

FAIRVIEW IN FAIRFIELD

AND ITS FAMOUS FOLKS

A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE OLD HOMESTEAD OF THE MEANS
AND BLAIRS AND FRAZIERS, WITH AN ACCOUNT OF ITS OWNERS

(Article I)

It was halfpast the seventeen hundreds. Westward the course of Empires was taking its way. Many of old Scotia's best families, of ancient clan, and Reformed Presbyterian faith, were fleeing religious persecution. In this human tide came the Means family. Like so many others of their kith and kin they settled first in North Ireland - County of Tyrone - to become Scotch-Irish. But, again, disturbed in faith and betrayed by the English Crown, they set their faces to the West again; and sailed for "The Colonies" of the "New World." So John Means (1717-89) with his wife, Isabella Harper (1729-93), their son John, aged four, and the rest of their family, came in the year 1760, under the good providence of God, to Boston Town, on Massachusetts Bay, in New England.

Twelve years John lived in that City by the Bay. Came sixteen and the surge of manhood and the restlessness of his kind - the wanderlust of the Celt, the venturesomeness of the Scot - this sandy-haired lad, with dreamy eyes of blue, wistfully watched the ships that came from afar and went over the hump of the sea. Each day of his life he saw

"... the black wharves and the ships,
And the sea-tide tossing free;
And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea."

"A boy's will is the wind's will
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Son John, at the age of sixteen ran off and went to sea. It is not strange, that in such a port, at such a time (1772), that such a boy took "French" leave and sailed away. Adventure he sought and adventure he found.

The eventful year of "seventy-six" came around. John was not at the "Tea Party," had he been there he would have been - and at Bunker Hill, too, but John was still at sea. His frigate was captured by the British and with others of the crew he was thrown below, in chains. He carried the marks of British cruelty - the scars of those irons - to the grave at Fairview.

How the hardy sailor escaped is not known, but presently he was fighting in the Colonial Army. He became a Sargeant in Captain Treadwell's company, in Colonel Crane's Artillery Regiment. With this company he fought in the Battle of White Plains. His enlistment was from January 1, 1777 to December 31, 1779, and his record of service is preserved in the official publication, "Massachusetts' Soldiers and Sailors in the War of the Revolution," Volume X.

While in the Navy, John visited Charles Town in Carolina. He was delighted with its salubrious climate. He was much impressed with the hospitality, courtesy, and culture of its citizens. Here he found a large number of substantial Scotch-folks who had organized a genuine Presbyterian kirk, where only the Psalms were sung, and that without instruments, but to the accompaniment of a most pleasing burr. There were more Scots in the Southern seaports than in New England, and what's more, they had ministers from Scotland. But that which interested John Means the most was the reports of the growing and prospering settlements of the Scotch-Irish in the "Upcountry" - and, after all, he was a Scotch-Irishman.

Time the war was over and the forces mustered out, this "soldier of fortune" sailed South, for Charles Town. His mother and brothers followed. From "The City" he prospected in the "Back Country" for a future home. Perhaps the family had been merchants, or importers, in Boston. Certainly, everywhere that the ex-soldier went, he opened a store. At the head of navigation on the Congaree River, at what had been known as the "Out Post of the Congarees," was the growing town of Granby. It held promise of becoming an important commercial town and political center - it was even then being promoted for State Capital. Here our pioneer settled, and for a time engaged in a mercantile business. It is an interesting speculation whether the merchant had any connection with the "chain store" - one of four in this state - that operated in old Fort Granby - the Geiger-Cayce house.

But the merchant's mind was turning toward farming and a rural home. On one of his tours of exploration in western Fairfield County he came to the home of Mr. David Milling. It was evident to this Scotchman's eye and ear that these were his kind of folks. John took one look and immediately rode in to ask for a drink of water - a kindness refused to no one in those early days. It so happened, as came to pass, that pretty Sally, a daughter of the family, was all dressed up in a new calico frock, and put herself out to be nice to the handsome stranger. When the traveller, after some delay, was gone, an old aunt who was sitting in a corner by the fire, remarked to vivacious Sally, "All your arts were in vain, the young man saw no one but your sister Mary." The observation was correct. John Means returned again and again - he seemed to be always passing that way, with an insatiable thirst that required frequent slaking. On September (February?) 14, 1787, John married Mary Anne - according to Aunt

Milling's prophecy.

