

*Jeanne Taylor Received in Brattonsville*

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THE BRATTON FAMILY AT THE HOMESTEAD - A PERSONAL LOOK

*from Curator Joseph H. Rainey*

Some seventeen years after the completion of the Homestead, Dr. John Simpson Bratton, died unexpectedly in April, 1843. Fourteen of his fifteen children and his wife survived him. At his death, Dr. Bratton had the largest plantation in the county (some 9,000 acres) and was also the largest slaveholder, owning around 143 slaves. Other than his medical profession and his plantation, Dr. Bratton owned at least two mercantile establishments (one at Brattonsville and one in Yorkville). Known as a financier of sorts, he had on loan at the time of his death some \$50,000. Although many people wrote him for advice and put great confidence in him, Bratton would not accept any powerful political office (although asked to run for the Senate).

Always interested in education, sometime before 1838 he established a fine classical school at Brattonsville for the education not only of his own children, but neighboring plantation children as well. He hired French and Italian tutors as teachers and by 1840 his school was well known throughout the upcountry (records show thirty pupils in 1840). Looking towards expansion of his school, Dr. Bratton contracted just before his death, the building of a large brick house to be used dually as a school and as a store. Records show that O.S. Crawford complied with his contract and was paid by J. Rufus Bratton and John S. Bratton II, administrators of their father's estate. According to the diary of J. Rufus Bratton, his brother John discontinued his study of medicine because of the numerous duties concerning the settlement of the estate. Since Dr. Bratton died intestate his estate was divided amongst his wife and children.

Harriet Rainey Bratton continued to live in the Homestead until her death in 1874. Unlike many widows, Harriet did not go into seclusion. She did quite the reverse. She managed the plantation, using an overseer, renovated the Homestead, and remained active for the next 31 years of her life.

At the outbreak of the War Between the States, Harriet Bratton pledged her support to the Confederacy. Her brother, Samuel Lawrence Rainey, had signed the Ordinance of Secession of South Carolina from the Union as a delegate from York County. He was the oldest member of the secession delegation. Before the war would end some four years later, Harriet Bratton would have been one of the largest contributors of wheat, barley and corn to the Confederate Army in York County.

Three of her sons went to the war, while the fourth became a member of the South Carolina Legislature. Of her sons, Dr. J. Rufus Bratton was the most famous. The end of the war, Rufus was head surgeon of the Confederate Hospitals in Georgia. He was captured by Sherman's Army and held prisoner until the entire Union Army had passed from the state of Georgia. He then walked from Georgia back to his home in Yorkville, only to hear of Lee's surrender and the end of the war.

The last ten years of Harriet Bratton's life were anything but pleasant. Reconstruction in York County was worse than four years of war. Federal troops were brought in to curb all "rebellious activities". Particularly notorious was the captain of the black militia who was backed in all he did by the Federal authorities. Formerly known as Jim Rainey, he called himself Jim Williams. According to testimony of witnesses at The Yorkville Clan Trials, Williams held a special grudge against the Bratton Family and "intended to burn Brattons-ville to the ground". He was also quoted as saying, "in case we don't

succeed in carrying the next election, we will kill from the cradle to the grave and we will apply the torch in every direction; we will lay waste to this country generally". He supposedly made these statements on March 4 of 1871. The same night he and his militia burned the summer house at Brattonsville. On March 6, Jim Williams was taken from his house about ten o'clock at night and hanged. The Ku Klux Klan was held responsible for this act, and both John S. Bratton and Dr. J. Rufus Bratton were forced to flee York County for their alleged leadership in "this brutal act". Federal warrants for their arrest were issued and Federal guards were stationed at Brattonsville in hopes of capturing the two brothers upon their return home. However, realizing their precarious situation, the Brattons fled to Canada, where they had friends.

Harriet Rainey Bratton did not live to see her eldest son, Rufus, return home. Although she constantly sought his pardon from officials in Washington, her requests were mostly ignored until some four years after her death. John S. Bratton, II was pardoned and returned home. Dr. J. Rufus Bratton returned to his home in 1878, some seven years after the Jim Williams' incident.

From the time of Harriet's death in 1874 until 1898, the Homestead had no regular occupant. Although its ownership passed to Dr. J. Rufus Bratton, he had purchased a home in Yorkville in 1845 and the Homestead was closed until Dr. Bratton's son, Moultrie, was married in 1898. Moultrie married his first cousin, Virginia Bratton (daughter of Napoleon Bonaparte and Minnie Mason Bratton) and they lived in the Homestead until 1914, when they moved to Yorkville. This move was made so that Virginia's parents (who were quite old by this time and who had also resided at Brattonsville in the house known as "The Bricks") could be close to a

physician's care in Yorkville.

