

# Tales of Winnsboro And Fairfield County

By Nell S. Graydon



Blackstock Community  
 History of Fairfield

IN Winnsboro one finds an atmosphere so reminiscent of the Old South that it cannot fail to impress the most casual observer. A priceless heritage is reflected in the architecture of her homes, churches and civic buildings.

The story of the old town clock—the oldest one running in America today—was told in The State Magazine several years ago, and most South Carolinians are familiar with the ancient Mt. Zion Society that has played a part in the educational development of the state since 1777.

AN interesting story was told me by the charming mistress of one of the stately antebellum homes that stands far back from the tree lined street that runs through the heart of Winnsboro.

Fortune, the personal servant of Captain Robert Buchanan, of Winnsboro, was with his master at Georgetown when Lafayette arrived there. Captain Buchanan generously lent Fortune to the Marquis for the duration of his stay. The famous man grew attached to the loyal, efficient Negro and regretfully parted from him.

Many years afterward in 1825, Lafayette returned to America and was elaborately feted throughout the land. In Columbia, a wonderful welcome was extended to him. Fortune, then a very old man, carefully dressed, rode his pony from Winnsboro to Columbia. Arriving at the hotel where the General was attending a banquet, Fortune had some trouble gaining admittance but when he finally stood before the General the famous man immediately recognized the first servant who had waited on him in America, and ordered a glass of champagne for old Fortune. George M. McMaster, who was born in 1828 and lived to be quite old wrote a relative in 1899 that he remembered "Fortune who always wore a woven woolen cap shaped conically. A

nephew of Captain Buchanan, General John Buchanan supported the slave in his old age. He was never required to do any work and did none except on his rice patch." The rice was grown on land located in the town of Winnsboro—the large spring on it has been known for years as "Fortune's Spring." The old rice patch is being developed into a lovely park.

A STORY repeated by one of the older residents concerns a greatly beloved Winnsboro physician, Doctor Robinson. He made many trips on horseback, over Fairfield county, attending the sick. One night, as he was returning home from a visit to a patient a terrific rain and thunder storm forced him to seek shelter in the doorway of Old Brick church. A flash of lightning revealed a tall figure clothed in a long white robe coming from the graveyard.



For a second he thought the apparition was a figure of his imagination, but another flash revealed it within a few feet of the doctor. Doctor Robinson was a brave man, and took no stock in tales of the supernatural, but without delay he sprang upon his horse's back. To his horror, the apparition jumped behind him and long bony arms clasped his waist. The doctor realized the firm grasp belonged to no phantom, and began to question his unwelcome companion, and

found that it was a poor de-ranked man who had escaped from his sleeping family and wandered into the churchyard.

NEARLY all the older residents of Fairfield county have heard the gruesome story of General Packenham and, as with most legends and traditions, there are various versions. In 1812, during the Battle of New Orleans the general was killed.

In a certain section of Fairfield county a group of friends met periodically to share a barrel of rum. On one memorable occasion the rum arrived from Charleston and when the last

*happened near Hebron Presbyterian - traditionally, Packenham was buried in a spot identified by the father of Charles Montgomery - now lost to memory*

drop had been drained from the barrel, it was still heavy one man could not lift it. The merry-makers decided to burst it open, and it was found to contain the perfectly preserved body of General Packenham, dressed in his uniform complete with decorations.

The story most commonly believed is that the General was "embalmed" in the alcohol and put on a ship for England and the ship was captured by privateers and the rum carried to Charleston and sold.