The young couple lived for a while at Granby, and their first bairn was born there. They called her Isabella. Soon after they moved "Upcountry" - a Scotchman loves the hills, and a daughter loves her family home. So they settled in east Newberry District, near Ashford's Ferry, on Broad River, and about a day's drive from the Milling home. Here John and his brother Thomas kept a country store, at a place where later lived Major Bausket, and still later, Major Thomas Waddington. The ex-soldier storekeeper became a man of influence in that community. In Judge O'Neall's "Annals of Newberry" it is recorded that John Means sat as a trial justice of the Court of Newberry, meeting at Colonel Rutherford's, in the March term of Court, 1787, and also September term of Court, 1787. It would appear from these dates that two children, Mary Ann, 1792, and John, 1794, were born in that neighborhood. Neither of these children lived and their graves are unknown.

John Means, Sr. had died in Boston in 1789. His widow, Isabella Harper, with her sons, Thomas and Robert, and daughters, Martha, Mary, Rebecca, and Isabella, had moved to South Carolina. Robert settled on the seacoast and became the "King of Beaufort." Thomas joined John, perhaps his mother and sisters were with him, and he became a partner with John in business in Newberry District. Some difference having risen between the brothers, Thomas moved across the river into Fairfield. He bought a place and settled northeast of what is now Salem Cross Road. There Isabella Harper spent her last days and was buried in the family graveyard at Buckhead plantation in 1790. The Salem Presbyterian Church was built about 1812 on lands given from the plantation of Thomas Means.

John is reported to have settled in Fairfield County prior to 1800. Here he bought property and again opened a store. There are several traditions concerning this store and its operation that have come down through the years. The proprietor had a high sense of honor, and it was extremely unwise to question his weights, or doubt his word, for the storekeeper had both the disposition and ability to maintain his honor. One impudent and imprudent yokel got himself soundly thrashed, with an old-time yardstick, by calling the storekeeper a "counter-hopper." Another indiscreet customer, having excited the proprietor's ire by some reflecting remark, was sat on with such promptness and power that both legs were broken at the knee. The family recorder remarks that this correction cost the combative merchant "a round sum." But profits were promoted though honor was maintained.

John Means bought a plantation that bordered on "Boundry River," just above Ashford's Ferry, and two miles below Lyles' Ford. Beautiful for location was the hill he chose, in that rugged land, for a home. This was a land of streams and springs of water. Three springs flowed from beneath the hill; northward, southward, westward, ran the rills. Here the Red Rover made his camp. Many are the marks of the Indian's art that we have gathered from that hill - arrowheads clear as crystal, checked pottery by the waterhole, and pestle and mortar down by the boulder cave. On the slope above the murmuring Eswah Huppledaw sleeps the chief with his braves, where moss-covered rocks in solemn rows mark the graves of the vanquished.

Lovely is the view from that ancient hill. From its oak-crowned crest John looked northward across the wooded valleys of Rocky Branch and Beaver Creek, to serrate ridges of endless range, that ran like the surge of a rolling sea. Eastward,

across Shadrick's shadowy hollow, majestically rose the pine-scarfed shoulder of Henssmuir Hill. Westward the sloping fields of Newberry ascend fresh and vernal from the river's mossy bank. Southward, the Broad River's tawny tide wends its way through banks of plummy willow, past forest-covered slopes, softly verdigris with distance; and far beyond - a score of miles or more - the blue-grey form of Little Mountain notches the southwest rim of sky.

And this is the house that John built - atop that ancient hill. Three years he was a-building it; in 1805 he laid the foundations thereof, and in 1808 he finished it. The workmen baked the brick of river mud, down by the "Devil's Leap," where Rock Creek runs from the hills to join the river. They dug the red clay to mix with lime, for mortar, out of the hill back of the house, toward Shadrick's Branch. "Old Mr. Poole," who worked on the house, told Mr. Jimmy Frazier - their lives overlapped - they slacked the lime for plaster, in pits, "for a space of three years." They sawed the heart of virgin pine - with hand and water saws - cut when the sap was down and seasoned before it was worked. The plantation smith hammered out the nails for the handdriven lathes, and the black carpenters shaped the handhewn pegs.

John Means built himself into that home - "The first brick house in Fairfield County." From base to top it was sturdy and strong. Into it went the best that could be made. It was simple, upstanding, even austere, yet handsome in its dignity, but above all enduring. The four foot foundation is of native strata-granite, enclosing a deep, dark and fearsome cellar. The mansion walls are of almost castle dimensions, eighteen inches thick, mortared together with a lost formula of lime and clay. The great chimneys at either end of the house ascend half flush with the

walls within; their fireplaces eight feet, four, with ample depth and spacious spread. The "living-rooms" amaze the moderns with their ample twenty by twelve, and are built without stint above and below. The dining-room, and kitchen with its cooking-hearth and fireplace, were built apart from the house, at the rear, according to fire precaution and custom of that day. Every dimension here dwarfs the recent, and stunts the "measly" measurements of our modern way.

