

A SHORT HISTORY OF A D G E R L A N T H E

HOME OF MR. AND MRS. WALTER W. LEWIS.

MRS. JOE CATHCART'S FRIEND  
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(Mrs. Walter Lewis)  
written between 1960-1977

The excellent idea of the <sup>Zuzammen</sup> Zuzammen Club in undertaking the project of the members doing research and reporting upon historical homes of Fairfield County has prompted me to make a study of, and report upon "Adgerlan", my own home. Fairfield County is rich in history, but unfortunately many of the people and families who helped make it famous, their descendants are now not to be found within its borders. Unless the present generation is bestirred to record for posterity their rich heritage much of it will be lost forever. It is sad to travel over our county and count the historical homes that once stood as monuments to culture and patriotism that have completely disappeared from the landscape due to economic and other factors. As far as I am able to ascertain there is no white person living in Fairfield County at this time by the surname of Adger, although there are Negroes of that name, and there are a few descendants of the Adger family by other names living here.

Our home is situated approximately four miles north of Winnsboro upon a knoll on the western side of the highway leading from Winnsboro to Chester. The Southern Railway also runs through our farm. Upon this knoll there has stood several <sup>famous</sup> homes, since the formation of Fairfield County in 1785. From the records in the Courthouse it is pretty clearly established that the farm or part of it was granted by charter to the Ellison family. Then by several deeds of conveyances the farm of approximately 2500 acres became the property of the Adger family. The first such deed <sup>of record</sup> conveying 90 acres to William Edger, (as it was spelled in the deed), for the price of 35 pounds sterling, is dated April 13, 1794, and in the seventeenth year of the Independence of the United States. In 1800 there was another deed conveying 17½ acres to William Adger which described the same as being situate on "the great road leading from Winnsborough to Chester", and being a part of the land originally granted to Robert Ellison. Also, by deed dated January 7th, 1806, sixty eight and one-half (68½) acres, was conveyed to William Adger and was described as being "on the great road leading to North Carolina/

Adger~~land~~ was a very large and thriving plantation prior to the the Confederate War. I have been told that the Adger family was very wealthy, and it is practically a certainty that the family came to Fairfield from Charleston, as many people did at that time. They came to higher ground seeking a more healthful climate and an escape from malaria. The Adgers had a beautiful mansion upon the picturesque knoll upon which my home now stands. However, as was the case of so many beautiful homes, Sherman's Army destroyed it. I have been told that the neighbors of the Adgers, voiced the opinion many times, that had Mrs. Adger remained at home upon the approach of Sherman's forces, that the beautiful mansion would not have been destroyed. She was a very charming, beautiful and vivacious woman and it was thought by them that she could have used her charms and personality in persuading the withholding of the torch that burned it to the ground. All that remained of the home was the brick kitchen which stood apart from the house. It was said to have had a built in oven similar to the one at Mt. Vernon. The old brick kitchen was never thereafter used for cooking but as a storage room. It stood until after we purchased the place.

After the cessation of hostilities the plantation of 2500 acres was levied upon and attached by Sheriff E. W. Oliver, of Fairfield County to be sold to satisfy the debts due by the estate of John Adger, evidently a son of the original William. It must be presumed that John lost his life in the war, and that there was no one to take charge of the plantation and pay off the debts. Sheriff Oliver's deed as recorded in the Clerk's Office of Fairfield County in Book "XX" of Deeds, at Page 210, <sup>and dated Aug. 10, 1867,</sup> shows that the plantation was sold at public outcry, for the purposes already stated, and was purchased by one William R. Robertson, the man who had it sold, for the purchase price of \$5236.33. Two days later, August 12, 1867 Robertson sold the land to John H. Cathcart for \$7,000.00, a nice profit on two days ownership, and no income tax to be paid on the profit realized. John H. Cathcart held title to the tract of land until December 13th 1872, at which time he sold it to his

brother, Samuel Cathcart, <sup>Doc #</sup> 11, 175, 16

One can only imagine the struggles and deprivations suffered by the planters after the war. The slaves had been freed and most planters had lost all their treasure and property. However, due to hard work, perseverance and an <sup>Emmigrant's</sup> ~~attain~~ faith in America, Samuel Cathcart from County Antrim, Ireland, set about developing one of the better plantations of Fairfield County. The only daughter of Samuel Cathcart, Mrs. Ella Cathcart Ketchin, widow of the late H. Elliott Ketchin, Sr., who is now living in Winnsboro, and ~~was~~ is 88 years of age, and she has been so kind in giving me most of the information about Adgerlan during her life time. She had two brothers one of whom died in his teens, the other being the late John H. Cathcart, the former husband of Mrs. Mattie Cathcart who is now living on Zion Street in Winnsboro. <sup>Yellow House</sup>

Mrs. Ketchin tells many interesting facts of the old plantation. There were many negro families that continued to live and work upon the plantation after gaining their freedom. There was the old slave quarters in which they lived. The plantation owner had many problems in the transition period from slavery to freedom. He had to continue to care for the negroes as if they still were his property. Some of the old negroes that lived on the plantation during the life of Mr. Samuel Cathcart, and who continued to live on and near the farm even until it was purchased by my family, have related many stories of the wonderful plantation days and the good treatment received at the hands of Marse Sam, as they called him. He was an excellent farmer and manager. There was never a want for food or clothing. Their ever need was supplied even to the extent of land for their church which still stands at Adger today.

