

# **2011 Spring Meeting of the Edgefield County Historical Society**

---

**Celebrating the Life of  
William Miller Bouknight (1896–1945)  
and the Dedication of the  
William Miller Bouknight Theatre**



**4:00 P.M., Saturday, March 26, 2011  
Joanne T. Rainsford Discovery Center**

© **Edgefield County Historical Society, 2011**

Copies of this booklet are available at \$12.00 each plus \$2.00 for postage and handling from:

Edgefield County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 174  
Edgefield, S.C. 29824  
803-637-2233  
info@historicedgefield.com  
www.historicedgefield.com

Also available from the  
Edgefield County Historical Society:

***The Story of Edgefield***

by the Edgefield History Class  
a full color, 128 page visitor's guide  
\$20.00 each plus \$5.00 for postage and handling.

***The Founding of Edgefield***

by Bettis C. Rainsford  
a 33 page book outlining the background and history of the Founding of Edgefield County and the Construction of the Public Buildings with 16 images, including photographs, maps, plats, documents and a full index  
\$12.00 each plus \$3.00 for postage and handling.

***The Early History of Johnston:  
The Founding & Development of A Railroad Depot Town***

by Hendrik Booraem, V., Ph.D.  
a 155 page book with a general discussion of the early development of Johnston and biographical sketches of many early Johnstonians, including photographs, maps, plats and a full index  
\$15.00 each plus \$3.00 for postage and handling.

***Slave Records of Edgefield County***

By Gloria Ramsey Lucas  
A hardbound book of 432 pages containing a comprehensive compilation of records from the Edgefield County Archives pertaining to the purchasing and selling of slaves  
\$50.00 each plus \$6.00 for postage and handling.

# **2011 Spring Meeting Program**

**Invocation - Rev. Harry Ford, Ebenezer Baptist Church**

**Welcome – Miss Clarice Wise, Vice President**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**“The Spirit of Edgefield”**

**Election of Officers for 2011**

**Report on the State of the Society – President**

Membership Update

Magnolia Dale

Joanne T. Rainsford Discovery Center

Publications

**The Life of William Miller Bouknight**

Biographical Sketch - Bettis C. Rainsford

**The Unveiling – Mr. Lyon Gardiner Tyler**

**Response – Mrs. Frances Payne Bouknight**

**Benediction – Rev. Harry Ford**

**Reception Honoring Mrs. Frances Payne Bouknight Tyler**

# The Spirit of Edgefield

## *(Air: The Bells of St. Mary's)*

---

The Spirit of Edgefield,  
Whatever betide,  
Is calling her children,  
From far and from wide;  
In city and village  
Or far out at sea,  
They hear her voice calling,  
"Come back, sons, to me!"

The Spirit of Edgefield  
Is calling today  
Her young men and maidens,  
Her youth, to the fray  
To build a great nation  
As strong men of yore;  
A challenge she offers:  
"Go forward once more!"

Old Edgefield, dear Edgefield  
Thy children all love thee;  
Thy great men, thy good men,  
Wherever they be,  
Turn back to the scenes oft'  
Remembered in story  
Thy children all come back,  
          come back  
To thee, to thee.

Old Edgefield, dear Edgefield  
Thy children all love thee;  
Thy great men, thy good men,  
Wherever they be,  
Turn back to the scenes oft'  
Remembered in story  
Thy children all come back,  
          come back  
To thee, to thee.

*Hortense Caroline Woodson (1896-1990)*  
*Officer of the Society for Half a Century*

# William Miller Bouknight

(1896-1945)

*By Bettis C. Rainsford, Historian  
Edgefield County Historical Society*

William Miller Bouknight, scion of several of the oldest and most prominent families of Edgefield County, played a significant role in the development of Edgefield County in the first half of the twentieth century. But for his premature and tragic death, he would have done much more for the progress and prosperity of the County. The Edgefield County Historical Society is pleased to be able to honor this most distinguished native son by naming its new theatre in the Joanne T. Rainsford Discovery Center in his honor. Perpetuating the memory of eminent persons like Mr. Bouknight will provide great inspiration for future generations of Edgefield County citizens and encourage them to emulate the examples of these distinguished leaders.

William Miller Bouknight was born March 21, 1896 at Mulberry Hill Plantation, the Edgefield County home of his parents which was located approximately half-way between Trenton and Johnston.<sup>1</sup> Mulberry Hill, originally been part of the property owned by the Gomillion family, had been purchased by Mr. Bouknight's father, Captain Joseph Huie Bouknight (1841-1911), in 1881.<sup>2</sup> Shortly thereafter while still a bachelor, Captain Bouknight commissioned Michael Anton Markert, the Austrian architect/builder of Edgefield, to design and build his house.<sup>3</sup>



*Mulberry Hill, home of William Miller Bouknight*

1 Autobiographical manuscript of Frances Payne Tyler, draft of 2010

2 Deed book 7, page 153, Edgefield County Archives.

3 The architectural features of Mulberry Hill, including the octagonal columns, the pediments over the windows and the braces under the eaves, are signature features of Markert. These features may be compared to those on Carnoosie, the Old Law Building and Magnolia Dale which were also built or enlarged by Markert.

