

MRS. CATHARINE STRATTON LADD. (MRS. GEORGE WILLIAMSON LIVERMORE LADD.)
(Taken mostly from the Dictionary of American Biography. Written by her.)

Mrs. Catharine Stratton Ladd, Mrs. George Williamson Livermore Ladd, school mistress, writer of fugitive prose, verse, and artist, was born in Richmond, Virginia, October 18, 1808; died in Fairfield County, South Carolina, January 30, 1899. Her father, James Stratton, arrived in Richmond from Ireland 1806 and a year later after this date married Martha Ann Collins. Six months after Catharine Ladd was born he fell from a vessel off the coast and drowned.

Mrs. Catharine Ladd was educated in the schools of Richmond and was said to have been a playmate of Edgar Allen Poe. One of the most treasured recollections of Richmond was her meeting Lafayette at a public reception there in 1824. In 1828 she married George Williamson Livermore Ladd, who was born in Plymouth, New Hampshire, and who had been a seaman for ten years before; but who was then in the South as a portrait painter having studied under the famous B.F.B. Morse of Boston.

Accompanied by his mother, she went to Charleston, South Carolina, where they arrived in time to witness the jubilee of the election of Andrew Jackson. From Charleston they went to Augusta, Georgia. Here they remained until burned out by the great fire of 1829. They then returned to South Carolina but later removed to Macon, Georgia, where for three years Mrs. Ladd was principal of Vineville Academy. Next she operated a school for girls in York, South Carolina. In 1839 she learned there was a large brick building on the main street of Winnsboro that would be ideal for an academy. Previous to this time she had had as pupils for several years the daughter of the Honorable Osmond Woodward of Winnsboro. Mr. Woodward through his interest in getting her school in the town had the Ladd possessions moved by his teams to the large building, and on January 1, 1840 the Winnsboro Female Institute was opened in style.

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In 1850 it was said there were 100 young ladies as pupils, some from as great a distance as Charleston, along with nine excellent teachers; and Mrs. Ladd remained principal until the school was closed by the Civil War.

Mrs. Ladd took a keen interest in public affairs, and it is said she published as early as 1831 ARTICLES ON THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MANUFACTURING IN SOUTH CAROLINA. It is also said she submitted a design for the Confederate flag. As permanent president of the Ladies' Relief Association of Fairfield she did much for the sick and wounded Confederate soldiers. Her son, Albert Washington Ladd, was wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines; her husband died on July 14, 1864. And she lost everything in 1865 when Sherman's troops burned her home which with wooden dining-hall sat South of the brick school building. After this she resided for sometime in the dwelling immediately north of the three-story school building.

In 1870 she reopened a boarding and day school taking male and female pupils; and this last school was in the western part of the county in the Feasterville community. Here she gave instruction in music, painting and dancing. Probably because of her failing eye-sight she retired in 1880 and went to live at historic Buena Vista plantation nearby in her 91st. year. And although she had been a member of the Episcopal Church she was buried in Salem Presbyterian Churchyard.

Her husband died in 1864 and is interred in a church cemetery in Winnsboro.

Mrs. Ladd's poems are characterized by strong religious feeling and love of nature. Her occasional letters of reminiscence and her later poems which appeared in the Winnsboro press are signed "Mrs. C. Ladd". but her earlier pen names are said to have been "Minnie Mayflower", "Arturus" and "Elifa". Two poems of little merit were signed by her pseudonym, "Morna" and "Elida" appeared in the second volume of the Southern Literary Messenger. Her articles on art and education as tales, essays, plays and news, letters were well received .

Today the two well-preserved printed programs of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and a finely executed piece of crochet in 100 size thread, and several oil landscapes are treasured by Mrs. Ladd's descendents of Winnsboro. The plays given by pupils of the Ladd school were presented in the Thesbian Hall on East Washington Street. It has been told the hall was built especially for the dramas given by Mrs. Ladd; and in the hall until very recent years still intact stood the scenic back-drops of the stage painted by her. This theatre was the second oldest active one in the state, second to Dock Street Theatre in Charleston.

Among the fine oil portraits executed by Dr. George Williamson Livermore Ladd in the possession of Fairfield County folk are those of the Honorable Osmond Woodward and Mrs. Woodward in the home of Miss Alice A. B. Walker and two of the ancestors of the Misses Julia and Mary Faucette in the Feasterville community of the county.

See below copy of records in books of the office of Probate Judge of Fairfield County, S. C., in Winnsboro. The ownership of the Ladd school property is shown here.

1829 deed from Richard Cathcart Lot #53 on Congress Street, Winnsboro, S. C. Consideration . \$200.00 to John Mc Master.

March 29, 1852 deed from John Mc Master Lot #53 and house on Congress

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Street. Winnsboro. S.C. Consideration \$3,500.00 to George W. Ladd.

Deed. 1862 George W. Ladd deed lot #53 plus other lots with house on Congress Street, Winnsboro, S.C. Consideration \$6,000.00 to Philip Porcher (Trustee for Mattie Eggleston, wife of George Eggleston of Charleston.)

Nov 27, 1874 deed from Maria Porcher of lots on Congress Street, Winnsboro, S.C. with residence. Consideration \$30000.00 to Priscilla Ketchin.

~~November 29, 1938 deed to John W. Cathcart by Bank of Fairfield officers signed by Priscilla Ketchin, and her heirs.~~

Mr. Ladd died Aug 14, 1864, and is interred in a church cemetery in Winnsboro, S.C.

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