The interior woodwork, wainscoting, mantles, doors, banisters, is the finest material, and must have been "brought up" from Charleston, perhaps imported from the "old Country." It is all beautifully matched and perfectly fitted, the work of a master workman. Tradition says that Mr. McCreight, of Winnsboro, received twelve hundred dollars for the finishing work alone. The ceiling of the parlor was decorated with a graceful design - a sunflower with encircling wreath of vine - beautifully done, but, sadly marred with a bad boy's ball. The whole of the interior work, the casement windows, the three-panelled doors, with their big lock and uphill hinges, the delicate banisters, are all true to their period, and worked by the best taste of the first years of the last century. But, the crowning work of art on this early mansion, placed with sentimental fervor and patriotic pride, over the front portal, was the seal of this country, done in the plasterer's finest art. The patriot little knew, when he placed that emblem there, that one day it would save that home from destruction by the hand of a ruthless foe.

In this beautiful new home the landlord dispensed hospitality according to the generous standards of that day to neighbor and traveller as well. At least one distinguished visitor has left

us his impressions of this Scotch-Irishman's welcome custom. In his most interesting Journal, Bishop Asbury records: "December 7, 1810. We reached the Fishing Dam in the evening... Saturday crossed Broad River at Clark's ferry, and pressed forward to Mr. Means's. Here, and it seldom happens that I seek such a shelter, we were under the roof of a rich man; we were treated with much politeness and kindness... The generous Carolinians are polite and kind, and will not take our money."

The builder of the manor house survived only too shortly after the completion of his home. Three years he lived to enjoy it, and then he died. They buried him beneath the great oak in the garden, a spot where he loved to rest at eventide and view the mystic vista of the dim, receding river. The slab that marks his grave is characteristic of the man whose memory it preserves. No title, here, of soldier, judge, or master, no mention of honor, gift, or grace; the simple inscription reads:

In
Memory of
John Means
son of
John and Isabella Means
who departed this life
on the 1st day of April, 1811
Aged 55 years

The "Widow Means" continued to live in the new "Mansion." With her were six children: Isabella (born 1789), Sarah Eloise (1798), David John (1800), Martha Carolina (1804), Robert Alexander (1806), and Mary Aruna (1809). The family were left "well fixed." The executors of the will list three plantations (one probably purchased from the Hamptons of Columbia). They are, "Little River," with 28 negroes; "Beaver Creek," with 30 negroes; and "Broad River," with 48 negroes. The estate was valued at more than \$40,000 - a goodly sum at the early day.

By marriage the children of this family were connected with the leading families of Fairfield District. Isabella married, first, the Reverend Hilliard Judge, and after his death, Dr. William Bratton. Sarah married her cousin, the Reverend Robert Means, a distinguished minister, later of Columbia. David studied medicine in New York, settled in Winnsboro and married Charlotte Johnston of that city; Martha became the wife of Dr. Richard T. Nott. Robert Alexander married Caroline Thompson, a daughter of Chancellor Waddy Thompson and sister of Waddy Thompson, Jr., United States Minister to Mexico. Mary became the wife of Judge John D. Coalter. From these unions have come many distinguished descendants to influence and elevate the life of Fairfield County and the state of South Carolina.

John Means, sailor, soldier, patriot, pioneer, planter, master, father, Christian, left the impress of his influence upon community, county, and state, and bequeathed to latter days the imperishable benefit of goodly sons and gracious daughters.

John C. Blackburn

FAIRVIEW

The sun comes up o'er Can^amore Hill,
The sun its light begins to spill
In Shadrick's glade, on Shadrick's rill,
The birds awake with morning trill.

The sun shines down on Fairview's crown,
The sun glows down o'er lonely mound,
O'er manor old, with grandeur bound
The sun moves on in daily round.

The sun goes down 'neath golden grill,
The river runs - is never still,
It winds afar, and ever will,
Past Fairview's home, past Fairview's hill.

J. C. B.

To The Daughters of The American Revolution
In memory of my husband Rev. John Britt Blackburn
- Edith Willingham Blackburn

Courtesy of Frances Edwards Skazier (Mrs. J. B. II)

March 6, 1979