

News & Herald, March 15, 1901

THE LYLES FAMILY

I quote a paragraph from "Mills' Statistics" : "The first settlement of Fairfield District took place about the year 1745. Colonel John Lyles and his brother, Ephraim , were among the first settlers. They located at the mouth of Beaver Creek, on Broad River. Ephraim Lyles was killed by Indians in his own house; but by a wonderful interposition of Providence, the Indians went off and left Lyles' seven or eight children and his wife in it, after killing a negro on the outside. The Lyles were native of Brunswick, Va., but moved to this county from Buis County, (?) N.C.."

By some it was believed that Ephraim Lyles was shot by Tories, not Indians.

Colonel Aromanus Lyles was the oldest son of Ephraim Lyles, and inherited all the land on which his father had located, by the law of primogeniture which was in force in South Carolina and other states until after the Revolution. He was a partisan officer during the war and fought in many of the battles. "Little Ephraim" as he was called by way of distinction, told me of he and his brothers being in the engagement at Fish Dam, where General Sumter commanded, and of other battles which I have forgotten, except that all of the Lyles who were old enough, fought in the Battle of Eutaw, which was one of the hardest contested conflicts of the Revolutionary War.

I think Colonel Aromanus Lyles first married a Valentine, afterwards a Means who was a sister of Colonel Thomas Means (she died childless); and last a widow, Mrs. Kinnerly, in the year 1816. He died shortly thereafter, in 1817. He had six sons and one daughter, viz: Ephraim, John, Valentine, James, Aromanus, Thomas, and Rebecca.

Ephraim married a Miss Foot and removed to Chester District, on Broad River. He was Captain of a militia or a rifle company before he left Fairfield. He was a fine looking gentleman, even when he had ceased to be a young man. He had daughters, but no sons. The eldest daughter married a brother of Chancellor Harper (?) (paper torn and part missing here). After his death, she married Thomas Booker of the same county by whom she had an only daughter, who died early in womanhood.

Rebecca married Blanton Glenn. The youngest daughter married William Worthy, of Chester District, who soon after died, leaving one daughter, who married Capt. Thomas Bynum, who died in July 1884, at Glenn Springs. His widow and her mother are still living near Newberry Court House.

John Lyles married a daughter of Reuben Sims, near Mabinton, Newberry County. He had five sons and one daughter. The oldest, Benjamin, married Katie Rook. Another son, Thomas Jefferson, first married a Miss Richards of Union County, and had only one daughter. He afterwards married a Miss Harrington of Newberry. His third, and last wife, was a Miss Earle of Greenville. He died not long since and was much loved and respected. His widow is still living, and married McGhee of Greenville.

John, the youngest son, also died not many years ago.

Eliza, the only daughter of John Lyles, married Golding Ederington in December, 1822. He died the following fall, and she married William Lyles, called "Carpenter Bill". He died not long after, leaving an only daughter. His widow lived until 1883.

Valentine Lyles also married a daughter of Reuben Sims, and moved west.

Captain James Lyles married widow Goree. She was Drucilla Lyles before her marriage, a daughter of Little Ephraim. She had one daughter born to Goree, at the time of her second marriage, who died in 1828. Capt. James Lyles was much respected by all who knew him. He had three children, Ephraim, John, and Drucilla; all are now deceased. He was a consistent, useful member of the Baptist Church for many years before his death, which took place in Mississippi, the state of his adoption.

If not out of place, permit me to relate a story I have often heard years ago, to which Col. Aaromanus Lyles was a party. It was that he was riding past a new ground where an old Dutch woman named Margaret Godfrey was splitting rails. The Colonel addressing her as Margaret, said, "Margaret, what in the devil are you doing?" She replied, "I'se mauling." The Colonel responded, "Thunder couldn't split that log." She rejoined, "By God, I'se wus dan dunder!" It was said to have been a gum log.

Thomas Lyles was the youngest son of Col. Aromanus Lyles (eldest son of the first settler of that name) and lived a short time after his marriage on Mill Creek, then moved to Wateree Creek, thence to Broad River, where he was born, and settled on his father's plantation, where his father died in 1817. He next bought William Fant's place on the Columbia Road, and settled on it in January 1821. He was a man of untiring energy and fixed purpose, of more than ordinary mental calibre, fond of mills and financial enterprises. With a large planting interest, he combined a mercantile enterprise and associated with himself, John Smith of Wateree. He commanded, as Captain, the Wateree troop of cavalry at the time our state passed the Ordinance of Nullification, and I was cornetist. We were all ready to march to Charleston to whip "Old Hickory" and would have done so, or tried, had it not been for the timely and fortunate modification by Congress of the Tariff Act of 1832. I have often thought of the whipping we would have received had it not been for "Clay's Olive Branch," as it was so truly called.