Captain Bouknight was a native of that area of Edgefield County which is now Saluda County near the Saluda River known as Mt. Willing. His family owned and operated Bouknight's Ferry Plantation. After attending Newberry College and the Arsenal at Columbia, he attended the Citadel and was awarded his diploma in 1865.<sup>4</sup> During the Civil War he served for a year with the corps of Citadel cadets. After the War he assumed management of his father's plantation at Mt. Willing. In 1876 he was actively engaged in the Red Shirt movement to restore Democratic government to South Carolina. He became a successful planter, businessman and president of the Bank of Johnston.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, given the fact that the theatre in the Discovery Center is being named for his son, Captain Bouknight built as an investment in 1907 two houses on the western side of the site where the Discovery Center now stands.<sup>6</sup>



*William Miller Bouknight's father,  
Joseph Huiet Bouknight (1841-1911)*

Captain Bouknight's father, William Bouknight (1807-1873), a successful planter and businessman at Bouknight's Ferry;<sup>7</sup> was of German extraction whose father, Daniel Bouknight (1785-1850), was the first of the family to come into the Edgefield District. Daniel Bouknight was the grandson of Michael Bauknecht (1711-17??) who immigrated to South Carolina from Neckartenzlinger, Germany in 1752 and who settled in what was known as the "Dutch Fork" area of present-day Lexington County. The actual site of the original grant upon which Michael settled is believed to be under Lake Murray.<sup>8</sup>

Captain Bouknight's mother, Nancy Huiet (1812-1892), was of French Huguenot and German extraction. Her father, Jacob Huiet, was descended from Francis Huet, a French Huguenot, whose family had moved into Germany after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Several generations later in 1738, Francis Huet and his wife, Maria Gertrude Quattlebaum, and their two children,

4 Hemphill, J.C., Editor-in-Chief, *Men of Mark in South Carolina*, Vol. II, Washington, DC, 1908, p. 29.

5 Ibid. *Confederate Veteran*, July, 1912.

6 *Edgefield Chronicle*, October 24, 1907. Older Edgefield residents will remember these houses: the one on the corner of Main and Bacon as the home of Mrs. Stella Blalock during the 1950's and 1960's and the other on the corner of Simkins and Bacon as the home of the Rubenstein family early in the century and of the Turner family in the 1970's and 1980's. The Main Street house was demolished in the 1970's and the Simkins Street house in the 1980's.

7 See Burton, Orville Vernon, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions, Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina*, University of North Carolina Press, 1985, p. 122, which notes that William Bouknight had "substantial land with more than sixty slaves."

8 Bauknight, Ivan M., Editor and Publisher, *The Genealogy of the Bauknight-Bouknight Family in the United States*, privately published, Miami, 2000, p. 76.

Jacob and Catherine, immigrated to America aboard the ship Glasgow from Baden Weirbach in the Palatinate, Germany.<sup>9</sup>

Nancy Huiet's mother, Christianna Halterwanger was, like the Bouknights, from a family of German settlers in the Dutch Fork. Her ancestors had played important roles in the fight for independence during the American Revolution.<sup>10</sup>



*William Bouknight  
(1807-1873), father  
of J. H. Bouknight*



*Nancy Huiet Bouknight  
(1812-1892), mother of  
J. H. Bouknight*

William Bouknight's mother, Emma Bettis (1852-1896), was the daughter of Benjamin Warren Bettis (1812-1893) and Elizabeth Jane Miller Bettis (1828-1910) who lived at that oldest of landmarks of Edgefield County: the Pine House. The Bettis family had arrived in the Edgefield County area from North Carolina during the American Revolution. They traced their ancestry back to Wortham Manor in Suffolk, England where the family had resided for many centuries.<sup>11</sup> John Bettis, the grandfather of Benjamin Warren Bettis, was a soldier in the Revolution. His home and mill were located at what later became known as "Samuel's Pond" just north of the Town of Trenton.<sup>12</sup> His son, Francis Bettis (1775-1846), acquired a large acreage extending from the Pine House vicinity nearly to Horn's Creek Church.



*William Miller Bouknight's mother,  
Emma Bettis Bouknight (1852-1896)*

9 Huiet, J. Fritz, Compiler, *The Huiet (Huet) Family of South Carolina*, a copy now found in the D. A. Tompkins Library, Edgefield, S.C. This comprehensive genealogical collection contains a number of Huiet family papers from varied sources. Although sources differ on the origin of Francis Huet, an article by Kay Phillips dated October 10, 1999, in that collection makes a compelling case that Francis Huet of South Carolina was the Huet who came to America in 1738.

10 Huiet, *The Huiet (Huet) Family of South Carolina*. She was the daughter of Johannes Haltiwanger, who fought with Colonel Philemon Waters in 1780 and 1781. His service is detailed in an affidavit from A.S. Salley, Jr., dated September 2, 1911, contained in the Huiet collection. See also Chapman, John A., *History of Edgefield County*, Newberry, 1897, pp. 395-396, 503-504. Christianna Halterwanger's great-grandfather was Capt. Michael Leitner of the Revolution and a member of the Second Provincial Congress.

11 See Adelle Cobb Kerrigan's *The Bettis - England to America*, privately published, 1950, which provides a comprehensive study of the many branches of the American Bettis family. Also, *The Bettis of Wortham in Suffolk - 1480-1905*, John Lane Company, London, 1912, gives the history of the English family. See the Tyler manuscript, pp. 280-288, which describes the visit of Mrs. Tyler and her cousin, Mary Bettis "Bet" Bouknight Runnels to Wortham Manor in 1999.

