

2012 Fall Meeting of
The Edgefield County Historical Society

Celebrating Darby Plantation



3:00 P.M., Sunday, November 4, 2012
Darby Plantation
1150 Augusta Road

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

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 develop-
ment of Johnston, with biographical sketches of many early John-
stonians, 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 com-
pilation of records from the
Edgefield County Archives pertaining to the
purchasing and selling of slaves
\$30.00 each plus \$6.00 for postage and handling.

Edgefield County Historical Society

2012 Fall Meeting

3:00 P.M., Sunday, November 4, 2012, Darby Plantation

Program

Invocation - Rev. Larry Ford, Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church

Welcome - Mr. William Morgan “Billy” Benton
President of the Edgefield County Historical Society

Presentation of Colors **Confederate Re-enactors**

Pledge to U. S. Flag

Salute to the S.C. Flag

Salute to the Confederate Flag

Posting of the Colors

“The Spirit of Edgefield”

Historical Period - Mr. Bettis C. Rainsford,
Historian of the Society
“The Story of Darby Plantation”
Ms. Clarice Wise, Vice President of the
Society and Owner of Darby

Unveiling of the Historical Marker

Black Powder Salute answered by Cannon Firing

“Dixie”

Benediction & Blessing - Rev. Larry Ford

Adjourn for a Southern Supper and Tour

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*

The Story of Darby

The Historic Plantation Home of the Bonham Family

By Bettis C. Rainsford

Darby Plantation lies on the ridge separating the headwaters of Horn's Creek from the headwaters of Shaw's Creek. Thus, the rain which falls on one side of the plantation flows into Horn's Creek and eventually into the Savannah River which carries it two hundred winding miles to the Atlantic Ocean.¹ The rain which falls on the other side of the plantation flows into Shaw's Creek and eventually into the Edisto River which also empties into the Atlantic Ocean. It is located at the edge of "the Ridge," an area of about 100 square miles in western South Carolina which had been recognized from the Colonial era for its unique geography and topography, characterized by large, relatively flat expanses at elevations exceeding 600 feet above sea level.² The soils of the Ridge are a combination of the rich red clays of the piedmont over which the sandy soils left by the receding ancient ocean of sixty million years ago are lightly spread. The resulting soils are fertile and provided farmers from the Colonial era until today with near ideal crop production. The relatively high elevations have proved to be very important to the growing of peaches as the early spring frosts settle in the lower elevations surrounding the Ridge and do not kill the young peaches at the higher elevations. The Ridge is divided from the piedmont by the Fall Line. Early maps show that the area northwest of this line is covered by oak and hickory trees, while the area southeast of this line is covered by pine.³

Darby Plantation derives its name from the Darby family who was the first family to actually settle on the property and live there. Benjamin Darby (1748-1833) was a native of Virginia⁴ and may have been the son of a Willis Darby (born circa 1725).⁵ He was married to Mary McRae by whom his first son, Willis Darby, was born in 1768.⁶ In all probability

¹ Readers may question the 200 miles of flow of the Savannah to the Atlantic, but one must remember how much the Savannah meanders on its way to the ocean.

² The elevation of Darby is approximately 665 feet above sea level.

³ See the 1817 map of Thomas Anderson and the 1825 map of Robert Mills.

⁴ Revolutionary War Pension Application of Benjamin Darby, November 6, 1832, S16758.

⁵ See Darby, Rufus M., *Genealogy of the Darby Family*, privately published, Atlanta, GA, 1953, copy in the possession of Bettis C. Rainsford, page 25, which credits "family tradition" for this information. It has been speculated by one Darby descendant that the father of Benjamin Darby was Willis Darby, but this descendant admits that she has no documentary evidence. See letter of Mrs. Sherry Darby Brown dated October 10, 1984, family group chart and Query memorandum in the files of the Tompkins Library, Edgefield, S.C.

⁶ Darby, page 25. This information is also contained in genealogical charts in the files of the Tompkins Library, but has not been independently verified.

Benjamin Darby moved to South Carolina just before or during the Revolution as we find no record of any Royal Grants or deeds to him prior to the 1780's. In 1776 his daughter, Civil, was born in South Carolina, thus documenting that he had already arrived in South Carolina by that time.⁷ Initially, the family located in the area that became Barnwell District.⁸

It was from the Barnwell District that he first joined the Patriot militia in 1778 or 1779, fighting for six months under Captain Daniel Green and Henry Ferguson. He later served for two months during the Battle of Stono where he was under the command of Captain John Ryan and Colonel Andrew Pickens. It may be that this is when Darby moved to the Edgefield District as he began at this time his association with Captain Ryan, a resident of the Horn's Creek area. He was called into service a third time under Captain John Ryan and Colonel LeRoy Hammond, and again under Captain William Swearingen and Colonel John Purvis, also Edgefield residents. He was at the siege of Augusta in May and June of 1781 while he was under the command of Captain Ryan.⁹ He also provided supplies of corn and flour for the Patriot militia during the year 1782.¹⁰