Both the Homestead and The Bricks were rented to tenants soon after the Brattons left Brattonsville. Both fell into disrepair quite rapidly and were finally vacated in the early 1950's.. From that time until the late 1960's vandalism ran rampant, especially at the Homestead. The Bricks was sold in the early 1960's by the heirs of Virginia Bratton to Samuel B. Mendenhall, while the Homestead remained in the possession of Dr. J. Rufus Bratton II. Through the efforts of Judge Mendenhall, the Homestead was orally leased to the York County Historical Commission for restoration in 1969, while actual restoration began in May of 1976. A written lease with a perpetual clause of historical usage was signed in March 1977.

## ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF THE HOMESTEAD - 1823-1977

Dr. John Simpson Bratton and his wife Harriet Rainey Bratton began construction of their Federal-styled mansion in 1823. Henry Alexander was the major contractor. The original eight room house was three years in construction. All of the lumber was cut from the plantation and processed at the Bratton sawmill. The stone foundation was quarried from the land and the bricks for the chimneys were made on the site. The two story house with a one story stoop cost <sup>a</sup>around 600 dollars while payments for the building were made randomly throughout the three year period of construction. According to records found in the South Caroliniana Library, final payment on completion was in March 1826. Some two years later matching wings were added, one on the south and one on the north.

Sometime before 1840, the brick dining room was added at the rear of the house. It is the only known detached dining room in the Catawba region of the upcountry. The tremendous dining room measuring 20 by 40 feet is connected to the main house by an arcaded breezeway. At least six brick out-buildings were constructed in this time period between 1835 and 1840. Architects, including John G. Richards IV, Vernon S. Hodges, and Dr. Harold N. Coolidge, Jr., agree that the buildings are definitely patterned after Thomas Jefferson's work at the University of Virginia.

In 1853, some ten years after the death of Dr. Bratton, Harriet Bratton (his wife) began an extensive renovation at the Homestead. A most impressive double-tiered piazza replaced the simple one story stoop. The wall between the old parlor and the wing bedroom was removed to provide a much larger entertainment area. The upstairs

drawing room was partitioned to make a long closed passageway to the upper piazza (a door replaced the central window on the second level). Double closets were added in the dining room and new locks (mortise locks) were installed on the exterior doors.

The house remained in this structural form until 1898 when Moultrie and Virginia Bratton were married and moved into the house. Since the house was too large for two people, the upstairs was closed off and no longer used. The drawing room was once again partitioned and made into two rooms. The northwest window was also removed and replaced by a door to give entrance to a closet or bathroom which was added. The detached dining room was partitioned and the east end used as a cooking area only when the warming kitchen was not sufficient. The remainder of the dining room was used for storage to the garret loft. While the old warming kitchen took the function of full use, Harriet's sitting room became the new dining room. In 1912, the landing window was removed to provide entrance to a sleeping porch which was added over the breezeway (information from personal interview with Margaret Bratton Moore, niece of Virginia Bratton, who spent most of her childhood at Brattonsville).

In 1914, the Brattons moved to Yorkville and the Homestead was subject to its first tenant occupation. In 1929, a tornado swept through Brattonsville completely destroying the Homestead's 1853 portico. The two story porch was not rebuilt, but was replaced by a crude one story stoop. Some ten years after the house was abandoned by tenants (ca. 1950), all the replacement porch collapsed.

The preceding information was gathered by Joseph H. Rainey from records deposited in the South Caroliniana Library by various members of the Bratton family.

William Bratton was born in Ireland in 1742 and immigrated to Pennsylvania at an early age. Like many young Irishmen who came to America, he joined the local militia during the Indian uprisings. With hopes of greater success, he, along with many other Scots-Irish families, emigrated southward to Virginia and the Carolina. Bratton settled for a time in the Waxsaw area of North Carolina in the early 1760's and in 1765 he married Martha Robertson (born in 1750) of Rowan County, North Carolina.

On August 11, 1765, William Bratton bought 200 acres from Thomas Rainey (the first transaction among many between the two families) in what was then Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. When the line between North and South Carolina was surveyed, the land became part of the old Camden District of South Carolina, which in 1785 was sectioned, and the Bratton land became part of York County.

William built the present log cabin, sometime between 1774 and 1780. Some accounts have listed the date at 1776, but there seems to be no solid evidence to support this as a certain date. A plat made in 1774 does not show a dwelling on the property. However, in 1780, when the battle of Hucks' Defeat occurred, both the Bratton and Williamson houses had been built. (The Williamson house was the home of James Williamson and the site of the battle which took place some 100 yards to the south-east of the Bratton house.)

The first house was a two-story structure of log construction, supported at its base by large native stones. The logs were fabricated by adzing and broad axing. There was one room upstairs and one room downstairs. A porch ran the length of the house on the west side, which

was the front entrance. There was one other exterior door on the east side. The logs were exposed both on the exterior and the interior. The openings between the logs were chinked with red clay and brick. The original chimney was probably an interior chimney. This seems to be the case because, on the upper floor, the logs run behind the existing chimney.

