

Landowner's life is a portrait of the 19th century

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 two or three months in the dead of winter because the youngsters were expected to prepare themselves to become farmers and therefore would participate in the planting,

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NEARBY HISTORY

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 eight 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 two 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

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county.

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

ular interest in studying med-

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

A descendant has written that the outbreak of the Civil War after 36 years of farming, "Archibald Barron was the largest estate owner in his section of

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.

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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 or 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 Sept. 15, 1879, at the age of 80, 15 months after his wife Margaret. Margaret had been as strict an ARP 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.

Archibald Barron's life and character represent the best of rural life in the 19th century.

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