The first actual evidence of Benjamin Darby being in Edgefield County is in 1783 when he became a surety on a bond with Rachel and Isaac Foreman in the estate of Jacob Foreman. In 1784 he purchased 45 acres on the north side of Horn's Creek from Lacon Ryan.¹¹ The following year, 1785, he acquired two grants on Horn's Creek from the State of South Carolina for 100 acres each. On July 15, 1793, he purchased from Ezekiel McClendon, an early settler in the county, two properties for "one hundred pounds Sterling Money" each by Lease and Release, which two properties formed the core of Darby Plantation. One of these properties was 180 acres and the other 470 acres.¹² In 1795 he expanded his Darby Plantation holdings by acquiring a State grant for an adjoining property of 100 acres.

The 180 acres was a portion of a two hundred acre tract granted to Dennis Nowland on August 11, 1774.¹³ This tract of land, described as being in Colleton County,¹⁴ had been surveyed on June 18, 1772 by John

⁷ See 1850 census where Civil Darby Marsh was stated to be born in South Carolina.

⁸ Revolutionary War Pension Application of Benjamin Darby, November 6, 1832, S16758.

⁹ Revolutionary War Pension Application of Benjamin Darby, November 6, 1832, S16758.

¹⁰ See Indents of the State of South Carolina.

¹¹ See deed in the Abbeville County Courthouse which were transferred from the Ninety Six Courthouse.

¹² Deed Book 12, Page 258 & 261, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

¹³ See Royal Grants of South Carolina, Series S213019, vol. 32, page 124, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

¹⁴ In the Colonial period, long before local governments were created for the backcountry, Colleton County was one of four counties in South Carolina by which lands were granted. Each of the counties extended from the Atlantic Ocean back, theoretically, to the Pacific Ocean. Granville County bordered

[illegible]

¹⁶ Grant Book NNNN, page 37.

After acquiring the tracts from McClendon, Darby established his home at the crest of the ridge which divided the Shaw's Creek and Horn's Creek watersheds. His family apparently lived there for nearly twenty-three years. His first wife, Mary McRae, must have died fairly early, because by 1790 we already find him married to Olive Darby.¹⁷ He is believed to have had at least seven children: (1) Willis, the eldest, born in 1768 probably in Virginia, married in 1802 to Elizabeth Susannah Burns, was given a 200 acre portion of Darby Plantation by his father in 1808 and died in 1815 leaving a number of descendants; (2) Civil, born in 1776 in South Carolina, married John Marsh from the neighboring plantation, died in 1855 and left a number of descendants who still reside in Edgefield County; (3) Mary, born in 1780, and married Wiley Sims and then Stephen Bettis; (4) Martha who married Joseph Murrell; (5) James, born in 1779, and married Martha "Patsy" Burns; (6) Charlotte, born in 1790, and married Ira Youngblood, then a Mr. Ballinger, and then John Glidden; and (7) Benjamin, Jr., born 17??, married Nancy Burns and died 1815 in Edgefield.¹⁸

Of the house in which the Darby family lived, we know nothing except that it was, in all probability, a small and basic log structure and possibly covered with clapboards, as was the custom in 18th century Edgefield. In any event, nothing of the house survived into the twentieth century.

After the War of 1812, when the lands of the old Southwest, now the states of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, were opened up for settlement, many residents of Edgefield County began to look to these new lands as a source of opportunity to improve their lives. Thus, a substantial migration began which ultimately took tens of thousands of families west between 1815 and 1860.¹⁹ Benjamin Darby was among the earliest of those to move. On August 5, 1816 he sold this plantation where he had lived for more than twenty years and which was to continue to be known by his name for two centuries. He moved to the Mississippi territory, later Monroe County, Alabama. The purchaser of Darby's Edgefield plantation, then 502 acres, was Thomas Christian.²⁰

The following year, on September 26, 1817, Christian borrowed \$414.80 secured by a mortgage on the 502 acres from Benjamin Frazier (1779-1844), a wealthy planter who later became the owner of the hotel in Edgefield and the Postmaster of the Edgefield Post Office.²¹ One might

¹⁷ See Olive as a witness to a deed with Benjamin, Deed Book 8, pages 61 and 62, Edgefield County Archives. Also, see the Renunciation of Dower executed by Olive Darby, as the wife of Benjamin, on a deed where Benjamin sold 45 acres on Horn's Creek to Eugene Brennan, Deed Book 12, pages 615-617, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

¹⁸ Genealogical materials in the Darby family file at the Tompkins Library.

¹⁹ See Mills, Robert, *Statistics of South Carolina*, Hurlbut and Lloyd, Charleston, SC, 1826, page 527.

