

Aiken Mercantile And Home

This picture belonged to the late Annie Aiken Davis, mother of Mrs. John A. McLeod and granddaughter of David Aiken, who owned the mercantile building on the corner where the Bank of Fairfield now stands. David's son, Dr. William

E. Aiken, ran the drugstore at the back of the building. The Aiken home, on the left, burned in 1911 or 1912. Sion Presbyterian Church now stands in that spot.

Old House Brings Memories Of Aiken Family

A delicate thread of family continuity woven into the history of the Winnsboro city block which reaches from the Bank of Fairfield on one end to the First United Methodist Church on the other, has become stronger with the purchase by attorney John D. McLeod of the Mayme Burley Coleman property fronting on Vanderhorst Street. John's great, great, grandfather David Aiken, once owned about a third of the block.

On the corner where the Bank of Fairfield now stands, David Aiken owned and operated a mercantile business. In the spot occupied by Sion Presbyterian Church was the spacious two-story Aiken home, and behind the house

were terraces, the first containing a flower garden, the second grape arbors and fig trees, and the third the family's vegetable garden. To the rear of the terraces were located the slave quarters and stables.

Several years ago, John purchased a house on Vanderhorst Street which had been the home of the late Lois Burley Wylie (Mrs. H.G.), and renovated it to use as a law office. This year he bought the adjoining house and property from Mrs. Lola Sellers, daughter of the late Mayme Burley Coleman (Mrs. D.R.). The house has been torn down to make room for a parking lot. John's mother, Patsy McLeod (Mrs. John A.), remembered hearing that the

house had once been a stable. This was verified by her cousin, Mrs. K.R. McMaster (Nell Elliott), also a direct descendant of David Aiken. Neither lady knows when the building was converted into a dwelling place, as it has been used for this purpose for as long as they can remember.

Further proof of its use as a stable was found as the building was being taken down by Washington Construction Company. When the plaster and wood was cleared from around the brick wall in the rear, underneath the inverted V of the ceiling was a bricked-up opening of the kind used in barns and stables.

As the bare skeleton of the house became

visible, it appeared that rooms had been added to one side of the main building, and a fireplace had been installed. Whatever the initial use of the structure, it was built to last, with handmade brick and thirty-foot beams of heart pine.

The Aikens

David Aiken came to Fairfield County in the 1700s as a small boy, crossing the ocean from Northern Ireland with his parents, James and Elizabeth Reid Aiken and other members of the family. The Aikens settled in the Lebanon section of the county, and James and Elizabeth are buried in the Aiken-Martin family burial ground near the

Presbyterian Church site.

David, who was born in 1786, was enterprising and became an influential and wealthy landholder. He owned a number of slaves and much acreage in the county and was also a successful businessman. He built the old Winstonsboro Bank building, later the Merchants and Planters Bank, now Southern Bank and Trust Company; and several other buildings of "wood, brick and stone". His mercantile business was housed in the town's tallest building until the Winstonsboro Hotel with four stories was built just across the street. Mrs. McMaster says the hotel's fourth floor was built expressly for the purpose of "topping" Aiken's three-story establishment. Across the street from the Aiken home, David had a blacksmith shop where the Winstonsboro Town Hall is now.

In his early years, David received support from an older brother, William, who settled in Charleston. William served as a congressman and was president of the state's first railroad, which ran from Charleston to Hamburg. The William Aiken home still stands in Charleston. It served for years as an office building for Southern Railway, and in the 1970s was restored by the company and turned over to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Southern still retains some offices there.

David's nephew William, son of the congressman, served as a governor of South Carolina.

building later housed a farm implement business owned by Mark W. Doty, (grandfather of the present Mark Doty) which was moved across the street. Sometime between 1905 and 1910, the mercantile building was either burned or torn down.

David's son, Dr. William E. Aiken, lived in the family home after the death of his parents. David died in 1860 and Elizabeth in 1859.