12 The 1817 and 1825 maps of the Edgefield District show this as Bettis' Mill.



Benjamin Warren Bettis's mother, Lucy Hatcher (1778-1834), was the daughter of Captain Benjamin Hatcher (17??-1780) who had arrived in Edgefield County from Virginia just prior to the Revolution.<sup>13</sup> His family had a long heritage in Virginia.<sup>14</sup>

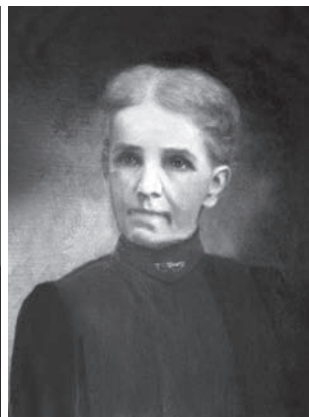
After valiant service in the Revolution on behalf of indepen-

dence, Benjamin Hatcher was tragically killed in an ambush by Tories in the last year of the War.<sup>15</sup> The Hatchers lived approximately half a mile northwest of the Pine House on the southwest side of the road to Edgefield. The Hatcher house survived until 1998 when it was demolished after years of deterioration.<sup>16</sup>

Emma Bettis's mother, Elizabeth Jane Miller (1828-1910), was the daughter of Captain James Miller (1792-1847). As a successful and respected planter in the antebellum era, Captain Miller served as Captain of the Edgefield Hussars, a local militia unit. Although he had originally lived on Sweetwater Road about six miles south of Edgefield on lands still owned by his descendants,<sup>17</sup> he later moved to a large plantation on the "Plank Road" (now U.S. Highway 25) about seven miles southeast of Edgefield.<sup>18</sup> There in 1840 he built the "Miller House" which was also known as "Magnolia Grove."<sup>19</sup> In 1994 this house was moved to Main Street in Edgefield where it now serves as the Discovery Center for the Edgefield County Historical Society. Captain Miller's portrait can be seen in the drawing room of his home.<sup>20</sup>



*Benjamin W. Bettis (1812-1893), Emma Bettis's father.*



*Elizabeth Miller Bettis (1828-1910), Emma Bettis's mother.*

13 Pension application of Lucy Hatcher, dated March 27, 1838, W21275, fn 99SC. Also, see *The Hatcher Genealogy* compiled by Leonardo Andrea of Columbia, S.C. for Mrs. S. R. Lucas and Mr. William Bettis, 1948, in the author's collection.

14 Tyler manuscript, pp. 126-129.

15 Pension application of Lucy Hatcher.

16 The author examined this house closely prior to its demolition and concluded that, while it had some elements and materials from the 18th century, it had been substantially altered through the years and little remained of the original structure.

17 See Plat of D. White, D.S., dated April 24, 1846, located in Plat Book 3, p. 3, Edgefield County Archives, which shows the 796 acre tract of Captain James Miller on Sweetwater Road.

18 He also owned another plantation on the Martintown Road toward Augusta known as "Poverty Hill."

19 The name "Magnolia Grove" was derived from the very large magnolia trees in front of the house; however, the name "Magnolia Grove" was apparently not widely used.

20 It has been suggested that this rather amateurish portrait makes Captain Miller look like a "Barbary pirate." For that reason, apparently, certain family members decided to sell the portrait, which was subsequently acquired by Edgefield antique dealers, John and Catherine Morrison. When the Edgefield County Historical Society acquired the house and moved it to Edgefield, the Morrisons generously gave the portrait to the Society. See also Tyler manuscript, pp. 178-181.



Emma Bettis's mother, Elizabeth Jane Miller, was also descended from Captain Benjamin Hatcher. She was the daughter of Lucy Hatcher whose father, Benjamin Hatcher, Jr. (1772-1856), was the son of Captain Benjamin Hatcher and the brother of the Lucy Hatcher who was the mother of Benjamin Warren Bettis.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Elizabeth Jane Miller was a cousin of her husband, Benjamin Warren Bettis.

Emma Bettis was born in 1852 and reared at the Pine House. She received her early education at home, but after the War was sent to a preparatory school for girls in New York City.<sup>22</sup> It was in this period that the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta Railroad was built through Edgefield County and a depot established not far from the Pine House. Initially, the depot was named "Pine



*The Pine House, childhood home of William Miller Bouknight*

House Depot," but sometime around 1873 the name was changed to "Trenton."<sup>23</sup> Within a short time, a new town grew up around the depot with a number of stores, churches and houses. After Emma Bettis returned from New York, she became an active participant in the social life of this new town. When a new Baptist church known as Ebenezer was formed in Trenton, the Bettis family joined and took an active part in it. Emma Bettis, together with her mother, Elizabeth Miller Bettis, spearheaded the development of the cemetery at Ebenezer. She laid out the roads and squares and planted most of the trees which are there, including the magnolias and the conifers.<sup>24</sup>

In 1889, Emma Bettis was married to Captain Joseph Huiet Bouknight. It is interesting that at the time of their marriage, Captain Bouknight was forty-eight years old and his bride was thirty-seven, far older than most people at the time of their first marriage. However, the marriage was fruitful with the birth of four children, Benjamin Bettis Bouknight (1890-1932), Joseph Huiet Bouknight, Jr. (1893-