On the front side of the house there were two windows opening from the first level and two long, narrow openings known as "fireworks" opening from the upper level, just above the porch, achieved by leaving out one log. On the north side one window opened from the first level and one small opening cut into the logs from the second level. Four high windows in the upper level opened at the gables; two on the north and two on the south.

The existing roof structure is pegged timber construction and dates to at least 1780, when the first ell is known to have been in existence. The house was covered with cedar shakes.

The first enlargement was the addition of a room at the rear. If the date of the original house was 1776, then the first enlargement came soon thereafter. It is known to have been there at the time of the battle in 1780.

It is however, quite evident that the rear room is not part of the original structure because logs in the wall separate it from the original. Also, the new ell was of heavy braced frame construction rather than log construction. Many of the joists were apparently salvaged from other structures as indicated by the random order of the various peg holes. An additional chimney was built at the south end of this room on the exterior. A new roof was added, extending the original upper roof, but at a

shallower pitch. A small opening was cut into the log wall for access into the attic space which may have been used for storage.

A second enlargement took place in 1828 at the same time that the wings were being built on the Homestead, home of Dr. John S. Bratton. The original chimney was rebuilt and a fireplace added on the south side to heat the new ell. This involved cutting out a section of the original log wall to accommodate the new fireplace.

The construction of the second ell resulted in the following architectural changes throughout the rest of the structure. The three windows in the original lower room were raised and the north window in the first addition was raised (a height of six inches). The original entrance door was replaced with a paneled door and the transom was made taller by six inches. New trim was placed around the windows and doors of the original lower room, but not in the east ell. New mantels were installed in the lower and upper rooms of the original house after the same pattern as that in the new ell. New sashes were probably placed in the windows at this time. The cupboard in the north wall of the original lower room may have been added at this time. The ceiling board were replaced in the lower room of the original house and ceiling boards were introduced for the first time in the upper room. New floor boards were installed in the lower portion of the house and the original stairway was replaced with a new one. The area under the stairway was closed in to make a closet or storage room.

This last enlargement introduced plaster to the house. The interior walls of the new ell were split wood lathe and plaster on braced

frame. The exposed log walls in the adjoining room were battened and covered with wood lathe and plaster. The exposed logs upstairs were given a thick coat of plaster. The narrow openings in the west wall upstairs were framed in half way and covered with wood lathe and plaster. Sliding doors were provided to cover the openings.

The new ell itself was illuminated by five windows; two windows on each side and one window and door on the south side. The trimwork was the most ornate of the house with fluted door and window casements, additional molding at the window sill, and molded window stops. The plaster was white with the trimwork and ceiling painted blue.

The exterior portion of the house also underwent changed by the addition of lapped siding. New shutters were installed on all the windows. Also, a new shingle roof was added at this time.

However, the Bratton home in itself is not that different from a dozen other pioneer homes found in the county, it is the Bratton family and the events which culminated on the morning of July 12, 1780 that make the house notable.

After the fall of Charleston, the British dispatched troops to all sections of the state to disperse patriot activities and to secure the countryside for the crown. The British regulars were aided in this exercise by numerous South Carolina Tories.

In late June of 1780, a group of patriots from the Brattonsville area in York County, led by Colonel Bratton, Captain John McClure and Richard Winn, attacked and defeated a group of Tories meeting at Mobley's Meeting House in Fairfield County. Upon hearing of this defeat, Colonel \_\_\_\_\_ Turnbull, the British commander at Rocky Mount, dispatched

Captain Christian Huck to punish the American patriots in this vicinity for their actions. The number of men under Huck's command varies from account to account of the battle. In 1897, Wright credited Huck with 400 men and David Duncan Wallace credited him with 150. Lord Cornwallis in a letter to Sir Henry Clinton, put the number at 105. As Wallace pointed out in his comprehensive history of the state, it has been a tendency for American historians, especially contemporaries of the event, to exaggerate the number of personnel engaged in these small battles.

Captain Christian Huck was a Philadelphia lawyer who had come from New York with Tarleton's Legion and was noted by the American patriots of the district for his cruelty. During the month of June, 1780, Huck and his men plundered property in York County. Colonel William Hill's Iron Works on Allison Creek was burned, as well as the parsonage of Reverend John Simpson at Fishing Creek Presbyterian Church. On July 11, 1780 Huck and his men plundered the McClure's farm and took James McClure and Edward Martin, who were making bullets for the patriots, prisoners. Mrs. McClure sent her daughter, Mary to General Sumter's camp some thirty miles away to inform them of Huck's activities.

