

M.028 TWO LETTERS TO ME FROM PROFESSOR THOMAS D. CLARK, OF 248 TAHOMA ROAD, LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY 40503, WHO PRESENTLY OWNS THE LAND IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY S.C. THAT MOSES HILL ONCE OWNED AND LIVED. IT GIVES A HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY.

Notes of Explanation....In the early summer of 1986, my son and I visited the old homesite of MOSES HILL, which is located in Fairfield County, in an area known as "Buckhead."

Moses Hill was the first person buried in the cemetery, which is located just east of the site of a small house. Buried by his side was a son, Littleton Hill, who died just prior to reaching manhood. His grave is marked by two stones (one at head, one at foot but no writings visible). This grave is beside that of his father's grave, Moses Hill.

Finding no one at the house, I left a note to the owner (unknown) and told him about my connection to Moses Hill and who once lived there. I gave him my name and address, left a few brief questions and asked him to write, which he did.

Below is the reply I received.

Robert R. Hill Sr.

August 22, 1986

Mr. Robert R. Hill
631 S. Echo Drive
Brandon, Fla. 33511

Dear Mr. Hill:

When I went down to the Trunwell Plantation (was home of Moses Hill) house next to the Younge Cemetery I found that Mr. Jack Coleman had placed your note on the desk in the house. We maintain that little house as an anchorage in which we have spent our summers, and as a base of management of our timberlands.

I have undertaken without full success to establish the succession of ownership of the Turnwell property. At the present time it contains 670 acres. I know that the original holding was much larger. I assume that MOSES HILL was living there at the time of his death.

There were two rather large plantation houses on the place. One just south of our present house was a two story log structure with large rooms and tall chimneys. It was very well furnished inside. There was a wide porch, and an extensive "L" which contained the kitchen, dining room, and maybe another room. There was a back porch.

I know that some of the past owners were ESTES and CLOWNEY. Once there was a horse cotton gin, maybe a store, and a post office. I have been told there were nineteen tenant houses on the place. The 85 foot dug well is said to have been dug before the Revolutionary War. It is solidly sealed with round quartz and sand stones.

Spratt Clowney became deeply involved in debt, and literally dredged the land growing cotton. He lost the place to the BLAIRS or BLAIR. They undertook to grow enough cotton to recover their loss, but were unable to do so. The land was mortgaged to the FEDERAL LAND BANK, and in 1931, my father-in-law, W. W. Turner purchased it, and in 1957 it came into the possession of my wife Elizabeth Turner Clark. Today it is covered in lob-lolly pines.

I don't know whether you ask for this sort of information or not. I am sorry to have missed you.

THOMAS D. CLARK
Professor emeritus of American History
University of Kentucky-Indiana University

A SECOND LETTER RECEIVED

August 30, 1986

Mr. Robert R. Hill
631 S. Echo Drive
Brandon, Fla. 33511

Dear Mr. Hill:

I appreciate greatly your tremendously interesting report on what is now Turnwell Plantation. You gave me wonderful leads which I am going to follow up in the coming months. I of necessity have to be vague about history of the place. I walk over the land trying to visualize what has happened there. I do find from time to time fragments of chinaware, plow tools and other metal. Most of the things, however, are of the old cotton tenant farming days.

In your letter you mentioned another plantation house less than a quarter of a mile away on a second hill. The old open well was there until I had it filled, so were the old chimney places. I judge from what old timers told me that this, too, was a large double log house of the same type construction as the Hill place.

The old plantation house which stood near our present small house was of rather heavy construction. There was a deep cellar lined with large rocks. The two large rooms were of hewn log construction. There were two upstairs rooms divided by a hall. The downstairs log pens were also divided by a

rather broad hall. All (of) the rooms were ceiled with heart pine lumber of 1 x 12 dimensions. The flooring was of narrow grooved heart pine. I rescued much of the ceiling material which I used in lining the playroom area of my house here in Lexington. Too, a good bit of original material went into the construction of our small house in S.C. I also made some pieces of furniture from the wood. There is a table in the S.C. house which reveals the rich heart properties of the wood.

The old house had been badly abused by its tenants over the years. When I first knew it it was beyond repair. My wife and I greatly regretted this fact because we would have restored it.

I think that you would like to know that there are two remains on the place, along the drive way, which reflect something of the economy of the times. There are two pits, (the) remains of horse cotton gins. I am reasonably certain there go back to a very early period.

I believe I told you that on our adjoining Bolick tract is the site of the Battle of Mobley's Churchyard. From your letter I gather Moses Hill was at the time in Colonel Winn's Company which repulsed the Tories at this place. I am sure you saw the historical marker out at the entry off the state road.

I never cease to be amazed at things which turn up about the old place. When we leveled off the lawn around the house I began to find arrowheads. Then when we clear-cut and disced the land preparatory to planting pines, I began spotting sites where paleolithic natives had their work places, and I now have a right considerable number of ancient artifacts from that place. When I was there week before last, I found a dozen or more. There is a rather large unexplored mound on the bank of Little River.

Again, the history of land involves the intimate personal history of people. I think I am about as thoroughly acquainted with the lay of the land and its features as is possible for an individual to learn from surface observations. I wish I could get inside the human emotions and ambitions of the former owners. None I am sure have had greater affection for the land than my wife and I.

In answer to your questions about the drive way entrance and the stone pillars. The pillars were built I think within my memory. I am unable to say precisely where the old entry way was, except I know that it led directly up to the front of the house. The depression is still there. Just inside of the stone pillars and to the left, and at the entry of the field road, is a red spot worn bare over a century or more, I was told, of Negroes loafing there. I was told by old timers that

I could heal over that scar. It has been difficult but I think I have done it. There was a very old tenant house near this spot. My impression, however, is that the drive way up to the house tied into the old Chester Road, down below the present gate. The plantation store stood about one hundred yards south of the gate.

The river (Little River) is approximately a half mile from the house. By a straight line the site of Mobley's Churchyard is about a mile plus.

I should tell you that there is a rather extensive slave graveyard back of the fenced in Younge Cemetery. I have taken every possible legal step to protect it. Too, on the south bank of Little River, directly south of the house, about a half miles plus, is a second Younge Cemetery, containing approximately twenty graves.

I am sorry that I have to be so vague about the history of our place. I am very anxious to do some searching myself and establish as clear a record as possible. The land is in loving hands with a fair degree of assurance that it will pass down to our heirs intact and in good state of preservation.

I am, most cordially yours,
THOMAS D. CLARK

P.S.

I forgot to mention above the fact that the 85 foot dug well is still there. I used it until the local water line was extended up to our mail box. I was told the well was dug before the American Revolution. Anyway it never seemed to be effected by the conditions of the weather-dry or wet. Too, the old tree directly in front of the house is a laurel oak and I have never been able to establish it's age beyond a century at least. The barn stood directly in front of our present house, about two hundred feet to the west. It rested on very heavy rock corners, and was partly of log construction.

END OF DATA