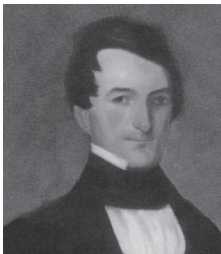
²⁰ Deed Book 34, Page 483, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

²¹ Deed Book 35, Page 64, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

imagine that Christian borrowed this money to make major improvements to the plantation or to acquire additional lands in order to take advantage of the cotton boom. However, in 1819 a financial panic hit our nation, resulting in a severe squeeze in liquidity and causing many planters to fall into bankruptcy. Christian was so affected and was unable to repay the mortgage loan to Frazier. Frazier therefore foreclosed upon the property and purchased it at a Sheriff's sale on January 3, 1820.²² His purchase price for the property was only \$20, an indication of the severity of the financial squeeze.

In 1834 Frazier added substantially to his holdings at Darby when he acquired an adjoining tract of 761 acres from Mrs. Eliza Bacon, paying \$450 for the property.²³ Although he later sold a portion of his Bacon acquisition to William Gallman, he continued to own the remainder of the Bacon tract and the entire Darby tract until his death in 1844.²⁴ Under his last will and testament, he left the Darby and Bacon properties to his son John Frazier.²⁵ On March 4, 1844, another of Benjamin's sons, Marshall Frazier (1806-1870), purchased these tracts from his brother John who had moved to Louisiana, thus becoming the owner of Darby Plantation.²⁶ Three years later, on May 18, 1847, Marshall Frazier sold Darby to a prominent Edgefield attorney, Nathan Lipscomb Griffin.²⁷ During the period of Frazier ownership, from 1820 until 1847, it is unlikely that any of the Frazier family had lived at Darby. Benjamin Frazier had always lived near or in Edgefield Village and Darby was only one of his many plantations. Marshall also lived in the Village until his father's death and therefore it is unlikely that he lived at Darby either. Several years after he sold Darby, Marshall purchased Oakley Park where he lived until his death.²⁸

Nathan Lipscomb Griffin



The man who purchased Darby from Marshall Frazier in 1847, Nathan Lipscomb Griffin (1803-1853) was born in the Whitehall section of the Abbeville District on February 9, 1803. He was the son of Richard and Mary Lipscomb Griffin. In 1823 he began to read law at Cambridge with Joseph Newton Whitner, but afterwards moved to Edgefield where he continued his study of the law under Andrew

²² Deed Book 37, Page 353, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

²³ Deed Book 47, Page 450, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

²⁴ Old Edgefield District Genealogical Society, *The ABCD's of Edgefield Genealogy*, 1995, page 43.

²⁵ Last Will and Testament of Benjamin Frazier, Will Book D, page 225, Estate Package 55/2279, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

²⁶ Deed Book CCC, Page 538, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

²⁷ Deed Book EEE, Page 168, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

²⁸ Deed Book DDD, Page 510, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

Pickens Butler (1796-1857). Admitted to the Bar in February, 1824, he began his practice with A. P. Butler, and later, after Butler's elevation to the Bench, with Armistead Burt (1802-1883) until that partner's election to Congress in 1843. From 1843 he practiced alone until his death.²⁹ In 1838 Griffin was elected a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives where he served for one term. In 1844 he was Intendant (Mayor) of Edgefield Courthouse Village. In 1846 he was elected to the South Carolina State Senate and was re-elected in 1850.³⁰

In May of 1824 Griffin married Anne Patience Butler (1805-1879), daughter of Stanmore Butler, Esq. (1774-1813)³¹ and Ann Patience Youngblood (1789-1861).³² Stanmore Butler was the son of Captain James Butler (1735-1781) and Mary Simpson Butler. Ann Patience Youngblood was the daughter of Nancy Simkins (1769-1843) and George Youngblood (17??-1???) and the granddaughter of Edgefield founder, Arthur Simkins (1742-1826).³³

Shortly after his marriage, Griffin purchased a lot and house on Main Street in Edgefield from John S. Jeter (1790-1847), a fellow lawyer in town.³⁴ This house, which subsequently became known as "Evergreen" and which was demolished in 1968 to make way for what is now Edgefield's police and fire department, has long been attributed in local historical sources to Judge Richard Gantt who was said to have built the house in 1796.³⁵ This is clearly incorrect because Gantt did not purchase the lot until 1813.³⁶ Gantt sold the lot to Jeter in 1816 for \$300, thus indicating that no house had been built upon the lot when he sold it.³⁷ The house that Griffin purchased from Jeter was the home where he lived with his wife and children for more than twenty years. Over the years he continued to add to the acreage of his town house property, which ultimately totaled more than 14 acres.³⁸

²⁹ Bailey, N. Louise, Mary L. Morgan and Carolyn R. Raylor, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate 1776-1985, Volume I*, page 619.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Old Edgefield District Genealogical Society, *The ABCD's of Edgefield Genealogy*, 1995, page 21.