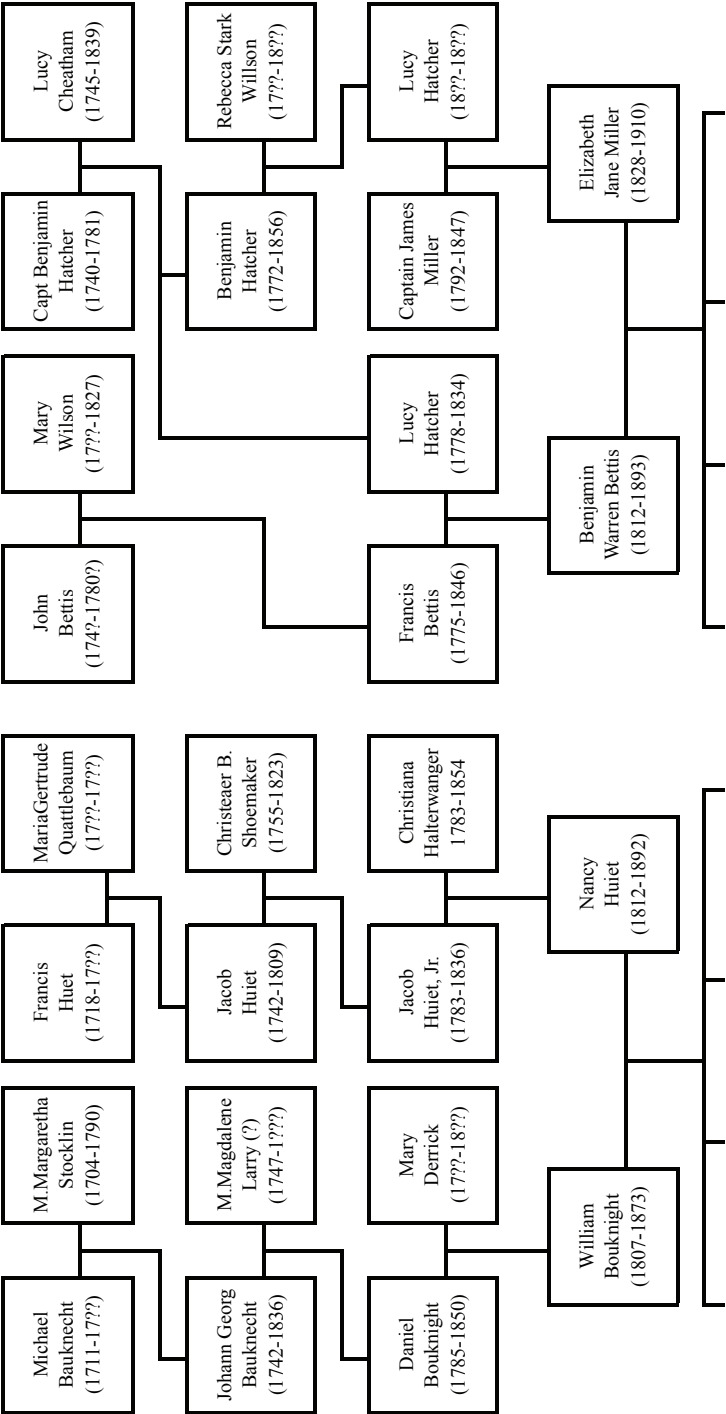
<sup>21</sup> Hatcher genealogy by Andrea.

