



**OLD HOUSES ON HWY 261, SUMTER COUNTY, SC  
THE STATEBURG AREA Part #6**

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**GOVERNOR MILLER HOUSE (continued)**

In 1835, Steven Decatur Miller sold his Stateburg house and fifty-four and a half acres to William Ellison for \$1,120. William Ellison would have been a most unusual man for any time, but he was an exceptionally unusual man for his time, as he had been born a slave and trained as a master ginwright under William McCreight of the Fairfield District. William either purchased his freedom or was given his freedom by his owner, William Ellison of the Fairfield District. Two things led Ellison to the Stateburg area. It was far enough away that he would not be in competition with William McCreight, and the Sumter District had a reputation of tolerating free Negroes. Probably one thing exemplified this tolerance more than the fact that the Ellison family occupied three pews in the Stateburg Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross. In 1816, when Ellison moved to Stateburg, there were more free Negroes there than in any other rural area of South Carolina.

In 1822, William Ellison purchased one acre of land at the junction of the Great Road and Garners (Brisbane) Ferry Road from General Thomas Sumter for the sum of \$375. On this acre Ellison built his gin shop and began producing and repairing cotton gins for the planters in the area.

In 1835, when Ellison purchased the Miller house and acreage, he moved in with his wife, daughter, grandson and three adult sons. One of the first things William Ellison did when he moved into the house was to rename it Wisdom Hall. Here his family lived for 85 years, until 1923. Over the years, the name used for the house has reverted to the Miller House or Governor Miller House, even though the Ellison family lived in the house the longest. There were few modifications made to the house during the Ellison ownership except for the kitchen outbuilding, which was moved and attached to the north side of the house.

When Gabriella Ellison, the last member of the Ellison family living in the house, passed away, the property was rented by James G. Simmons, a local planter, until 1923. The Ellison estate then sold the house and five acres to Mary Virginia Saunders White (of the Borough House) for \$2,075. Mary made the property part of the Borough House property and no material changes were made to the house during her ownership. The house served as living quarters for L. J. Lefflema who had been hired as the forester for the Borough House reforestation project.

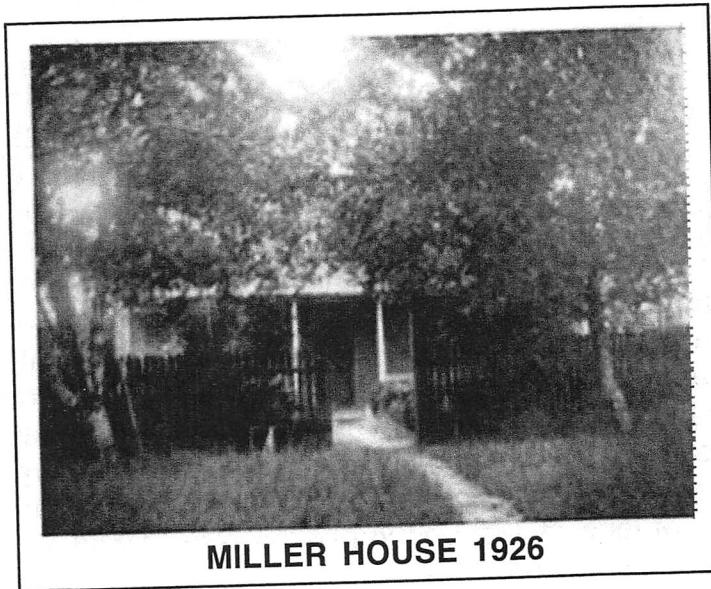
In 1965, Mary Virginia Saunders White's estate sold the house and four and a half acres to Martha Welles White, daughter of Mary Virginia Saunders White. Martha Wells White began an ambitious renovation project not only to renovate and update the house, but also all of the outbuildings.

Originally on pillars, Martha Wells White had a cellar dug to house the machinery needed for modern heating and air conditioning. A curtain wall around the house was added to cover the pillars. The carriage house and tack room were rebuilt on their original sites. The carriage space was extended several feet to the back and side to accommodate modern vehicles. A cupola was added to break the carriage house roof line. It is thought that the original building did have a cupola. The tack room was turned into a shop and storage area.

