men who had been selected for punishment by the British and they were not inclined to be very charitable toward their prisoners.

In the modern community are two other old Bratton homes, both built before the Confederate War by Dr. John S. Bratton, the young boy who hid in the fireplace during the fight. In the large house, across the road from the oldest of the three, some people say there are ghosts but this is explained by the fact that the owner was a physician and used a skeleton in his work. The story may also refer to the tragic days after the War-between-the-States when the Ku Klux Klan had been organized in the county.

This section was reported as being a center of activities for the whitehooded men of the neighborhood and when arrests were being made right and left, of those who were guilty as well as those who were not guilty, in 1871, Dr. James Rufus Bratton, son of Doctor John, was one of the most wanted. However, with many others of the section he managed to escape and made his way to London, Ontario, in Canada. There he began to set up a practice and his children were going to school when one night he was seized, blindfolded, and gagged by three agents of the United States Government. They thought they were capturing another refugee but "This one is of much use to us", one of the agents said as they rode away in a cab. The doctor was returned to New York (or, Yorkville, as it was called) and charged with conspiracy to "Injure, threaten, intimidate", and even "murder." However, he managed to be released on bond when his friends secured "12,000 for the purpose. He was questioned as to his membership in the secret organization and said the only secret organization that he had ever joined was the Masons. When Canada learned that United States agents had crossed the international boundary line between the two countries and seized Dr. Bratton by force the government immediately sent a note of protest to Washington. Realizing that the agents had been wrong

Rock Hill Public Library
Rock Hill, S. C.

BRATTONVILLE (Page 4)

in kidnapping the doctor, the Radicals in South Carolina immediately released him. Thus was concluded what might have developed into a very unwelcome international incident.

Yet, that is not entirely the end of the story. In the times of Reconstruction, Thomas Dixon, later to be the noted North Carolina novelist, often visited the home of his mother's parents in York, the McAfees. There he heard the tales of the community and when he began to write incorporated many of them in his three books about the period "The Leopard's Spots," "The Clansman", and "The Traitor". Many years later, the moving picture, "The Birth of a Nation", was produced and most of the material for the picture was taken from Dixon's accounts. As we all know, the picture was one of the most popular ever shown. It was scheduled for one of the cities in Texas, as it went around the country for the first time, and in that city lived a descendant of the Brattons, a cousin to Dr. Rufus. The editor of the local paper knew she had gone to Texas with her husband at the same time Dr. Bratton had escaped to Canada and he asked her to write something about her experiences during the days described in the picture. Not knowing anything about what would occur in the movie, she proceeded to write her collections of the arrest, and of Dr. Bratton's kidnapping. The editor published it, proud of his true story, when to the amazement of both the editor and the writer, a publicity official for the movie read the account and accused them of swiping the plot of "The Birth of a Nation" and telling all about it before the picture was shown. Eventually, it was declared that the resulting arguments did a great deal to attract more spectators to the show.

And out there in Texas was found another part of the story of Houk's defeat. An old man of the Carroll family that had intermarried with the Brattons asserted that his grandfather was the soldier who had actually killed the British leader. If Houk's body were found with two bullets in the same wound, he - Thomas Carroll should be given credit for his death, because he loaded his gun with two bullets, and this was the case. Such are some of the accounts of happenings concerning the old Brattonville, and a few of the men and women who claim one or more of the three houses as the homes of their ancestors. It is a rare sight to see three old places such as these in one close neighborhood, but there they are today and all are owned by descendants of the original couple, William and Martha, who came to South Carolina about 180 years ago.

The main sources of information have been historians Howe, Johnson, Thompson, a bulletin published in Canada about Dr. Rufus Bratton's case and family traditions. Palmetto Landmarks is written by Louise Jones DuBose and put out by the R. L. Bryan Co. of Columbia.

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IN COMMEMORATION OF DEEDS OF VALOR.

The Unveiling of a Revolutionary Monument.

GREAT DAY AT BRATTONSVILLE

Bit of History Recalled by Notable

Event at Old Homestead of Brat-
tons, in York.

Special to The State.

Rock Hill, Oct. 2.-As a historical event and a day of rare pleasure Thursday, Oct. 1, will long be remembered by every one who was so fortunate as to be at home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Moultrie Bratton on that day--the day of the unveiling of the monument erected by the Kings Mountain chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, in commemoration of Huck's defeat, July 12, 1780, on the old battle ground.

Not since 1839, when Dr. John Bratton lived at this old homestead, has there been any attempt at such a celebration; at that time there was something like 1,500 people present, and now only the oldest residents have a faint recollection of it, and so this event of Thursday will be handed down to posterity.

Mrs. Bratton is a lineal descendant--being a great great granddaughter--of the famous Col. William Bratton who led to victory the brave little band of 75 men against Huck with his overpowering force of 500 Tories.