³² Bailey, N. Louise, Mary L. Morgan and Carolyn R. Raylor, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate 1776-1985, Volume I*, page 619.

³³ Montgomery, Erick of Augusta, Georgia, Compiler, *Descendants of William Butler, Gentleman Justice of Prince William County, Virginia; His Descendants in South Carolina*, copy in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford.

³⁴ See Deed Book 41, pages 200-201, for deed dated September 30, 1824 which states "the lot of land containing one acre more or less where I formerly lived."

³⁵ For example, see articles

³⁶ See Deed Book 31, page 445, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C. for the deed from Arthur Simkins, Esq. to Richard Gantt dated March __, 1813 (the day is blank in the recorded deed in the Archives).

³⁷ Deed Book , page , Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, SC.

³⁸ See deed of Nathan Lipscomb Griffin to Samuel S. Goode, dated September 4, 1849, Deed Book FFF, pages 237-238, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, SC.

In 1831, Nathan Griffin joined the Edgefield Village Baptist Church where he became a devout member and deacon. He also joined the ranks of the Teatotallers, being devoted to the principles of temperance.³⁹

Nathan and Ann Patience Griffin became the parents of nine children: Stanmore Butler Griffin (1825-18??), Mary Lipscomb Griffin (1827-1872), Ann Patience Griffin Bonham (1829-1894), Elizabeth Simpson Griffin Sullivan (1832-1910), Emaline Rebecca Griffin Bland (1835-1891), Richard Griffin (1838-1838), Nathan Lipscomb Griffin, Jr. (1843-18??), Ellen Addison Griffin Reed (1846-1880), and William John Griffin (1851-18??).⁴⁰ Presumably, all of the Griffin children were born at Evergreen in the Village, except William John, who was born at Darby.

On November 13, 1845, the Griffins' third child and second oldest daughter, Ann Patience Griffin, a sixteen year old, was married to thirty-two year old General Milledge Luke Bonham, a lawyer, legislator and militia general in Edgefield. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. J. M. Chiles.⁴¹ Some seven months later, on the 4th day of June, 1846, Bonham purchased from the Rev. Arthur Wigfall a house and lot on Main Street in Edgefield, adjoining Evergreen where the Nathan L. Griffin family lived.⁴² Griffin had advanced the purchase price of \$2,250 to Bonham which enabled him to purchase the property.⁴³ This house had previously been the residence of Louis T. Wigfall, Arthur's younger brother who was a lawyer and political activist and who had gone to Texas where he later became a United States Senator, Confederate General and Confederate States Senator.⁴⁴

Milledge Luke Bonham⁴⁵

Ann Patience Griffin's new husband, Milledge Luke Bonham (1813-1890), was born at Red Bank, Edgefield District, now Saluda County, December 25, 1813. He was the fifth child and youngest son

⁴⁰ Bailey, p. 619.

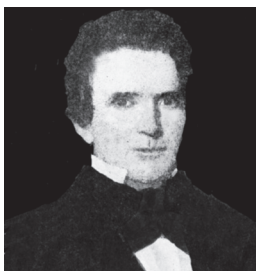
⁴¹ McClendon, Carlee T., *Edgefield Marriage Records*, R. L. Bryan Company, 1970, page 17.

⁴² Deed Book EEE, page 62, Edgefield County Archives for the deed from Arthur Wigfall to M. L. Bonham.

⁴³ See Equity File 929, M.L. Bonham, wife & others versus Ann Griffin & others, Bill for Settlement and Partition, September 20, 1853, page 2.

⁴⁴ Deed Book EEE, page 62, Edgefield County Archives, states, "it being the lot and premises recently occupied by Col. L. T. Wigfall."

⁴⁵ The grandson of Milledge Luke Bonham, Professor Milledge Louis Bonham (1880-1941), the P. V. Rogers Professor of History at Hamilton College, wrote a large and detailed unpublished manuscript biography of his grandfather entitled *The Life and Times of Milledge Luke Bonham* which can be found in the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia and the Tompkins Library in Edgefield. This well-documented biography of Bonham contains a tremendous amount of material taken, to a large extent, from Bonham's own papers. It is subsequently noted here as "Bonham, *The Life and Times*."



*Milledge Luke Bonham
as Solicitor*

of James Bonham (1766-1815) and Sophie Smith (1780-1858). James Bonham was a widower from Maryland who had come down to the Edgefield District circa 1796. After arriving in the District, he had married Sophie, daughter of Jacob Smith (1735-1805) and Sarah Butler (1740-1817), a sister of Captain James Butler (1735-1781) of Big Creek. As Milledge's great uncle was Captain James Butler who was his wife's great grandfather, Milledge and Ann Patience were second cousins once removed.

