

SOME PROMINENT FAIRFIELD FAMILIES.

(From Ederington's History)

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The Kirklands were Scotch, and lived on Cedar Creek, Fairfield County, xxxxx They were gallant supporters of the cause of American independence. This anecdote is related: "Once old Mr. Kirkland (grandfather of Col. Wm. J. Alston and his sister, Mrs. Dr. Pearson) and another male member of his family, probably a son, were on a visit to their home during the war. A party of Tories found it out and undertook to capture them. They heard of it and left to rejoin their command. When they arrived at some stream, they had to cross, it was night and they found the enemy encamped on the other side. They determined to make a dash for it and surprise them. Knowing the clatter of their horses' feet on the bridge would sound as though there were more than two riders, they put spurs to their horses, and calling to some imaginary followers to come on, charged the enemies' camp and carried it, the latter taking to their heels."

Although it was a large family, there is not one left of the name in Fairfield.

Frances Kirkland, one of the daughters, was born August 18th, 1777. She married James Alston; one of their children was Elizabeth M. Alston, who married Dr. George B. Pearson, on December 29th, 1814. Mrs. Pearson was a woman of marked characteristics, being generous and charitable to an unusual degree. She was born on Cedar Creek in Fairfield, on December 9th, 1799.

William Kirkland, a grandson of Joseph Kirkland, a prominent physician years ago in Charleston, died in Virginia in June 1862, from wounds received in battle; he was the last of the name of this family

of Kirklands, except his own young children. He was a member of the Charleston Light Dragoons, and was a rice planter of Colleton District. He married a daughter of Judge Withers; I think she still lives in Camden, S. C.

Col. Wm. J. Alston, son of James Alston and Frances Kirkland, was born July 21st, 1802. He was a man of wealth, education and intelligence, and was a member of the Legislature from this county from 1840 to 1846. When a vacancy occurred in the Secession Convention, caused by the death of John Buchanan and William S. Lyles, members of that body from this county, he and Wm. R. Robertson were elected to fill the vacancies.

Col. Alston had built a fine, large house a short time before the civil war; Sherman's "fleur de chevalerie" burnt it, although his family and other ladies were in it when fired. Mrs. Alston and her little children took refuge in another house on the place and were again driven forth and that house burned. I suppose those who applied the torch soothed their consciences if not too scared to feel, by saying that they were turning women and children out of doors in winter, "to preserve the Union!" The peculiar atrocities perpetrated on this place and that of Mrs. Wm. S. Lyles were ascribed to the fact that the owners had been members of the Secession Convention.

Col. Alston died on the 4th of July 1868; he had a presentiment of his death, and the message came not unexpected. He had been for years a consistent member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and contributed largely to the building of the church in Monticello. He was twice married; his first wife was Miss Mariana Brown, of John's Island, S. C., and their children were James Henry, Wm. Samuel, Kirkland, and Marian Kennan. James Henry died just before attaining manhood, beloved by all who knew him. Kirkland died when a child and Marian Kennan, then whom no braver, more lovable man young man ever lived, fell mortally wounded at the battle of

South Mountain, Maryland, September, 1863. Nothing more was ever learned of his fate. Col. W. S. Alston is the only surviving child of this marriage. He married Miss Edith Matthews of John's Island; they had two children, both of whom are now dead. Col. and Mrs. Alston moved to North Carolina about fifteen years ago, and now live in Hendersonville.

Col. William J. Alston married again in 1852 Miss Susan P. Cook, the beautiful and affable daughter of the late Gen. Philip Cook; they had three children, Philip Cook, a most estimable youth, who died of consumption in 1874; Frances Kirkland, a girl of an unusually lovely character; firm, yet gentle and patient, who died June the 10th, 1876, at the home of her guardian, Maj. T. W. Woodward, endeared by her noble traits to all who knew her.

Joseph Kirkland Alston, the only surviving child of this marriage, was last year admitted to the bar of South Carolina, and is now engaged in the practice of law in Columbia. Mrs. Susan Alston died in 1870 in Spartanburg, whither she had gone to educate her three children.