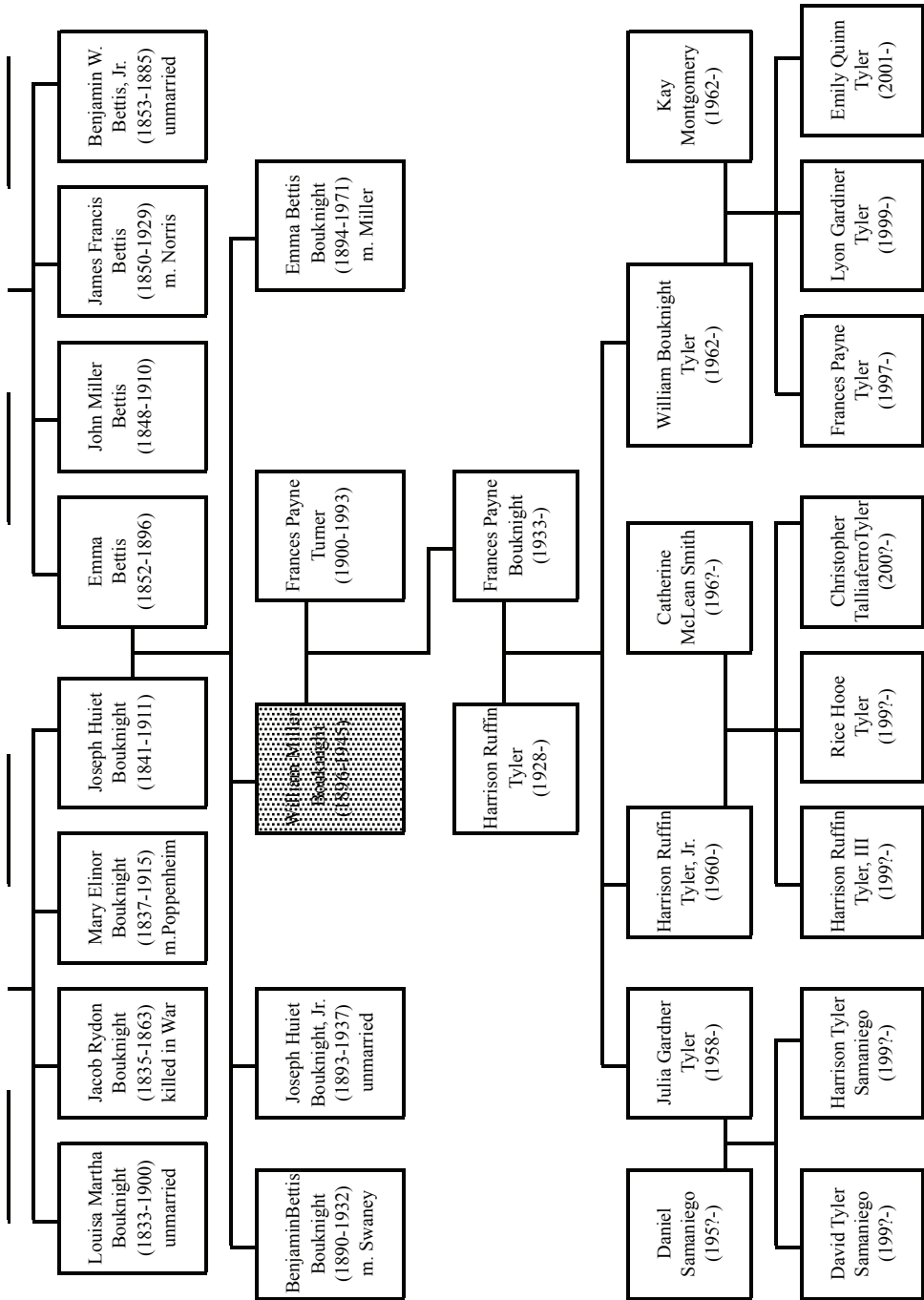
<sup>22</sup> Letters between Emma Bettis and her mother, Elizabeth Miller Bettis, in the possession of Mrs. Frances Payne "Paynie" Bouknight Tyler, provide interesting glimpses into this part of Emma Bettis's life. See Tyler manuscript, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> There is no satisfactory explanation for the origin of the name "Trenton." Presumably some official of the railroad did not like the name "Pine House Depot" and decided to rename their depot "Trenton," possibly after Trenton, New Jersey. It is probably significant that this change of name occurred shortly after the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta Railroad was sold to the Richmond and Danville Railroad, a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Railroad. See Booraem, Hendrik, V, *The Early History of Johnston, The Founding and Development of a Railroad Depot Town*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 1993, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> In this effort she secured the surveying assistance of young Thomas H. Rainsford (1861-1932) who had just completed his study of engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. According to Rainsford family tradition as remembered by June Rainsford Henderson (1895-1993), they enjoyed a jug of wine as the cemetery at Ebenezer was laid out. See also Tyler manuscript, p. 217.

Table of Descent of the Family of  
William Miller Bouknight





1937), Emma Bettis Bouknight (1894-1971) and William Miller Bouknight (1896-1945), the subject of this sketch.

After the birth of William, Emma Bettis Bouknight suffered declining health for nearly seven months until she died on Nov. 7, 1896, an event which was widely lamented throughout the county.<sup>25</sup> Inasmuch as Captain Bouknight was older, active in business and unable to cope with the needs of small children, the four siblings were sent to their grandmother at the Pine House to live. Their grandfather, Benjamin Warren Bettis, had died in 1893, but their grandmother, Elizabeth Miller Bettis, was a tower of strength who rose to the occasion of caring for the children of her deceased daughter. With the help of a devoted servant, Emma La Borde, fondly known as "Bona," and with frequent visits from their father, Mrs. Bettis raised them.<sup>26</sup> She engaged a Mr. Long to tutor the children at home until they were old enough to go to boarding schools. The boys were sent to Porter's Military Academy in Charleston and Emma was sent to Fassifern in North Carolina.<sup>27</sup> Later the three boys would attend the Citadel and Emma, the St. Mary's School in Raleigh.<sup>28</sup>

In May of 1910 the much-beloved "Grandma" and foster mother of the Bouknight children, Elizabeth Miller Bettis, died at home at the Pine House.<sup>29</sup> The children's father, Captain Bouknight, was quite ill and would die a little more than a year later in July of 1911.<sup>30</sup> After the death of their grandmother the children were carried by their tutor, Mr. Long, to 31 Meeting Street in Charleston, South Carolina where they lived with their aunt and uncle, Mary Bouknight Poppenheim and Christopher Prichard Poppenheim.<sup>31</sup> The four Bouknight children were remarkably tall for the time: the oldest, Bettis, was 6 feet 6 inches; Joe was 6 feet 3; William was 6 feet 2 ½; and Emma was a full 6 feet. They made quite an impression on one Charleston matron who, upon encountering the four on the street, exclaimed: "My, what a magnificent display of mankind!"<sup>32</sup>

Upon his father's death William Bouknight inherited Mulberry Hill. Joe inherited Homeland Plantation across the highway from Mulberry and down towards Johnston; Emma inherited the overseer's house catty-cornered to Mulberry which she named "Pecan Grove"; and Bettis lived at the Pine House. William took his responsibility for managing Mulberry seriously and made frequent trips back to the Plantation even while a student at Porters and the Citadel. One of the first acts which he and his siblings did after inheriting their Plantations was to plant pecan trees. These plantings took place in the period from 1912 to 1914. Bettis planted the avenues of trees along the roads near the Pine House, and Joe, Emma and William planted the trees near Mulberry, Homeland and Pecan Grove. Also, in this period, as a tribute to his beloved grandmother, William Bouknight added "Miller" as his middle name.

