

Winnsboro, S.C.

April 14, 1955.

My dear Virginia:

Your grandmother told me down town yesterday you had to write a paper about Winnsboro history. So I told her I shall send you some data I have in my personal files. See below.

Sincerely,

Alice America Beaufort Walker

The nationality of Fairfield County's earliest settlers was English predominating, and Scotch-Irish. Many came by the way of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, some landed at Charleston. Later pure Scotch blood added its iron to the colony, and the latest influx of settlers about 80 years ago was pure Irish stock. Between the Scotch and the last and Irish group, the French from the coast pushed up into the county, bringing the imagination and devout outlook of the Huguenots. The amalgamation of these people has produced a hardy stock of people, who have responded to the call of arms and any dangers that have arisen to the community. And as a result the soldiers, and some few statesmen of Fairfield County and Winnsboro have gained national fame.

To name a few soldiers of early days that played important parts in the history of county and town, there is the hardy Thomas Woodward "The Regulator", who served in the French and Indian Wars with George Washington, and organized the "Regulation", which originated in this county, Captain John Buchanan, also a Revolutionary hero and patriot, who was the first man to greet Lafayette when he came ashore in Georgetown and shared tent and servant with the Frenchman. Both these played important roles in war and in peace - taking part in county and town affairs until their late years. In the western part of the County a Virginia family, Winn, had settled, with father John, and sons, John, Richard, and Minor. They came from Virginia here, about the year 1749. A verile type of men they took out large landgrants, and were foremost in all activities of the county and state.. Likely the first landgrants were taken out by the father. Son Richard, who owned much acreage situated on a level section of the county in a well-drained part of a hilly section, with ^{John} Vanderhorst, a scion of a rich French Charleston family, also owner of connecting lands, decided to lay out a town. The name was decided - Winnsboro, as most of the village was laid out on the land of Richard Winn. He was the most daring and brilliant of the Winn brothers. The Winns also had in their veins the ^{love of} decisive principles of the Welsh, their ancestors. There is a record of James and William Winn. This town of Winnsboro was drawn and laid out by Ephrim Mitchell, Surveyor-general of South Carolina. The charter application for a town was signed by John Winn, Richard Winn, and John Vanderhorst. The town was incorporated as a town March 8, 1875.

An interesting incident happened when Cornwallis encamped in Winnsboro, on what is the the campus of the present Mt Zion School. When Cornwallis chose Winnsboro for his permanent camp he did so according to historian Robert Mills (In his Statistics of South Carolina) because of the rich outlying section necessary for food-stuffs for his army, and because of the unusually fine drainage of the town location, which then was a small settlement of a few houses.

According to Dr. George Howe's "History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina" which book contains many interesting and valuable facts, Cornwallis had a habit of taking a morning ride south a few miles. He had guards posted in woods along this route. But Minor Winn, and likely Richard, and others decided to attempt to capture the General. When the attempt was thwarted by these hidden guards the colonists were captured, sent in chains to Charleston and were supposed to be executed for this crime. But the mother of Captain Buchanan, Lieutenant Robert Buchanan, named Mrs. Rachel Philips Buchanan notified her brothers, English officers at Charleston that her son's friends, the Winns, - (and incidentally Winns were friends of the older Philips - Englishmen - who had just before the Revolution, with their nephews Buchanan had taken out grants next to the Winn acres,) were prisoners of the British at Charleston, the Philips men were successful in having this group exchanged. When the Philips officers were prisoners at the Battle of Camden, the Buchanans and Winns had the Colonial army reciprocate with pardons. It was said that Minor, who had not been religiously prayed all night and day before the hour of his supposed execution. And at dawn next day the word came they were pardoned, and would be allowed to join their ranks again.

After the Revolution - some years, the Winns left Fairfield and went to Tennessee. One went to the land that was later made into Utah. One sister, Lettice has descendants in North Carolina. The home of Mr. Joe Cathcart was built on Winn land that was sold to the husband of a Winn daughter - Dr. William Bratton. The town home of Minor Winn was 300 acres, and the house stood on the site of the T.H. Ketchin home. This home was called by Minor Winn, "Malvern Hill".

The early settlers started log cabin churches, being of a religious turn of mind. And the problem of education - which was that of paramount importance to such a type of people as settled in this section of the state, was taken seriously. So we find that with a number of Charleston men - this was considered almost a resort county for people escaping from the malarial-ridden lowcountry, - there was started a study club, first meeting in private homes, then later in a two room house on north Vanderhorst street known as the Cribb house. This reading club had as members the best of the town and county men and was soon called the Mt. Zion Literary society. The desire to have the youth taught more than mere reading and discussion, the movement began to take the shape of organizing a college. It was called the Mt. Zion College for Young Men. Though this was the first organization for education purposes on such a scale in S.C., we did not ask a charter until the year 1779, but the date of the beginning of Mt. Zion College organization is given by the famous Dr. James H. Carlisle of Wofford as ten years before the Revolution. As Robert Mills, Historian said in his "Statistics" "No man of importance is S.C. that did not pass through the halls of Mt. Zion in its flower".

Before the war between the States and afterwards, at one time, there were five schools in the county and town. Besides those listed in the Book of the Fairfield County pageant Pilgrimage was Miss Ladd's School for young ladies, that was located in what is now the Gardner Tourist Home on Main Street, and Mr. Stewart's school next door in what is known now as the home of Miss Ella Beaty. Mrs. Obear had a private school during the war in the present Mrs. A.J. Williford house. Winnsboro at one time - about 50 years ago sent more boys and girls to college in proportion to population than any town in S.C. The town has been noted for its educational ambitions.

This Richard Winn was in Battle of Fort Sumter, Hanging Rock and others.