Mrs. Ketchin was very young when she came to live at Adger. Her family had lived with her grandfather in Winnsboro until her father could build a home to live in. Her new home consisted of just three rooms, which later was added to and made into a story and a half house. After some years this house was enlarged into a two story mansion consisting of thirteen rooms with big porches on the front. Mrs. Ketchin tells of the lonesomeness she endured

during her childhood on the big farm, as she was the only girl, and no near neighbors. When she started to school it was necessary for her to stay in Winnsboro during the winter months in order that she could attend Mt. Zion Institute. At that time the road to Winnsboro wasn't much better than a trail which crossed the railroad four times in its four mile distance. In the winter time it was nearly impossible to travel the road, the mud being up to the axles of the carriages. It would take an hour or longer to get to town, a trip that only takes about five minutes now. Parts of this old road is still in use today but with much better upkeep. Her brothers rode horse back in going to town to school, which was very tough in winter time. However, despite the condition of the road her father rarely ever missed going to church in Winnsboro, rain, shine, sleet or snow. Mrs. Ketchin remembers many such rides on Sundays with her father.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Charlotte and South Carolina Railway, later called the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta Railway of the Southern Railway System, was constructed through the plantation, a railway station was built and named Adger after the family who owned it at that time. As far back as 1820, upon the map of Fairfield District taken from Mills' Atlas, in the bend of the "great road" which lead from Winnsborough to Chesterville Courthouse one will note the name "W. Adger". For many years all passanger trains stopped at this station and it was quite a special event on Sunday for the plantation negroes to be at the station when the train came in. Later it was changed to a flag stop, and in the last few years no paásanger trains stop there any more except upon the side tract to permit another train to pass.

Mrs. Ketchin reminiscences how the many tramps <sup>who followed</sup> came to beg food and lodging and were never turned away by her father. If he judged one to be fairly respectful he permitted him to sleep in the home in a room called the tramp room. This room always had clean sheets on the bed, bowl and pitcher for the use of the tramp.

*the railroad*

If he didn't like the looks of a tramp he would be fed and allowed to sleep in the cotton in the gin house or in a barn. Those who were willing to work sometimes stayed weeks doing odd jobs around the place to pay for their keep painting outhouses and fences, or the like.

After the death of Marse Sam, the plantation was inherited by his only surviving son, J. H. Cathcart and Mrs. Ketchin. Mrs. Mattie Harris Cathcart (Mrs. John H. Cathcart, Sr.) tells how her husband John brought her to live on the plantation in 1900 where they lived until 1909 at which time they moved back to town in order for their son John Harris Cathcart could attend school. He is now a practising physician in Gaffney, S. C. Also in addition to rearing her only son, Mrs. Cathcart reared her sisters two sons, Charlie and Harris McDonald, whose parents were dead. In 1914 the Cathcart's moved back to the farm, the boys being old enough to go back and forth to school in town each day. In 1919 the Cathcarts moved back to town to the house in which Mrs. Mattie Cathcart now lives on Zion Street.

The plantation continued to be farmed by Mr. John H. Cathcart and his overseers. In 1920 Mr. Thomas Boulware was the overseer of the farm living in the big house. During that year the second mansion to grace the lovely knoll was burned to the ground. It has been said the house was burned for the want of a ladder. The fire started around the chimney on the roof and the house was so high from the ground they did not have a ladder tall enough to get to the top of the house. In 1922 a new story and half house, consisting of 8 rooms was built upon the famous knoll. The Cathcart family continued to own the plantation until 1943 at which time we purchased it. Thus Adger plantation was in the Cathcart family for a span of seventy-five years.

My husband negotiated with Dr. John Harris Cathcart to buy the entire plantation consisting of some 2000 acres. However, he and his brother, E. Burr Lewis reserved for themselves approximately

500 acres, including the home site and the cultivated land surrounding it. The remainder was purchased by R. E. Patrick, J. K. Wright and J. B. Frazier, Jr. In 1953 my husband and his brother divided up their holdings and we are now the owner of the home site with approximately 250 acres surrounding it. During the fall and winter of 1952-1953 we completely remodeled the one and a half story house converting it into a two story/brick colonial home consisting of eleven rooms. On January 13, 1953, after selling our granite home in Winnsboro we moved to the farm into the new home.

After consulting with one of the descendants of the Adger family Mrs. Henree Buchanan Coleman, as to whether any of the former homes had a name, and she advising that she had never known any of them to be named, we decided with her help to name our home "Adgerland" the short for Adger land. We felt that that had to be the name as white and colored from near and far knew the place as Adger.

I am sure there is much more history connected this historical plantation that I have been unable to secure at this time, but I shall not cease my labours.