Milledge Bonham received his early education in the private schools of the Edgefield and Abbeville Districts.⁴⁶ After graduating from the South Carolina College with second honors in 1834, he came to Edgefield Courthouse Village where he read law. However, with the outbreak of the Seminole War in 1836, he volunteered for service, becoming Adjutant General of the South Carolina Brigade under General W. H. Bull, and secured the rank of Major in the United States Army. After the war, Bonham returned to Edgefield where he continued his study of the law. He was admitted to the Bar in 1837 and began practicing in Edgefield.

In 1836 Milledge Bonham's older brother, James Butler Bonham (1807-1836), brought considerable fame to the Bonham family as one of the heroes who died at the Alamo. He had moved from South Carolina to Alabama and become a lawyer. When Texas began its struggle for independence, he joined many other Southerners in going to take part in that heroic battle. Jim Bonham joined forces with his childhood neighbor, William Barrett Travis at the Alamo, having been given the rank of lieutenant. When Santa Anna besieged the Alamo, Bonham was sent out to secure reinforcements. After traveling all over Texas for some days without finding any who could come to the aid of the besieged Texans, Bonham returned, rushing through the Mexican troops who were surrounding the old mission to what was a very dangerous situation. When the final assault came, Bonham was killed along with all of the other defenders of the Alamo.

Milledge Bonham began his political career in 1840 when he was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives. He served in that capacity until 1843. He also continued to serve in the local militia, maintaining the rank of General.

Shortly after Bonham's marriage to Ann Patience, the Mexican War broke out and Bonham immediately offered his services. He was given command of the twelfth regiment, United States Infantry with the rank

⁴⁶ Bonham, *The Life and Times*, page 48.

of Lieutenant Colonel. He was soon elevated to the rank of full colonel. Following the end of the Mexican War in 1848 Milledge Bonham was elected solicitor of the southern circuit of South Carolina where he served until 1857.

Purchase of Darby by Griffin

During the time that Ann Patience's husband was in Mexico, on May 18, 1847, her father, Nathan Lipscomb Griffin, purchased from Marshall Frazier the Darby plantation, described as being a tract of fifteen hundred acres, more or less, on both sides of the road leading from Edgefield Court House to the Piney Woods House. The purchase price of the property was \$4,250 and the property was composed of a number of smaller tracts. The largest of these tracts was known as the "Darbey [sic] place" and contained 536 acres. The other tracts were as follows: Burknell or Gallman tract, 282 acres; William Robertson tract, 220 acres; Lawrence S. Johnson tract, 145 acres; Bacon or Drayton tract, 317 acres. The fifteen hundred acres were bounded by Benjamin Hatcher, Alfred S. Hughes, L. S. Johnson, Amon Lindsey, W. Brooks, Samuel Marsh, and others.⁴⁷

Although he was already a substantial landowner and planter with plantations at Ninety Six (1,825 acres) and Hickory Grove (1,328 acres), his purchase of this beautiful and extensive agricultural tract just east of town put Nathan Lipscomb Griffin in the forefront of the planter class in Edgefield and was clearly a symbol of his financial success. Presumably he commenced building the major plantation house on this property soon after purchasing the property. Thus, the house may have been completed as early as 1848, but we know that he sold his town house, Evergreen, in 1849, indicating that he had already moved to his new plantation home.⁴⁸ The 1850 census showed him to have \$27,000 in real estate and 124 slaves.

Sadly, Nathan Griffin was not to enjoy his plantation for many years. On February 16, 1853, just a few days beyond his fiftieth birthday, Griffin died, leaving behind his beloved widow and eight children. His estate constituted almost 5,000 acres of land, 163 slaves and a considerable amount of other property, making him one of the wealthiest men in the Edgefield District. He was also very highly regarded for his sterling character. Judge O'Neal, in his *Bench and Bar of South Carolina*, summed up Griffin's life and character with the following assessment:

The annunciation of this sad event (Griffin's death) created more general and heartfelt sorrow than is usual. High and low, rich and

⁴⁷ Deed Book EEE, page 168, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

⁴⁸ See deed of Nathan Lipscomb Griffin to Samuel S. Goode, dated September 4, 1849, Deed Book FFF, pages 237-238, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

poor, bond and free, united in the universal wail. For he was loved and honored by all who knew him. After a lapse of six years, and turning back over his life, little can be found to blame, and much, very much to praise. As a lawyer he triumphed, by untiring industry, over a defective education, and by a punctuality, which was unwavering, and a devotion to business, which was unceasing, he obtained, and held to the day of his death, the confidence of a larger number of clients than any member of the Edgefield Bar. As a man, he had the respect of all who know him. For his word was truth, and his life honesty itself. As a citizen, he might have been carried forward by a party to the adoption of mistakes in politics, but yet his forbearance made him not even obnoxious to violent party condemnation. No one ever doubted the purity of his principles, and the patriotic devotion of his heart. As a husband, father, and master, none but those who know him in that sacred circle of home can form a just estimate. It may, however, be said, that weighed in the balances, he was not found wanting in any of these respects. His noble, high, and spiritually-minded widow still lives, and cherishes his memory with that enduring affection which looks forward, evermore, to that blissful re-union beyond the grave, to which he pointed on his dying bed. In fine, as a friend and brother, I would say of Nathan L. Griffin, few men deserved more of the affection of men here; and few could look forward beyond the grave with a more certain hope of everlasting happiness.⁴⁹