---

<sup>25</sup> See the *Edgefield Chronicle*, November 4, 1896 for the eulogy written by Editor James T. Bacon.

<sup>26</sup> Tyler manuscript, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

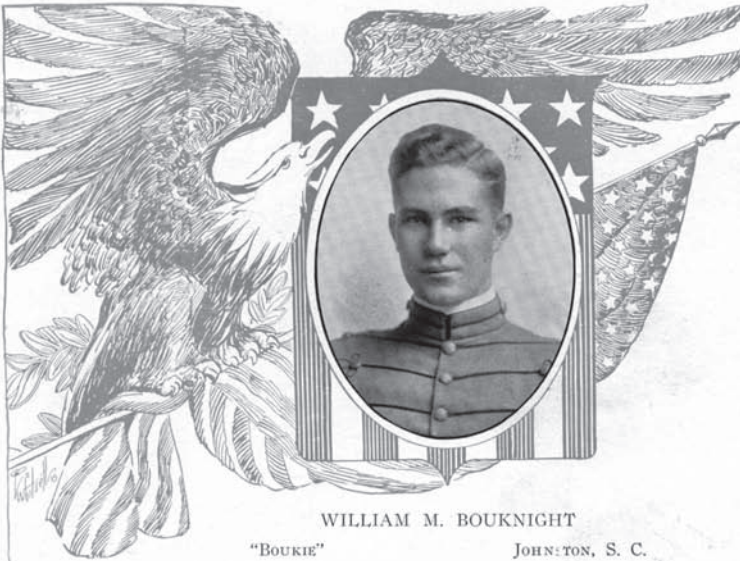
<sup>28</sup> *Confederate Veteran*, July, 1912.

<sup>29</sup> *Edgefield Chronicle*, May 12, 1910; *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 11, 1910.

<sup>30</sup> *Edgefield Chronicle*, July 6, 1911.

<sup>31</sup> Tyler manuscript, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 37-38.



WILLIAM M. BOUKNIGHT

"BOUKIE"

JOHNSTON, S. C.

*"Just being happy is a fine thing to be"*

Private Companies "D," "A"; Sergeant Company "A"; Color Sergeant Company "B"; Private Company "C"; Polytechnic Literary Society, Corresponding Secretary (2), Vice-President (1), Chief Monitor (1); Baseball Manager (1); Tennis Squad (2); Picnic Committee (2); Member of "Old Guard."

+

The most pleasant, agreeable, and obliging man we have ever met is "BOUKIE." He never aspired to military honors, but Jesse seemed determined that he should have a sergeant; consequently he carried the flag in his second class year. "BOUKIE" hopes some day to wire Johnston; that's why he takes Physics—meanwhile, his chief occupations at the Citadel are keeping "Pons" straight, making baseball schedules, and furnishing kale for the needy ones.

He has never entered into the social world, but when he does, "Look out, ladies!"

His generous, kind-hearted, and optimistic disposition is sure to win friends in after life, as it has in the four years we have known him.



*William Bouknight's page in The Sphinx, the Citadel's Annual, 1916*

After finishing at Porter's William entered the Citadel from which he was graduated in 1916, majoring in mathematics.<sup>33</sup> He then did post-graduate work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he was a member of Theta Chi

<sup>33</sup> *The Sphinx*, 1916, the annual of the Citadel.

Fraternity.<sup>34</sup> When the United States entered World War I, he joined the army as a lieutenant in the American Expeditionary Forces in France where he served under General John J. Pershing. While in the Meuse-Argonne sector he was engaged in the most severe trench fighting of the entire war. For his heroism he was awarded two Silver Stars and the Purple Heart. His citation states that his Purple Heart was bestowed “for gallantry in action.”<sup>35</sup>



*Lieutenant Bouknight's  
World War I medals*



*Lieutenant Bouknight, circa 1918*

While in Paris during World War I he met a family connection originally from Ridge Spring, Miss Sarah Watson, who had come to work with the YWCA. She later taught at the Sorbonne. After the War, at her suggestion, he studied at the Sorbonne.<sup>36</sup> While in Europe he spent some time in Bavaria, Germany near the town of Poppenheim visiting his cousin, the Graf Poppenheim, at their family schloss (castle).<sup>37</sup>

Mr. Bouknight returned to Mulberry Hill Plantation and resumed management of the plantation. It was at this time, when he was twenty-five, that a tragic accident occurred. As he was overseeing operations at the plantation sawmill his coat was caught in the machinery and he was pulled back with his leg being pinned between the power wheel and the belt. His leg was horribly mangled in the machinery and almost severed. After enduring excruciating pain for an extended period, he was finally taken in his father's railroad car to the hospital in Augusta. The doctors doubted that he would live. However, following an amputation he gradually recovered. As a result, for the remainder of his life, he walked with an artificial leg and the help of a cane or crutches, and was often in pain.<sup>38</sup>

In 1926 he wed Frances Payne Turner (1900-1993) of Johnston who was the daughter of Mark Toney Turner (1867-1937) and Frances Payne Turner (1870-

34 Tyler manuscript, p. 39. David Duncan Wallace, *History of South Carolina, Biographical Volume IV*, American Historical Society, 1934, p. 566.