When Huck first arrived at Brattonsville, Col. William Bratton had gone in search of the Tories, but hearing that they had gone to Brattonsville, he immediately retraced his steps, arriving there about 4 o'clock in the morning.

During his absence his wife, Martha Bratton, was subjected to insult and ill treatment by the Tories. They demanded her to tell where her husband was; to this she promptly replied: "In Sumter's army." Huck tried in every way to win her to the royal cause or force her by menaces to disclose the place of her husband's retreat, though she firmly refused, even when a sharp reaping hook was at her throat in the hands of a brutal soldier. This courageous act of Martha Bratton is still lovingly remembered by all Whigs.

This house is a true type of the antebellum homes, and the Brattons have a clear understanding of the word hospitality.

Even nature gave her consent and smiled on the efforts of this worthy descendant of a worthy sire, and the day was an ideal one.

On coming to this home you pass the old Revolutionary home of William and Martha Bratton, about 200 yards to the left of the present home, and from this the American flag was appropriately afloat. Over the broad gateway of Mrs. Bratton's home was the word "Welcome," while the house was literally covered with American flags and colors and colors of the D. A. R., presenting a most inspiring and beautiful picture.

The broad varanda was converted into a platform for the speakers and on this were seated Mr. Wm. McCaw, master of ceremonies; Hon. D. E. Finley, the orator of the day, and on either side the members of the Kings Mountain chapter, D. A. R., while the guests were seated on benches under the great trees in the front.

The ceremonies were opened with prayer by the Rev. J. K. Hall. Mr. Wm. McCaw then in a few happy remarks introduced the orator of the day, who, in a well prepared address, rehearsed the stirring scenes and events leading up to this remarkable defeat of the Tories. This was followed by a most appropriate and beautiful ode written and read by Mrs. Robt. Stephenson of Yorkville. It reads:

When urgent grew out nation's need
Ere yet it knew a nation's name,
Or much of victory--aught of fame!
And liberty alone seemed sweet,
There rose brave men to fight and bleed.
T' arouse this section of our State
To show men how they might be great,
Upon this field of Huck's defeat.

The hour was dark, the end seemed near;
E'en hope was gone from many a breast.
Instead was left a vague unrest,
A dread of failure, dire, complete;
For British troops were everywhere;
The valliant few from home had fled,
"The State was fallen!" Sir Henry said--
No further need to risk defeat!

Thank God that York's brave sons and true
Were never known to quail or quake!
No prisoners they! nor deigned to take
Protection offered by the foe!
Preferring exile with the few
To tame submission with disgrace,
And loss of freedom to their race,
And bonds for those who loved them so.

Upon this field of Huck's defeat,
Anew was lit the flaming torch
That blazed with fiery breath to scorch
The foe that fled, the foe that bled,
And, bleeding, gave us vict'ry sweet.

All honor to the man who led,
Brave William Bratton, it is said--
Let thy descendants honor thee!
Remember, too, with hearts brim full,
Thy wife, so brave and merciful!
Oh, never gems in any crown,
More nobly worthy to be worn,
Than loyalty and mercy free!

The others, too, who fought beside,
We give them ~~need~~ with grateful pride;
For never shall this State forget
"how gushed the life blood of her brave--
Gushed, warm with hope and valor yet
Upon the soil they fought to save."

So, meet it is we here today
Erect a monument of stone,
To show to all through coming years
Our loving pride in deeds well done.

Theirs the conflict, ours the peace;
Theirs the battles' storming showers--
Ours the chance "to pay the debt
Of love and rev'rence and regret,"
To those who made this country ours.
Then let our tributes never cease!
Let loving hearts be taught to bring
The fairest flowers of the spring,
To crown this monument of stone,
In gratitude for deeds well done,
Both daughters leal and scions all,
Hear, and heed this signal call!

And yet whom we commemorate--
Rest ye in the bosom of your God,
Until, the sleep of death all o'er,
Ye rise from underneath the sod--
Be it soon, or be it late!
Children of light, forever more! *

5
The master of ceremonies then requested the company to form in twos and march to the monument, about 100 yards distant. Inside the enclosed space the members of the Kings Mountain chapter, D. A. R., Mr. MacCaw and little Miss Margaret Mason Bratton and Master Robert Brevard Bratton, great, great, great grandchildren of William and Martha Bratton, who, as the band struck the strains of "America," drew the ribbon which held the veil, thus unveiling this handsome memorial of love and respect for the valiant deed of their noble ancestors.

The monument is a huge granite boulder with elegant bronze

(The authors of this poem afterwards moved to Aberdeen, Vt.
where she placed a monument part in the life of that place)

plates, a most appropriate and fitting token of the regard in which this noble band is held by the present members of this chapter of D. A. R.