Griffin was buried in the Village Cemetery adjoining the Village Baptist Church. The epitaph on his tombstone reads:

Nathan Lipscomb Griffin
Born February 9, 1803 – Died February 17, 1853

Endued with a mind remarkable for its strength and sagacity, he attained to eminence at the Bar, winning from his professional brethren the highest degree of respect and from his clients a most unusual confidence. As a legislator he earnestly sought the good of his country and filled the office of State Senator by a manly, dignified and independent discharge of its duties. He died a deacon and to a large circle of admiring friends his memory is more particularly endeared by the recollections of his domestic tenderness, his brotherly kindness and the purity of his character as a follower of our Saviour.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ O'Neal, Judge John Belton, *Bench and Bar of South Carolina*, Newberry, 1859, pages 546-548.

⁵⁰ Tillman, Mamie Norris and Hortense Woodson, *Inscriptions from the Edgefield Village Baptist Cemetery*, Edgefield County Historical Society, page 39.

The unexpected and untimely death of Nathan L. Griffin was quite a blow to his widow and eight surviving children. As Griffin did not leave a will, the estate was settled under the laws of South Carolina pertaining to intestate estates.⁵¹ Under these laws the widow was entitled to one third of the entire estate with the balance to be divided among all of the surviving children. In 1854, Milledge Bonham & wife and others filed a Bill for Settlement and Partition with the Court of Equity. In the ensuing order of the court the commissioners decreed that “the Darby place (which is the family homestead, the present residence of Mrs. Griffin and the one sought to be assigned to her) is less than one-third of the value of the whole real estate of the late N. L. Griffin.” This language makes it clear that Darby was in fact the family homestead and that those prior historical accounts suggesting that N. L. Griffin had purchased this property as a wedding gift for his daughter and son-in-law were complete fabrications.⁵²

After several years as a widow, Mrs. Griffin apparently decided that she preferred to live in Edgefield Village rather than at Darby, some four miles from town. On November 21, 1855, she filed a suit against her children for partition of an unsold portion of the real estate of N. L. Griffin, deceased. Then, on the 9th of January, 1856, she purchased from Mrs. Eliza Bacon and Thomas G. Bacon forty acres in the Village with a cottage.⁵³ Under Mrs. Griffin’s tasteful care and green thumb, this cottage on Addison Street in Edgefield became noted for its beautiful roses and other rare plants and was afterwards known as “Griffin Hill.”⁵⁴

Purchase of Darby by Bonham

Mrs. Griffin’s suit for partition resulted in an auction of the property and a sale by the commissioner of Equity to M. L. Bonham on February 8, 1858 of 1,062 acres, being the Darby and Mill tracts, for which Bonham paid a total of \$14,350.⁵⁵ Thus, Darby was acquired by Milledge Bonham and became the home of the Bonham family.

As one begins to consider the life of the Bonham family at Darby, one must realize that Milledge Bonham and Ann Patience Griffin Bonham had fourteen children over the course of their marriage: (1) Sallie Butler Bonham (1847-1862), (2) Richard Griffin Bonham (1849-1887), (3) Sophia Smith Bonham (1851-1910), (4) James Bonham (1853-1884), (5) Milledge Lipscomb Bonham (1854-1942), (6) Infant Daughter (1856-1856), (7) Annie

⁵¹ Estate file of Nathan Lipscomb Griffin, Estate Box 67, package 2744, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

⁵² See, for example, South Carolina Historical Society Fall Tour brochure, 1985.

⁵³ See Deed Book III, page 244, Edgefield County Archives, by which Mrs. Griffin acquired Griffin Hill.

⁵⁴ See *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 26, 1865.

⁵⁵ See Deed Book JJJ, page 277, Edgefield County Archives, by which Milledge Bonham acquired Darby.

Elizabeth Bonham (1857-1921), (8) Julia Ellen Bonham (1859-1906), (9) Nathan Griffin Bonham (1861-1862), (10) Mary Rebecca Bonham (1863-1864), (11) William Butler Bonham (1866-1903), (12) Thomas Seymour Bonham (1868-1954), (13) Patience Griffin Bonham (1871-1961), (14) Francis Pickens Bonham (1873-1915).⁵⁶ With this number of children coming and going, life at Darby must have been quite lively!