Sr.,

John Alston, Sr. grandfather of Col. Wm. J. Alston and Mrs. Pearce, belonged to an English family, though when he came to this country, he came from Scotland. He was a graduate of Glasgow University, and by profession a civil engineer. His commission from the crown as engineer was destroyed in the house of Col. Wm. J. Alston, which was burned by Sherman's vandals in February 1865. He was married to Mary Boyd April 7th, 1768. They had quite a large family. The names of the children were Samuel, Margaret, Mary, James, David, Jane, Agnes, Anne, John, and several who died in infancy. Samuel was born December 14th, 1769, and died July 30th, 1834. He was quite a prominent man in the district and lived and died in the house in which he was born, on Cedar Creek. This old brick house was destroyed by Sherman in 1865.

.. David Alston married and left three sons, John, who was for a time principal of the Mt. Zion College, and who died in Winnsboro, in 1859; William L., who perished with Fanning's men March 27, 1846, in the fort at Goliad, Texas. James died in 1848. The two last never married.

James Alston married Frances Kirkland; they had but two children: Elizabeth M., who married Dr. G. B. Pearson; and Col. Wm. J. Alston. James Alston was a man of remarkable firmness of character and strength of mind. He owned a large ~~plantation~~ property and was ever noted for his charity and general nobility of disposition. He died in 1841, universally respected.

Anne Alston, daughter of John Alston and Mary Boyd, married James Owens and became the mother of Alston, Samuel, James, William, Jesse and Mary Owens. She was a noble hearted woman and lived to an old age. Her children all had sterling qualities of head and heart.

Alston Owens was a young man of great promise, but died in early life, soon after having graduated in law with distinction.

Samuel H. Owens studied medicine and graduated at the Charleston Medical College. He did not practice his profession long, but became a planter. He served in our State Legislature from 1846 to 1848, in company with A. G. Palmer, J. R. Aiken and W. W. Boyce, being at the head of the ticket in the election. He first married Miss Alice Heath, by whom he has one daughter living, Mrs. J. S. Lewis, of Marion County, Florida. He married a second time in 1847, Miss Mary A. Dentaler, of Orangeburg, a sister of Col. Olin M. Dentaler. There were two children by this marriage, one daughter, now Mrs. J. W. Waldo, and one son, Albert W. Owens, who studied law and has located in Jacksonville, Fla. He is at present State Solicitor in the circuit courts. Col. Samuel H. Owens and his brother, William, moved to Marion County, Florida, about the year 1834, and were

at one time largely engaged in cotton planting. Col. Owens was elected to the senate and preserved the high stand in his adopted State he held in that of his nativity. He died December 19th, 1886.

Mr. James B. Owens first moved to Mississippi. He afterwards joined his brothers in Florida, and was a member of the Confederate Congress from that State. He was at one time a preacher of the gospel, but had to desist from using his voice in that way on account of bronchial troubles. He was twice married and is now living in the midst of a large and cultured family. He and his brother Samuel are engaged successfully in orange culture and truck farming.

Gen. William A. Owens was a noble, generous man. He died at his home in Marion County, Florida, in 1867, of congestive chills, universally lamented. His widow, two daughters and a son, still live at the beautiful home he made for them, not many miles distant from Orange Lake. Jesse, the youngest son of Anne and James Owens, Sr., graduated at the South Carolina College and was at the head of the ticket for representative to the legislature in 1848, having 1,132 votes. He married Miss Sallie S. Woodward, and died in a few years, leaving one little daughter and one son. The daughter, Jesse, married Maj. Boston, of Georgia. She was a woman of fine Spanish mind and contributed articles to several newspapers. She died a few years ago, leaving three daughters and two sons.

The son, James Owens, while on a visit to his uncle's, enlisted in the 6th Florida battalion, during our late civil war, and after being in active service in Florida under Gen. Finnegan, he went with his command to Virginia. The color bearer having been shot down, he gallantly took up the flag and was instantly killed, at the battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia, June 1st, 1864, not yet being eighteen years old. His mortal remains are interred at the Presbyterian churchyard in Willsboro, N. C., and his grave receives its annual tribute of flowers on memorial day with the other heroes

of the Lost Cause.

