

Archibald Barron
by Louise Pettus

Archibald Barron, son of John and Jane Duncan Barron, was born on a farm in 1800 in the Tirzah community of York District. His early life was typical of the times.

Archibald had a “common country education” (meaning that he attended a local one-room school, probably taught by a young unmarried man who had not yet settled upon what he wanted to do with the rest of his life). The school session was likely 2 or 3 months in the dead of winter because the youngsters’ were expected to prepare themselves to become farmers and therefore would participate in the planting, laying-by and harvesting of crops. Archibald was a good student in both school and work.

When he was 24 he married Margaret Watson and bought a small farm between Tirzah church and the Catawba river. For 12 years he worked hard and saved his money for a larger farm.

Archibald Barron had 8 brothers and sisters. By the mid-1830s they had all moved from York County to either Tennessee or Alabama. Barron heard that Alabama soil was mighty rich and knew that Alabama had granted 2 of his brothers and his sister’s family 640 acres each.

He went to Alabama to see what his siblings had gotten. He came back with the decision to stay where he was. Even though he never achieved the wealth of his brothers in Alabama he never regretted his decision to stay in York County.

In 1836 Barron bought a Catawba lease for 318 acres from John McCaw. He moved his wife and 4 children to a farm next to Thorns Ferry, the present-day site of the bridge over the Catawba river on Highway 49, at River Hills. He built a comfortable two-story house and he and Margaret had 4 more children there.

To each child, Barron promised either a farm or a college education. Three sons and Jane, the only daughter, chose a farm. Jane kept her father’s books. The others chose college and showed a particular interest in studying medicine.

Barron devised his own plan for farming. The best one-third of his acreage was planted in corn (the staple for man and beast). One-third was planted in cotton (the money crop). On the other one-third he put in grain. Along with the field crops he raised hogs and a few cattle—enough to feed his family and have some extra for profit.

A descendant has written that at the outbreak of the Civil War, and after 36 years of farming, that Archibald Barron was the “largest real estate owner in his section of the country” and that he had loaned out \$20,000 in cash. The 1850 census shows Barron owning 19 slaves, a goodly number although far from approaching Cadwallader Jones’ 91 or John Springs’ 86 slaves and a half million dollar estate. Still, Archibald Barron had prospered much beyond the norm and was respected by his neighbors for his accomplishments.

When the Civil War came along, every one of the seven sons fought. Two of them, Samuel and Alexander, did not return.

After the Civil War Barron found himself a much poorer man, for not only did he lose the monetary value of his slaves, his neighbors paid their debts to him in Confederate money—a now useless currency.

The war did not deter Barron of take away his customary cheerfulness. He “spent most of his time riding around the neighborhood seeing that no one of the aged or very young needed for food, shoes, cotton to make cloth or land needing cultivation.”

Archibald Barron died September 15, 1879 at the age of 80, 15 months after his wife Margaret. Margaret had been as strict an A.R.P. church member as her husband. It was remembered that in her married life she only once cooked a meal on the Sabbath and that exception only because travelers had stopped and needed to be fed.

bands would strike up with music calculated to distract the crowds from joining the fighting.

Since the bands were not paid for their appearances they had to find ways to support themselves. The Bethel Band got their funds largely from operating lemonade and ice cream stands at special events. The lemonade was made in shiny new washtubs and the ice cream in wooden churns. Folks brought their own tumblers, saucers, spoons, etc.

Not only did the cornerstone exercise at Winthrop give fame to the Bethel Band but so did their play at a Confederate reunion in Ebenezer. Their spirited playing earned an invitation to play at a to-do at Ball Alley Mountain near Marion, N. C. The Bethel Band accompanied 300 Winthrop students for the excursion which began at the train station behind the Winthrop campus.

D. B. Johnson, Winthrop president was a great believer in the educational value of excursions, especially because most students had never seen both the mountains and the ocean.

Around 1900 and later a number of bands were formed by mill owners for their employees. Especially good was the Highland Park Mill Band of Rock Hill. They played many public concerts as well as taking part in parades.

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