35 Letters of W. H. Simpson, Lieut-Colonel, Infantry, Acting Chief of Staff, dated September 3, 1919, in the possession of William Bouknight Tyler, Richmond, Virginia.

36 Tyler manuscript, p. 40. Rogers, Mrs. Paul Hamilton, "Interesting Personalities, the Story of Sarah Pressly Watson," Thursday Study Club, Hartsville, SC., April 1967.

37 The Bouknight family had twice intermarried with the Poppenheims who had come to America but who had maintained relations with their German cousins. Years later, during the period from 1938 until the end of World War II, Rudolph, young Graf (Count) Poppenheim was sent by his family to stay in America with his cousins. See Tyler manuscript, pp. 156-157.

38 Tyler manuscript, p. 64-66. Today, many of those in Edgefield County who remember Mr. Bouknight primarily remember that he had a "wooden leg."



1958). One daughter, Frances Payne Bouknight, affectionately known as “Paynie,” was born to this couple in 1933 and was reared at Mulberry Hill Plantation.

On his Plantation Mr. Bouknight worked in partnership with his older brothers, Bettis and Joe. Unfortunately none of the Bouknight brothers was blessed with a long life. Bettis died in 1932 at the age of



*Paynie at the age of three on her horse, George*

forty-two and Joe died in 1937 at the age of forty-four. William was to die in 1945 at the age of forty-eight.<sup>39</sup>

The Bouknight Brothers chose to cultivate longer-staple upland Sea Island cotton on their Plantations.<sup>40</sup> Their stationery expressed in Old English script their business, “Bouknight Brothers, Breeders of Pedigreed Cotton Seed.”<sup>41</sup> As the majority of planters moved to low-labor mechanical cultivation which cut the cotton staple, the Bouknight brothers deliberately positioned themselves as suppliers of the higher-quality, longer-staple cotton which was used primarily for making thread.<sup>42</sup> Due to the requirements of total hand labor, a large acreage, a private gin and private storage buildings, their product was more expensive to cultivate, but it also proved to be very profitable.<sup>43</sup>

Later Mr. Bouknight raised asparagus and peaches. He used his father’s railroad siding at Mulberry Hill from which he shipped those commodities by rail. Annually Clemson College brought agriculture students to observe his farming methods.<sup>44</sup> William Bouknight loved animals. He maintained a large work force of farm animals and a nice stable of several Allen Line Tennessee Walking Horses and a matched pair of black standard breeds for his own use in driving.<sup>45</sup>

He was dedicated to his church, Ebenezer Baptist, serving as superintendent of the Sunday school for twenty-two years.<sup>46</sup> He delighted in sponsoring largely-

39 Old Edgefield District Genealogical Society, *Cemeteries, Vol. III*, pp. 36-37.

40 Tyler manuscript, pp. 43-52. Many readers may be surprised to learn that “Sea Island” cotton was produced in Edgefield County, or that it was produced into the middle of the twentieth century. Sea Island cotton is traditionally thought to be produced exclusively on the islands near the coast of South Carolina and Georgia. However, longer-staple, upland Sea Island cotton was grown in many of the inland counties of Georgia and Florida during the last half of the 19th century and well into the twentieth century. Against this background, it is less surprising that it was grown at Mulberry. See *The Story of Sea Island Cotton* by Richard Dwight Porcher and Sarah Fick, Wyrick & Company, Charleston, 2005, pp. 125-132.

41 Stationary in the possession of Frances Payne Bouknight Tyler.

42 Porcher and Fick, pp. 276-278.

43 Tyler manuscript, pp. 43-52.

44 Reference to collaboration with Clemson is noted on the Plantation stationery.

45 Tyler manuscript, pp. 133-136.

46 Wallace, *History, Biographical*, p. 567. *Edgefield Advertiser*, Johnston News, January 2, 1946.



*Ebenezer Baptist Church, William Miller  
Bouknight's church*

attended Christmas and Easter after-services celebrations and would often take his Sunday school students on outings to movies.<sup>47</sup> Each year he would bring his entire work force to Ebenezer to clean and beautify the cemetery.<sup>48</sup> Additionally he was Moderator for the Edgefield Baptist Association for the years 1926 and 1927.<sup>49</sup> He also served his community and state by his participation on many committees and boards.

The death of William Miller Bouknight was unexpected. At the age of forty-eight, on December 19, 1945, he underwent a double operation on his appendix and gall bladder. It was found that the gall bladder had ruptured before the operation and it was immediately realized that he was in serious condition. Even though he improved slightly for several days giving some hope to his family and many friends, his condition began to worsen and he died on December 31, 1945.<sup>50</sup> His funeral was held at Ebenezer Church with an overflowing crowd in attendance. He was buried in the family plot at the church which had been selected by his beloved grandmother, Elizabeth Miller Bettis.