The office and smoke house were stripped to their frames and restored so the inside complied with the existing dimensions. The floors, walls, and ceilings were all of original heart pine. The smoke house retained the original beams and uprights, along with the old pegs for hanging hams. The siding was replaced and a brick floor was laid over the original salt riddled sand. The

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(continued from page 65)

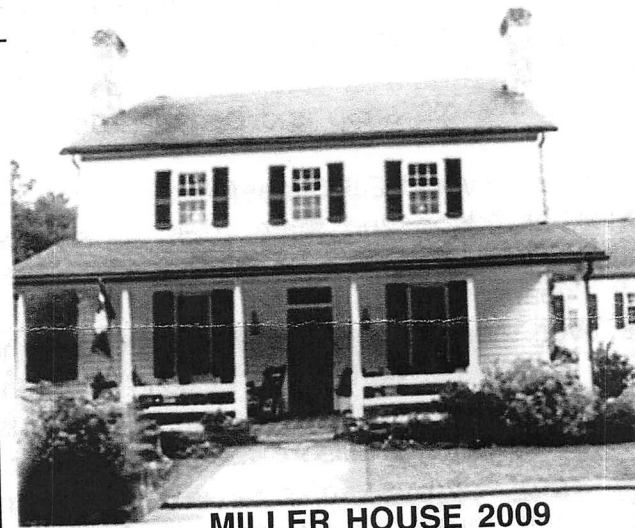


MILLER HOUSE 1926

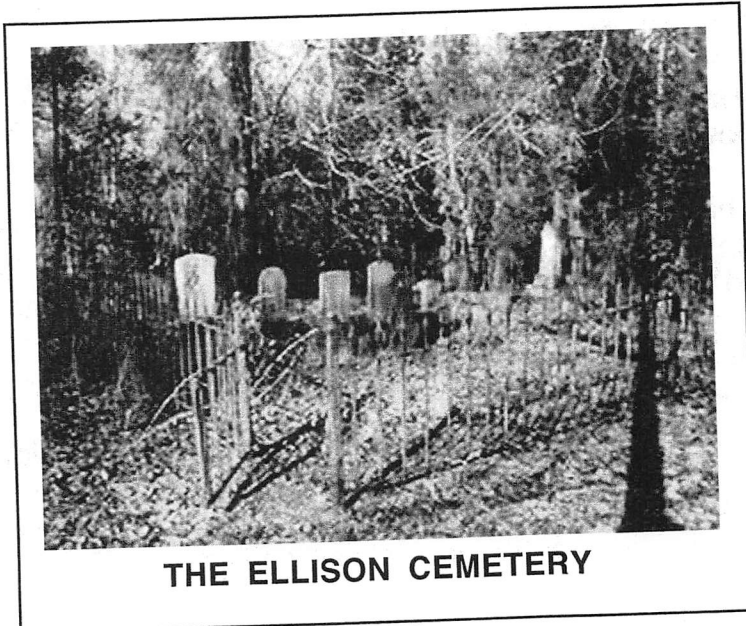
Sumter County will be forever indebted to Martha Welles White for having the desire and drive to restore the Governor Miller House to its original, pristine condition. Sumter is equally fortunate that the house is in the capable hands of the present owners, Floride and Grainger McKoy, who continue to care for and preserve another of the true treasures of Sumter County and South Carolina.

smoke house was then used to store wood. The law office was restored so the inside reflected the original dimensions and a bath and closet were added. The chimney was rebuilt and the original fireplace was uncovered. Also added were a well house and a tool shed as well as a swimming pool that served for both recreation and fire protection.

A transom window over the front door designed for the Trophy Room at Circle W Farms the White family retreat in Ohio, was reset by Colclough Sanders, a local stained glass artisan.



MILLER HOUSE 2009



THE ELLISON CEMETERY

**THE ELLISON CEMETERY,  
STATEBURG, SC**

Located on Old Garner's Ferry Road. Take Highway 261 north from Highway 378. Take the road veering to left just before going downhill and after the white plantation fence on the left. (There are road signs.) The cemetery is 2/10th of a mile down on the right.

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Photos of the Ellison Cemetery and individual headstones can be found at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/scsumter/cemeteries/ellison.html>. Go to this site to see the disclaimer for using this or other photos found there.

(continued on page 66)