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Hon. Creighton B. Coleman
Representative, SC House
P.O. Box 1006
Winnsboro, S.C. 29180

Dear Creighton,

Please pardon the presumption or enjoy the irony of my writing the son of the Circuit Court Judge whose picture was recently hung in the Fairfield County Court Room concerning hanging the smaller painting of my great, great grandfather, Col. James H. Rion, , in the same room. I suspect you have heard as much or more about it than you care to recently, so I'll try to be brief. However, retired Air Force Col. Gabel has done a great deal of research, and I am sending his mini-biography to you by email, just in case...

Col. Gabel's work and our correspondence include one reference in an old letter to a favorite story which, even if apocryphal, illustrates the Colonel's personality and, above all, character. The Col's. Law office was in the little Law Range across an ally from the town hall, and across Main Street from the Robert Mills Courthouse. One day the grandson of the man who cleaned the office ran in, "Col. Rion, sir, they're going to hang Joe (for raping a white woman) on the Railroad Platform!" (this was across from the Col.'s house, and his wife and nine kids.) The Col. gets his civil war revolver, jumps on his horse, rides up the street, jumps onto the platform, faces the crowd, draws the revolver, and, "I'll shoot the first man who lays a hand on that son of a bitch." The crowd disperses, and some respectable citizens approach, led by the Presbyterian Minister, "Col., that was the bravest thing we ever saw, if we'd had the courage we would have stopped it ourselves. If there's anything we can ever do for you, just let us know." To which the Col. replied, "Well, do any of you gentlemen have any clean linen?"

Along with all his military, professional, business, and political wounds, successes and honors, went a strong spine and a self-deprecating sense of humor. So it's high praise for both and proper to assert that the Col.'s picture's presence in the court room would be consistent with the Judge's. Of course, I'd be glad to hear from you on this or any other matter at 803-734-3880.

Sincerely,

Ec: Ross A. Burton, Esq.