The *Edgefield Advertiser* had the following words to say about William Miller Bouknight:

"To the man[o]r born," William Bouknight loved people. This love extended to all with whom he came in contact, whether it was the servant in his home, or the friends whom he met socially in this lovely home where he was a genial host, or the men with whom he, as an extensive planter and fruit grower, was associated in business. "He walked a prince among men yet never lost the common touch." He went the second mile in friendship, and seemed to possess a gift for knowing what would bring happiness to his friends. He took time to learn of his neighbors and the people about him, was interested in them and their problems and they loved him for it. "Give and it shall be given unto you" was the law that made him rich because it gave him the riches of a rich personality, which is the basis of wealth. He radiated riches in his personality, his cheerful bearing, and his general spirit of helpfulness. He was a radiating focus of good will and made one of the

47 Interview by the author with J. Fritz Huie of Trenton, S.C., March 18, 2011.

48 As told to the author by Mr. Doug L. Wise in 1976 while a large group of citizens were cleaning and restoring the Horn's Creek Church cemetery.

49 Wallace, History, Biographical, p. 567.

50 *Edgefield Advertiser*, Trenton News, December 26, 1945.

finest contributions to his social circle in this way. He lent his presence and support to every worthwhile civic, social or religious undertaking in the community. He loved life and felt there was a great deal more to be done before he finished his course in faith, yet he had contributed happiness to his sphere better than he knew.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to the many individual acts of kindness which he extended to numerous friends and neighbors, the principal contribution of William Bouknight to his county was his inspiring persona and leadership. In the agricultural circles of the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's when so many farmers were suffering from the onslaught of the boll weevil and the effects of the Depression, his persona imparted a much-needed sense of confidence, hope and stability. His devotion to the improvement of agricultural practices and his example of careful business management inspired other Edgefield farmers and gave them hope. This leadership was invaluable to our county and the loss of it, through his death, was a tragedy from which we have long suffered.

## Epilogue



*Paynie Bouknight, the debutant*

After the death of William Bouknight, his widow Frances Turner Bouknight and daughter Frances Payne "Paynie" Bouknight continued to live at Mulberry Hill. Paynie attended Converse College and was graduated from the University of South Carolina. Over the years she had spent considerable time in Richmond, Virginia with her aunt Emma Bouknight Miller, who was married to Leland Miller of Richmond, a distinguished lawyer who was affiliated with several railroads. While in Virginia, she met Harrison Ruffin Tyler, an able and ambitious chemical engineer and businessman with a long and distinguished Virginia heritage.

Harrison was the son of Lyon Gardiner Tyler (1853-1935), long-time president of William and Mary College, and the grandson of President John Tyler (1790-1862), president of the United States from 1841 until 1845. Mr. Tyler is also descended from Virginia's antebellum leader, Edmund Ruffin (1794-1865), and from Pocahontas (1595-1617), Virginia's Indian princess who did much to aid the Jamestown colony.

<sup>51</sup> *Edgefield Advertiser*, Trenton News, January 2, 1946.



*Harrison Tyler, the young chemical engineer and businessman*



*Paynie and Harrison cutting the cake, 1957*

Paynie and Harrison were married in 1957 and have lived ever since in Richmond and in Charles City County where Harrison had grown up. They became the parents of three children, Julia Gardiner Tyler (1958-), Harrison Ruffin Tyler, Jr. (1960-) and William Bouknight Tyler (1962-), and eight grandchildren.

In the early 1970's they purchased Sherwood Forest, President Tyler's home, from Harrison's cousins and have restored it, making it accessible to the public. In 1977 Paynie and her mother made the decision to sell Mulberry Hill along with five acres, and for Mrs. Bouknight to move to Virginia to become custodian of the

Sherwood Forest. Mulberry Hill was sold to Earl and Virginia Honeycutt who lived there for twenty years. Today, Paynie not only retains all of her father's agricultural and timber properties in Edgefield County, but over the years she has added to her holdings. She has a deep love for the county and is always ready to help with worthy causes.

The Edgefield County Historical Society is extremely grateful for the support which Paynie has provided to our organization over the years and we are very pleased to have this opportunity to honor her father.



*Sherwood Forest, the home of President John Tyler*



*The Harrison Tyler Family, at Sherwood Forest, Christmas, 2010*

*Front Row: Harrison Ruffin Tyler, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, III, Frances Payne Bouknight Tyler, Emily Quinn Tyler, Christopher Taliaferro Tyler*

*Second Row: Frances Payne Tyler, Kay Montgomery Tyler, William Bouknight Tyler, Catherine McLean Smith Tyler, Harrison Ruffin Tyler, Jr., Rice Hooe Tyler, Harrison Ruffin Tyler, III.*

*Not pictured: Julia Gardiner Tyler, David Tyler Samaniego and Harrison Tyler Samaniego.*

*Note the portrait of William Miller Bouknight in upper right corner of the photo, painted when he was 21 upon the occasion of his graduation from the Citadel.*

**Edgefield County Historical Society**

Magnolia Dale  
320 Norris Street  
P.O. Box 174  
Edgefield, S.C. 29824  
803-637-2233  
[info@historicedgefield.com](mailto:info@historicedgefield.com)