Upon the death of Congressman Preston S. Brooks in January of 1857, Bonham was elected to the United States House of Representatives.⁵⁷ He continued to serve in that capacity until South Carolina seceded from the Union in December, 1860, whereupon he, like all of the other South Carolina members, tendered his resignation from Congress. He was then commissioned to go to the Mississippi Secession Convention to try to convince the Mississippi delegates to secede.⁵⁸



Milledge L. Bonham in the military. Following Secession Governor Francis Pickens appointed Bonham Major General in command of the South Carolina militia. He later relinquished his position and accepted a Brigadier's commission under General P.G.T. Beauregard

Bonham's son and namesake, Milledge Lipscomb Bonham (1854-1942), later Chief Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court, recounted his memories of the period of Secession at Darby: "The country was then

⁵⁶ Montgomery, *Descendants of William Butler*.

⁵⁷ Bonham, *The Life and Times*, pages 271-273.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pages 396-406.

in the throes of the excitement incident to Secession. When the news came that the State had seceded from the Union, a tall flag pole, with the State flag on it, was erected on the lawn at Darby, bonfires were lighted, guns fired, friends and neighbors collected and there was great enthusiasm.”⁵⁹

Another interesting event at Darby was told by Chief Justice Bonham in “A Boy’s Memories of War Time and Other Times.”

We boys had a little cannon which added a little to the tumult. I don’t recall where we got this cannon and I have since wondered that we were allowed to have it. It was a dangerous toy; it could shoot a buckshot through an inch plank. It subsequently got me into trouble which I may as well recount here. In course of time the gun-carriage was broken, and the barrel lost. My brothers Richard (called Buddie) and Jimmie, older than I, went to school at Edgefield. I was too young to go. One day I found the barrel of the cannon. In the carpenter shop I found some blasting powder, left over from some which had been used in blasting rock from the spring. I crammed the barrel of the little cannon full of this powder and stopped up the mount with mud to keep it from spilling out. At this stage of proceedings prudence suggested that before attempting to shoot it I had better take counsel of my brothers. Moreover, I wanted them to see my find, and join in the fun, as they were joint owners of the gun. They did not return till the afternoon, or “evening” as we designated any time after midday. When I showed them the gun they were somewhat dubious of the effect of so much blasting powder in it. They advised that I dig a hole under the corner of the Library chimney, which was outside the house, stick the barrel in it, leaving the touch hold out. This I did. Next I got a long peach switch, split the end, in which I inserted a coal of fire which I got from the kitchen, upon which I blew to keep it alive. I got behind the corner of the house, reached around and touched her off. The other boys had taken refuge behind Manny’s house, where they were hid from view, but could see me. The explosion was terrific and the report was loud; small pieces of brick and dirt flew all about. I was so astounded by the extent of my exploit that I could not run. My father, who was at home from the army for a short time, was in the Library. I reckon he thought the Yankees had descended upon him. At any rate he came charging out just as I recovered from my paralysis and started to run. He ordered me to stop in a tone which admitted of but one course. I stopped. The juxtaposition of a long peach switch and a flying boy, following such an explosion, will suggest what followed for me, and I will not linger longer on this painful memory⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Edgefield Advertiser, Centennial Edition, February 12, 1936.

⁶⁰ Bonham, Milledge Lipscomb, “A Boy’s Memories of War Time and Other Times,” manuscript in the

Chief Justice Bonham's son visited Darby in the summer of 1916. He discovered a large crack which was quite perceptible in the library chimney. Whether it was due to the slower work of time and decay or to the more rapid artillery of his father, he could not say.⁶¹

One of the most interesting facts which has been handed down to us about Darby is the fact that during the Battle of Fort Sumter, when the artillery batteries at Fort Johnson and Fort Moultrie were bombarding Fort Sumter and the federal troops at Fort Sumter were returning fire, these guns were heard at Darby – more than 150 miles away! Chief Justice Milledge Lipscomb Bonham recounted his childhood memories for an article which appeared in the 1936 Centennial Edition of the *Edgefield Advertiser*. In this article he noted “We could hear at Darby the firing of the guns [at Fort Sumter].”⁶² In Justice Bonham, “A Boy's Memories of War Time and Other Times,” he wrote:

Then one day in April, 1861, we heard the deep reverberation of the guns firing at and from Fort Sumter. Young as I was I felt the solemnity of the occasion. I did not know why, but I knew that a great event impended. It may be that I was impressed by the serious aspect of the countenances of the elders who stood listening to the fateful sounds. It may be that they let fall some words I do not now recall, but I know that the joy had gone out of the sunlight, and there was left a feeling of grave apprehension of the future. There were at the scene of this opening tragedy of that long and bitter conflict those who were dear to us, and this lent force to our forebodings. But not the most timorous one of us had any idea of the full significance of the occasion, of what it meant to us in blood and death, in fire and loss, in tears and sorrows and suffering.⁶³

While to many readers, this will seem almost incredible, it has been said that the guns were also heard at Redcliff, the home of James Henry Hammond at Beech Island, only slightly closer at approximately 140 miles.⁶⁴ Perhaps in those days there was less background noise to interfere and perhaps cloud cover might have caused the noise of the guns to reverberate and transmit further than would otherwise have been the case.