Mary, the only daughter of Anne and James Owens, Sr., married Dr. William Smart. They moved to Mississippi, where she died about 1890. She married left one child who married Capt. Tully S. Gibson, of Sunflower County, Mississippi. She refuged with her cousin, Maj. T. T. Woodward, in Fairfield, S. C., during the war and on returning home at its close, she and both of her little sons were drowned by the sinking of the boat in the Yasco River. She was a lovely, warmhearted young woman, and her death caused great grief to her gallant husband and stricken father.

Margaret Alston married Samuel McKinstry. I think they had three children who lived to be grown. John McKinstry, who moved to Alachua County, Florida; Thomas McKinstry, who was a good farmer and was one of the representatives in the legislature from Fairfield during the war, and Nancy, who married Capt. Billy Broom. Mr. Thomas McKinstry died a few years ago. He was a man of sound judgment, sterling integrity, and strong religious faith. He had one promising young son, Sergt. W. D. McKinstry, killed at Spottsylvania, C. E., Virginia, May 12, 1864, during the civil war. Three children survive him, Dr. Tom McKinstry and two married daughters, Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Cauthen.

During the early lives of the Owens young men, athletics, sports - wrestling, etc., were much practiced. William and Sam and Jesse were powerful men and were continually testing their strength with other young men. One family, conspicuous for their size and strength, were Robert, Henderson, Dave and Frank Hughes, who were pretty well matched with the Owens. In Winnsboro at that time were a number of young lawyers, James Rutland, E. G. Palmer, Wm. M. Bratton, John M. Buchanan, W. J. Boyce, and J. B. McCants. They had great enjoyment putting on each other practical jokes. No one would have a joke put on him without having his turn. Rutland

would come back at Dr. Sam Owens by getting in a crowd and telling the followings After Sam graduated in medicine and returned home, the first time he came into town, being a wealthy young gentleman, he was dressed in tip of fashion suit - fine beaver, blue broadcloth, lizard-tail coat, with bright flat brass buttons, buff vest and elegant pants. Having just graduated, he invited all his friends to take a drink with him at Aiken's store. The liquors were kept at the north end of the store on a raised platform, there being a cellar below, where the liquors were stored. Owens walked back and there being a crowd, he stepped behind the counter and aided Rutland, who was one of the clerks at that time, to hand out the decanters. While this was going on, Mr. David Aiken looked out of the counting room, which was at the south end of the store, and said to his son, Joe, who was also a clerk, "Joseph, who is that yonder behind the counter with Jim Rutland?" Joe replied, "Sam Owens." Mr. A. said, "Joseph, go there and watch him." Joe replied, "Why, Pa, that is Sam Owens." "Well, Joseph, I don't care a damn who he is; you just go there and watch him, I tell you." I have seen many a fellow dressed just as fine as he is that you would steal, ~~just~~ just watch him. " This story would always bring the laugh on Owens, who would have to rack his brain to come back on Rutland.

Gen. Wm. Owens was kindhearted and was very popular, but was irascible and sometimes a little overbearing and generally used vigorous language intermixed with profane expletives. On one occasion he had a difficulty with a Mr. Watt from Little River neighborhood. They were both in town on a public day. Owens being on the pavement and Watt in the hotel piazza, Owens cursed him furiously. Watt did not reply, but walked up and down the piazza. After a while John Cockrall, who was about a 200-pounder, as were also Owens and Watt, walked up and said, "Well, Watt, I suppose the timber won't make it." "Yes, it will," said Watt, "if I can have fair play."

"I'll see to that," said Cockrell, pulling off his coat. Watt and Owens pulled theirs off and went at it. Bystanders said the blows were like sales kicking. After a long struggle it resulted in a drawn battle, to the surprise of all, for Watt had no reputation of being a fighter, and Owens had.

In the friendly tussels of the Owens, they were very rough sometimes. Once when Gen. John Bratton was quite a young man, he was riding in a spring wagon when Pa. Owens on a hunt for a fish, and without warning, Owens tried to throw him out of the wagon, but Bratton got the turn on him, and pitched him headlong out.