He was promoted to the office of Major in 1832. Afterward he was commissioned by Governor R. Y. Hayne in 1832 as Lt. Col. of the first squadron of cavalry organized within the 6th Brigade of South Carolina Militia. He was a true patriot. At the beginning of the Civil War, although he was seventy-five years old, he equipped a young soldier and sent him to fight in his place.

Major Thomas Lyles was a man of undaunted courage. At the time of Sherman's raid, he was confined to bed with a dislocated hip. One of the raiders, (perhaps thinking that he was feigning disability) approached with a lighted torch, saying, "Unless you give me silver and gold, I'll burn you alive." To this the old hero replied, "I've not many years to live anyway, burn and be damned!" The yankees, at this characteristic speech, ordered a negro to remove the torch from under the bed, remarking, "You are the bravest man I have seen in South Carolina."

Major Lyles represented Fairfield in the Legislature for eight years. He married Mary A .C. Woodward in December 1810. They had only two children, Thomas M., and William S. Lyles. His wife died in 1855. He lived at his home near Buckhead until his death, which took place on January 19, 1874, at the advanced age of eighty-seven.

"Life's labor done, Serenely to his rest he passed,

While the soft memory of his virtues yet linger

Like sunset hues, when that bright orb has set."

His older son, Thomas M. Lyles, married Eliza R., the youngest daughter of Col. Austin F. Peay. They were the parents of seven sons and six daughters; two of the daughters died in childhood. Mrs. Lyles died in 1897.

William Boykin, the oldest son was married to Sallie W. Strother soon after he returned from the University of Virginia. She lived but a short time. Two years later, he married Georgianna C., daughter of J. M. Dantzler of Orangeburg District. He was one of the first to respond to his country's call in the late Civil War, and went from home as a First Lieutenant of the Buckhead Guards to the attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861. At the reorganization of the 6th Regiment, South Carolina Volunteers, in Virginia, he was made Captain of the Company and was killed at the battle of Seven Pines May 31, 1862, while gallantly leading his command to the charge, aged twenty-six years. The enemy occupied the field next morning, and our men, sent under a flag of truce to recover the dead, were refused permission to enter the lines; hence he was buried on the field of battle.

"But Freedom's young favorites sleep as sound

On Foreign soil as native ground."

Captain William Boykin Lyles possessed a warm and genial disposition, and was brave and generous to a fault.

"When hearts whose truth was proven,

Like his, are laid in earth,

There should be a wreath woven

To tell the world their worth."

He left a widow and one little daughter, Sue Boykin, who grew to lovely womanhood, married J. William McCants in 1882, and died six months after. They were not long severed, for he passed from earth November 1, 1885. Their mortal remains are interred in the cemetery of the M. E. Church in Winnsboro, there to lie til the resurrection morn.

Captain Thomas M. Lyles had five other brave sons in the Confederate Army: Thomas, Nicholas, Austin, John, and Belton. Austin was twice wounded, first at Dranesville, then at the Second Battle of Manassas, and was killed near Petersburg, Virginia in June 1864, aged only twenty-one years.

The four remaining brothers returned home unmaimed

Nicholas served through the whole war and was slightly wounded once or twice. He married Lou Poelinitz of Alabama and moved to that State. Nicholas was sheriff of Marengo County, Alabama, and died in 1899. Thomas is living in Louisiana. John W., who married Sue S. Morris, is a practical farmer and was a member of the Legislature from this county one term. Belton married Rosalie McMeekin, and James the youngest son married Cora Irby, who died. They all engaged in planting.

Of Captain Thomas Lyles' daughters, Sallie E. married Lt. E. A. Poelinitz of Alabama; Mattie married A. E. Davis of Monticello; Rebecca V. became the second wife of Major T. W. Woodward of Winnsboro; and Carrie E. married J. Feaster Lyles of Buckhead.

Old Major Thomas Lyles's second son, William, was a man of fine intellect, with a warm heart and generous to a fault, and like his father, represented Fairfield in the Legislature. He was an enthusiastic member of the Secession Convention. He died April, 1862, much lamented. He was twice married, first to Sallie P. Woodward. They several sons who died in childhood, and two daughters, Mary C., who married Colonel S. D. Goodlett, of Greenville, and died in January 1877, leaving a son and a daughter. Sallie P., the youngest child, married John C. Feaster, and resides at her grandfather's old homestead.

In May 1846, Major William S. Lyles married Sallie A. Haynesworth of Sumter Court House. There were five children by this marriage: Sue H. who married C. B. Pearson, and died in 1868; Fannie Hortense who died in childhood; Fannie Eliza who died in her fourteenth year; William H., the only son, removed to Columbia and married Miriam M. Sloan of Anderson. He is engaged in the practice of law and has also been a member of the legislature from Richland County. The youngest child, Florence, married Mr. M. L. Kinard, a popular clothing merchant of Columbia, S.C.