

Thomas Lyles

The State April 13, 1919

Capt. Thomas Lyles Life Ends Suddenly

Member of One of Oldest Fairfield County Families Dies in Eighty-second Year.

Rockton, April 12 - Capt. Thomas Lyles, died suddenly yesterday morning at his home at Rockton, Fairfield County, in his 82nd year, having been born at the home of his father, Capt. Thomas M. Lyles, in western Fairfield near Lyles Ford in September, 1837. The funeral and burial will be in Winnsboro Sunday afternoon at 5:30 o'clock. Captain Lyles was of the eldest line of descent of the oldest family in Fairfield county, his father being the eldest son of Maj. Thomas Lyles, the eldest son of Col. Arromanus Lyles, the eldest son of Ephraim Lyles, one of the brothers who came from Virginia, and were the first white settlers of Fairfield County. The other immigrant brother, John Lyles was killed by Tories and Indians.

The family has shown great vitality and longevity. Capt. Thomas M. Lyles, the father of the Thomas Lyles who has just died, was one of the largest landowners on Broad River. In Western Fairfield, and married Miss Eliza Peay, daughter of Col. Austin Peay, who owned land for ten miles along the Wateree River in Eastern Fairfield. Thomas M. Lyles and Eliza Peay were educated at the South Carolina College and at Barhamville Academy, respectively, and married at 20 and 16 years of age, rearing 11 children and living together as man and wife in their original home for more than 65 years. His father, Maj. Thomas Lyles, who had married Mary Woodward, lived to be nearly 80.

Capt. Thomas Lyles, the younger, attended Mount Zion Academy in Winnsboro under the famous Professor Hudson, entered the South Carolina College in 1855, joined the Euphratean Society, graduated in 1858, and in 1859 moved to Louisiana, near Shreveport, where he spent most of his life as a planter, returning to his old county six years ago to spend his last days among his kindred, he having never married. After a few years in the old neighborhood, he located at Rockton, on the plantation of the late Col. Thomas Woodward, in order to be near his sisters, Mrs. Rebecca V. Woodward and Mrs. Mattie Davis. He steadfastly refused to live in town, being devoted to a simple rural life.

He volunteered in the Confederate Army from Louisiana at the first call and served in the Ninth Louisiana Regiment. Later after recovering from a wound he was assigned to service with South Carolina troops and upon the surrender of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston in North Carolina he had charge of a squad of men, chiefly from Orangeburg, returning to their homes with a wagon and some provisions. After a short stay with his parents he returned to Louisiana.

As a graduation present, his grandfather from whom he was named, gave him a handsome gold watch, on the face of which was engraved the panoramic view of the South Carolina College buildings and campus, a beautiful souvenir of antebellum college days, which he has always cherished.

He preserved a remarkably youthful spirit, being cheerful and social and buoyant, and keenly interested in current events. He loved the domestic, his garden and farming, his animals, and his neighbors. He rode horseback at 80, though he had stopped fox hunting for some years.

He and five brothers served in the Confederate Army, two being killed in battle, William Boykin Lyles and Austin Peay Lyles. The other brothers and sisters are: Nicholas Peay Lyles, who left children in Alabama; John W. Lyles, clerk of court of Fairfield; Belton English Lyles, living near Blairs, in Fairfield County; James Septimus Lyles, who left children now living in Columbia (Mrs. Carrie and Gussie Mobley and James Lyles); Mrs. Sallie Poellnitz, who left children in Alabama. Mrs. Mattie Davis and Mrs. Rebecca V. Woodward in Winnsboro and Mrs. Carrie Lyles, who lives near Seivern, in Lexington County.

He was a first cousin of William H. Lyles of Columbia and Mrs. M. L. Kinard. [transcribed by D. Whitesell for SCGT]