On the plate on the front is this inscription:

Field of Hucks' Defeat
When 75 Whigs led by
Col. William Bratton
Defeated a British and Tory
Force of 500 men
July 12, 1780.
Erected by the
Kings Mountain Chapter
Daughters of
The American Revolution
Yorkville, S. C.
1902.

On the opposite side another bronze plate presented by the Brattons is this inscription:

To the memory
of
Mrs. Martha Bratton
wife of
Col. William Bratton
Loyal in the face of death
Brave in the hour of danger
Merciful in the hour of victory.

When the company came back to the house they were requested to proceed to the home of Mrs. Bratton's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Napoleon B. Bratton, just next door, and arriving at this elegant home, a sight met their eye which will never be forgotten. The flower garden to the side of the house had been converted into an al fresco dining hall where a most sumptuous repast was served; the whole place was resplendent with American flags and other appropriate decorations.

After every one had partaken to their heart's content of the delicious viands set before them the toast master, Dr. Andral Bratton; announced the following toasts:

"The Day We Celebrate--the 12th of July, 1780"--Responded to Mr. H. W. S. Hart.

"To the memory of Col. William Bratton, a patriot and soldier of the American Revolution, without fear and without reproach; and of Mrs. Martha Bratton, his devoted wife, the heroine of the battle we commemorate"--Mr. Thomas F. McDow.

"The soldiers of the American Revolution, to them under the blessing of God, we owe the liberty we enjoy; to them belong a nation's gratitude, a world's applause."--Rev. J. K. Hall.

"The Kings Mountain chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, through whose patriotism and zeal the deeds of heroism and valor displayed on this field on the 12th of July, 1780, have this day been commemorated in granite and bronze"--Rev. W. G. Neville.

"Carolina, Carolina, while we live we will protect thee, cherish and defend thee"--Hon. Arthur Gaston.

After this toast Mr. G. W. S. Hart advanced and speaking to Mrs. R. M. Bratton, thanked her in the name of the Kings Mountain chapter, D. A. R., and for every one present for her unfounded hospitality.

The guests returned to the old homestead where the last course, consisting of coffee, crackers and salted almonds, was served and dainty souvenirs which were cards with a picture of the old Revolutionary home with the following couplet:

May every Whig of freedom still enjoy
its fruit,
And may the Tories never recruit.
July 12, 1780. October 1, 1903.
Brattonsville, South Carolina.

Among those present were: Judge and Mrs. Geo. Gage, Mrs. J. J. Stringfellow and Mr. Arthur Gaston of Chester, Mr. and Mrs. L. C. Harrison, Mrs. Poag and Misses Beckham of Rock Hill, Mr. and Mrs. W. B. McCaw, Miss Agalice McGaw, Mrs. J. K. Alston, Mr. and Mrs. G. H. O'Leary, Miss Anise O'Leary, Mr. and Mrs. D. E. Friley, Miss Margaret and Edward Finley, Miss Daisy Gist, Mr. and Mrs. G. W. S. Hart, Miss Jennie Hart, Master Joe Hart, Miss Alice Hart, Maj. and Mrs. Jas. F. Hart, Miss Daisy Hart, Mrs. B. Neely Moore, Mr. and Mrs. S. M. McNeel, Mrs. W. Brown Wylie, Miss Dollie Miller, Mr. Paul T. McNeel, Miss Hulda McNeel, Miss Bessie Barron, Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Neville, Mrs. Withers Adickes, Mrs. R. T. Stephenson, Mr. T. F. McDow, Mr. and Mrs. Robt. J. Herndon, Master Robt. Herndon, Mrs. C. G. Parrish, Mr. and Mrs. G. S. Lowry, Miss Louise Lowry, Mrs. J. Rufus Bratton, Mr. Wm. L. Bratton and Dr. R. A. Bratton of Yorkville, Mrs. Jane Love, Miss Ella Love, Mr. and Mrs. Jno. B. Bratton, Master Robt. Bratton, Dr. W. M. Love, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Moore, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Williams, Mrs. C. L. Moore, and Misses Mary Moore and Clarabel Williams and Master Glen Love of McConnellsville, Mr. and Mrs. Mason Bratton, Misses Margaret and George Bratton, Mr. and Mrs. J. K. Hall and Mrs. C. J. Kuykendal of Guthriesville and Mrs. Harriet Bratton, Mr. and Mrs. Robt. Witherspoon, Misses Rita, Julia, Helen and Nancy Witherspoon, Mrs. Scott Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. N. B. Bratton and Mr. and Mrs. R. Moultrie Bratton.

COPIED FROM STATE, October 3, 1903.

Lent by Mrs. J. R. Carson of Chester, S. C.