

London House On Chatham Avenue Built Just After War Between States

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Nephews Now Live In Ancestral Home

By ELIZABETH REED

The John R. London house at 441 Chatham avenue in Rock Hill was built just after the War Between The States by Major John R. London. The date of the construction of the old house was probably 1866.

Major London, a native of Pittsboro, N. C. did not see actual fighting in the War Between The States but he did supervise the construction of a railway from Danville, Va. to Greensboro, N. C. When the war ended he came first to Yorkville and then to Rock Hill where he operated a mercantile establishment and was instrumental in the establishment of the Highland Park and Victoria Mills.

Major London was also interested in farming and was concerned that the blackjack soil of York County did not produce better crops. He sent soil to the agricultural department in Washington which reported that the soil failed to produce because of a lack of potash.

Assisting Major London in this enterprise was the late Capt. A. E. Hutchison. He went to Charleston and discovered that kainite was being used for ballast in ships arriving from Germany. It analyzed 25 per cent potash and could be bought cheaply. He then made a deal for the purchase of much kainite.

Major London and his wife, Mrs. Cammie Rhodes London, had no children but their nieces and nephews were constant visitors to the home as were the Episcopal ministers of the day. In fact Mr. and Mrs. London were among the founders of the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour in Rock Hill.

One nephew who was reared in the London home was E. R. Stitt who became personal physician to the late President Woodrow Wilson and the author of several books on medical subjects and a Rear Admiral in the U. S. Navy.

Another niece, Miss Cammie Rhodes, lived with the family for many years and later became Mrs. T. C. Rawlinson of Johnston St.

John R. London of Marion street and Mrs. Sallie London Wood of Johnson City, Tenn. are also a nephew and niece of the builder of the fine old home.

Major London died in 1904 and Mrs. London then left the Chatham street home to travel and to make her home with nieces and nephews. She died in 1934.



THE LONDON HOUSE—Shown above is the home built soon after the War Between the States by Major John R. London. (Herald Staff Photo)

In 1924 the house was given by Mrs. London to her nephew, Rufus M. London who lived in it until his death in 1942. In 1946 Fred Hill London and his bride moved into the house. They live there today with Rufus London, another son of Rufus M. London.

In the years when the house was not occupied by members of the London family the home was rented. Among those who have made the house their home were Mr. and Mrs. Joe H. Miller. Dr. W. W. Fennell, Jr., was born in the house.

The House

The nine room house was pleasantly located a short distance from the street near the overhead bridge. When built it was the only house standing in that section. As Miss Emma London of Baltimore, Md. says "Busy Oakland avenue was then dead country, a lovely wooded section where rabbits, squirrels and possums were quite at home. The old Fewell place, Mrs. Alexander Long's home, was then the plantation house. On the nights of dances young ladies spent the night at the London house as it was not considered proper for them to ride so far out at night."

Major London named Chatham avenue after his native county in North Carolina.

Miss Emma London has heard her parents and others speak of the breakfasts in those earlier days. Breakfast was not a toast and coffee affair but a "spread" of country ham, brown gravy, hot biscuits scrambled eggs, fresh butter and preserves.

The living room mantel with its mirror and side panels is unique. The gold leaf picture molding also distinguishes the home. Although many of the wide hardwood floor boards have been covered over with newer floors, the lovely old floors can be seen in several rooms.

A boxwood walk leads to the house and giant magnolias lend their shade and aroma to the surroundings.

Closely associated with the old house was the establishment and growth of the Episcopal church in Rock Hill. One missionary meeting in the old parlor will never be forgotten. A visitor from Charleston by the name of Miss Tobias was to be the speaker. At that time a prevailing nursery rhyme was "Farmer Tompkins had two sons, and each was t' others brother, Tobias was the name of one; Kochunka was the other". Mrs. London greeted her guest at the door and escorted her to the parlor announcing brightly "Ladies, I want you to meet Miss Kochunka."

Today the unassuming, but dignified old house is not only the home of Mr. and Mrs. London and their brother but two rear rooms form the thriving sandwich shop known as "Cindy's Sandwich Shop." Here Mr. and Mrs. London make approximately 2,000 sandwiches daily for sale in plants and business houses throughout Rock Hill.

The information for this story has been furnished by Miss Emma London, a teacher in St. Paul's Girl's school in Baltimore and a niece of Major and Mrs. John R. London.)

(This is one of a series of stories on York County homes and families.)

London Home, RH Landmark, Demolished

One of Rock Hill's century old landmarks has been demolished.

The Major John R. London house at 441 Chatham Ave., built just after the War Between the States, has been torn down and the property is to be used by a Rock Hill merchant for a parking lot.

For a number of years the house was occupied by the family of Rufus London, a nephew of Major London. Mrs. London gave the house to Rufus sometime after Major London died in 1904. The Londons moved into the house in the early 1920's. The London children are Rufus Jr. and Fred H. London and Mrs. F. L. Coleman, all of Rock Hill.

The house was built by Major John R. London. Many Rock Hillians believe the date was about 1866, some think it was a little earlier.

Major London came to Rock Hill after the war, operated a mercantile establishment and was instrumental in establishment of Highland Park and Victoria Mills.

All who knew of Major London remember his keen interest in farming and his concern because the blackjack soil of York County produced such poor crops. It was Major London who sent a sample of soil to the agriculture department in Washington. The report showed crop production was poor due to the soil's lack of potash.

Assisted by the late Capt. A. E. Hutchison, a search was made and the two discovered that kainite, analyzed 25 per cent potash, could be purchased cheaply in Charleston. A deal then was made for the purchase of great quantities of kainite.

Since Major London and his wife, Mrs. Cammie Rhodes London had no children, their constant visitors were nieces and nephews.

Many happy times were had by guests in the beautiful old London home, which remained an interesting place until the destruction began several weeks ago.

The nine room quaint and colorful house was pleasantly located a short distance from the street near the overhead bridge. When built it was the only house in that section. Major London named the section Chatham Avenue for his native county in North Carolina.

Some of the wide hardwood floor boards had been covered with newer floors but in several rooms the lovely old floors could still be seen.

Closely associated with the London house is the establishment of the Episcopal church in Rock Hill. The Londons were interested in the church and were among the founders of the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour.

Gone are the enchanting living room mantel with its mirror and side panels; the gold leaf picture molding and the beautiful hardwood floors.

But in the hearts of many Rock Hillians memories of the stately old house will remain.