Colonel William Bratton, Captain John McClure and Captain Jameson were immediately dispatched with 130 men to find Huck. In the meantime, Colonels Edward Lacey, William Hill, and Andrew Neel had also heard the news and were marching to the rescue. Huck, however, by now had moved to the Bratton Plantation. Huck demanded of Martha Bratton the whereabouts of her husband. She replied that he was with Sumter. The Tory leader then proposed giving Colonel Bratton a royal commission if he would join the

Tories. To this she replied that she "desired that he should remain in General Sumter's command even if he lost his life".

According to a later account found in the family history, Colonel Bratton's five year old son, William, had been sitting on Huck's knee during this discussion. Upon hearing Mrs. Bratton's response to his proposal, Huck threw William to the floor, bleeding his nose. One of Huck's soldiers then grabbed a reaper and held the tool to Mrs. Bratton's throat, but was stopped from killing her by Huck's second in command.

While at the Bratton's Huck arrested three old men, James McRandle, Thomas Clendenin, and Robert Bratton, and charged them with being patriot sympathizers. These men were confined to a corn crib where they were found and released following the battle. After finishing with the Brattons, Huck moved on to the neighboring plantation of James Williamson. The Williamson house was surrounded by a fence and a small lane passed before the house. There was also a main road that ran near the house. Huck posted sentinels and he and his officers, including a Colonel \_\_\_\_\_ Ferguson of the Tory militia, whose main duty was to plunder and raid, quartered in the house while the remainder of his men slept in tents.

Colonel Bratton and Captain McClure and 125 men left Sumter's camp at Old Nations Ford on the Catawba River, to encounter Huck. During the march about 50 men dropped out, bringing the Patriot force to about 75 men. Bratton had originally planned to attack Huck and Ferguson at White's Mill, but upon arriving on July 11, he was informed that Huck had moved north to Brattonsville; the area of Colonel Bratton's home.

Arriving at Brattonsville after dark, they located the enemy and made plans to attack at dawn. The attack which was on the north and east of the Williamson house took the British by complete surprise. Apparently Huck did not immediately realize the extent of the exchange as he suddenly rushed from the house coatless, mounted a horse and tried to rally his men. Sighting Huck, Thomas Carroll shot him through the head. Meanwhile, Ferguson tried in vain to rally his men, but his effort proved useless. After Huck was killed, the patriots charged the British force, capturing many and routing the rest. Ferguson plead for mercy, but was executed on the spot for his alleged shooting of William Strange. In all, the battle lasted approximately one hour.

According to Cornwallis' report of the battle to Sir Henry Clinton, 12 men of Tarleton's Legion and 12 of the militia were either wounded or killed, the rest being taken prisoners. The Americans reported that Huck and 34 of his men were killed, while 29 were captured. Huck's prisoners, McClure and Martin, who were to be hanged that morning, were released.

The defeat of Huck and his men had a profound effect upon the patriot cause. This was the first success for the South Carolina Militia against the regular British forces since the capture of Charleston in May of 1780. Subsequently, this victory brought men rallying to General Sumter's army.

After the war, Colonel Bratton returned home to his wife and children. Living to see all his children mature and prosper, Colonel William Bratton died on February 9, 1815 at the age of seventy-three. While there

is no reference in William Bratton's will to the log cabin, he left the "family residence" to the youngest of his eight children, John Simpson Bratton I. While Martha continued to live in the home until her death on January 19, 1816, John was married to the wealthy Harriet Jane Rainey. John and his older brother, William, were both medical doctors. However, William fell in love with Christina, daughter of Richard Winn of Winnsboro, and moved there to practice medicine. After his mother's death, John and his wife continued to live in the home of his parents and raised seven of their fifteen children there. In 1823, Dr. John S. Bratton contracted Henry Alexander to build him a new dwelling some 75 yards to the south of the old house, however, it was not until 1826, that the new house was completed.

From 1826 until the 1860's various family members used the house in somewhat of a transient manner. Then, during the War Between the States, John's youngest son, Napoleon, married Minnie Mason of Virginia, who, with her mother, came to live in the Revolutionary house until "The Bricks" could be made ready for them. (Information concerning the academy or "The Bricks" will follow in a separate paper.) After Napoleon and Minnie moved to their new home, Napoleon's widowed sister, Jane Dunovant, moved into the old house. Jane and her new husband, Knox Williams, were living there in August, 1876, when D. G. Stinson visited there while he was aiding Dr. John H. Logan in writing his History of Upper South Carolina.

Various members of the Bratton family retained possession of the Revolutionary house until 1962, when, after the death of Mrs. Virginia Bratton, great-granddaughter of Colonel William Bratton, the estate was

sold to R. F. Draper. However, the family requested that the house be turned over to York County. Matching Federal, State and County funds are financing the restoration of the house.