In later years, J.B. Burley, father of Mayme Coleman, lived with his family in the Aiken house before purchasing the "stable", which had been turned into a house some time before. Earlier, the family of Bill Gilbert lived in the stable-house; both occupants were public servants - Mr. Gilbert was a policeman and Mr. Burley a county officer. Winding another family thread through the history of the property is the notation that Thomas Sprott was born in the stable-house in 1907. Tom became the husband of Nelle McMaster, a great, great granddaughter of David Aiken.

The Aiken house burned in either 1911 or 1912. Six months before it was destroyed by fire, some young boys playing in the yard remembered hearing that bottles of wine had been sealed up in the masonry work at the back of the house.

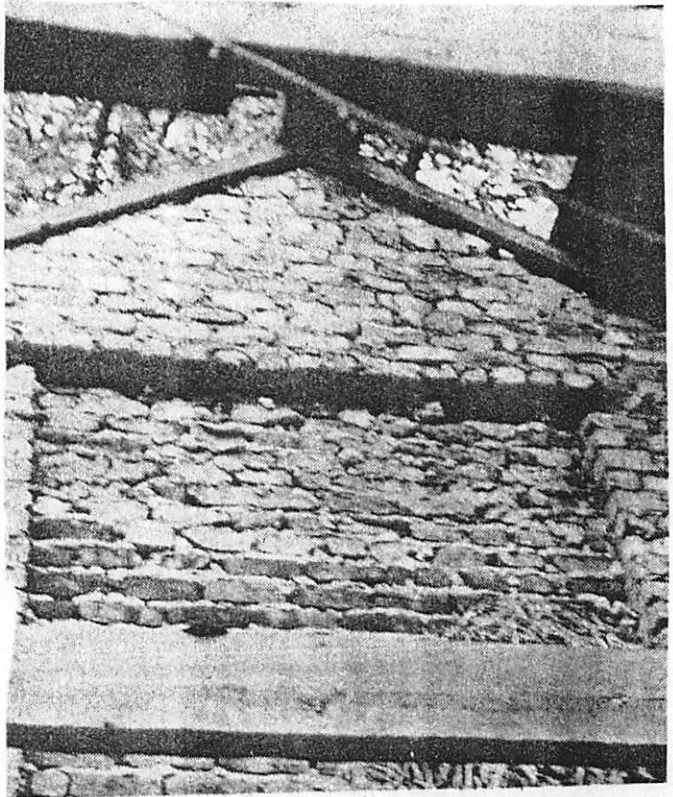
Out of curiosity they began poking and pulling at the masonry, and uncovered two wine bottles. One was filled with what must have surely been a vintage wine; the other contained a history of the Aiken family, written by Dr. William Aiken.

way into the hands of Mrs. McMaster, granddaughter of its writer. She says it was this history found almost providentially, that began her keen interest in family history - an interest that has rubbed off on two of her daughters, Nelle Sprott and Carolina Lyles (Mrs. W.S.)

At the time the Aiken house was burned, it was occupied by the Rev. James M. Holladay, pastor of Sion Presbyterian Church, then located on Garden Street. The congregation was making plans to build a new church, but now had to build a manse instead. Still standing on West Washington Street, the manse was completed around 1912, built at a cost of \$6,200. Building

delayed for several years. Under the leadership of Dr. G.G. Mayes, the congregation was finally able to move into a new building in 1923; it stands on the site of David Aiken's home.

The Aiken family name became well-known in politics and business, and descendants scattered out from Fairfield County. Direct descendants still living here are Mrs. McMaster and Mrs. McLeod and their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Mrs. McMaster is the daughter of Carrie Aiken Elliott and Mrs. McLeod's mother was Annie Aiken Davis; both were daughters of David's son, Dr. William Aiken.



Old Opening Revealed

Tradition held that the home of the late Mayme Burley Coleman on Vanderhorst Street was once a stable. The house was recently torn down, and this rear wall revealed a bricked-up opening, such as may be found in barns and stables. (Independent photo)