In February, 1861, Governor Francis W. Pickens appointed Bonham a major general and commander of the Army in South Carolina. Several months later, on April 19, 1861, he was appointed a Brigadier General in

collection of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, S.C.

⁶¹ Bonham, Milledge Louis, *The Life and Times*, pages 248-249.

⁶² *The Edgefield Advertiser*, February 12, 1936, page 4.

⁶³ Bonham, Milledge Lipscomb, “A Boy's Memories,” pages 7-8.

⁶⁴ The author has been told this by several reliable sources, but has been unable to document it as of the time of publication of this document.

the Confederate Army and was given command of the First Brigade of the Confederate Army of the Potomac under General P.G.T. Beauregard. He fought in the first battle of Manassas, commanding his brigade as well as two artillery batteries and six companies of cavalry in the defense of Mitchell's Ford on Bull Run.



*Milledge L. Bonham
as Governor*

On January 27, 1862 Bonham resigned his commission in order to enter the Confederate Congress. Later that year, on December 17, 1862, the South Carolina General Assembly elected Bonham governor of the State, succeeding Francis Pickens.⁶⁵ As such he inherited two major problems from his predecessor: coastal defense and military conscription. Although South Carolina had contributed liberally to the Confederate military, the vast majority of its men and resources had gone to the Virginia front or to the West. However, when the Union navy occupied Port Royal and the South Carolina Sea Islands, many in the state began to question

whether the state government and the Confederate military were doing enough to protect the state. As enlistments fell off following the initial burst of Secessionist enthusiasm, South Carolina had adopted military conscription even before the Confederate Congress had passed such legislation.

Although he, like many others in the Confederate Congress, had major differences with President Davis over policy issues, Governor Bonham was committed to the proposition that South Carolina “in every legitimate way should sustain the Confederate authorities.” In the ensuing two years of his term Bonham made good his inaugural promise to cooperate with the Confederacy. This was in stark contrast to the governors of Georgia and North Carolina, each of whom made wide use of discretionary powers and granting exemptions from conscription for state officers. Bonham refused to follow that course, but instead required all those conscripted under the law to serve their terms.

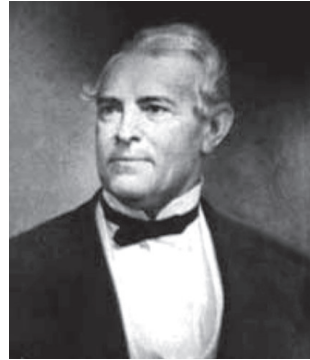
On the third day of August, 1863, Milledge Bonham sold his Darby Plantation which is described as containing 1,014 acres, to George Alfred Trenholm. We do not know exactly what may have motivated Bonham to sell his plantation at this time, but it is likely that he needed the money. The financial pressures created by the War were doubtless weighing

⁶⁵ Bonham, *The Life and Times*, pages 631-634.

heavily on him. He had sold his stock in the Bank of Hamburg a bit earlier, perhaps to pay off a mortgage loan owed to his brother-in-law, John Lipscomb.⁶⁶ George Trenholm may have been one of the few South Carolinians who were sufficiently wealthy to make such a purchase during the War.⁶⁷ Bonham had become Governor at the end of 1862 and had taken up residence in Columbia. The family had remained at Darby until after the sale. The purchase price for Darby was twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000). Of course, this was in Confederate money. Given the enormous inflation which the Confederate currency suffered during the last years of the War, it is difficult to know what the inherent value of this \$25,000 was in the summer of 1863. Nor is it possible to know exactly what financial pressures the new Governor might have been under in the summer of 1863.

George Alfred Trenholm

The new owner of Darby, George Alfred Trenholm (1807-1876), was a highly successful merchant and financier during the antebellum period, was heavily involved in blockade running during the War and became the Secretary of Treasury of the Confederacy in 1864 and 1865. He is thought by many to have been the person upon which Margaret Mitchell based her character Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind*. Trenholm was born on February 25, 1807 in Charleston to William and Irene de Greffin Trenholm. His mother was the daughter of the Comte de Greffin, a French landowner on the island of San Domingue (now Haiti) who had refuged to Charleston following the revolution on the French island.



After the death of his father, the teenaged Trenholm left school and went to work for the firm of John Fraser and Company, a company specializing in the brokerage of Sea Island Cotton. Trenholm apparently had a remarkable ability in business and therefore advanced rapidly in the firm, becoming senior partner by the early 1850's. By this time the firm itself had become one of the most powerful firms of its kind in the South, with offices in New York and Liverpool. Through his firm, Trenholm had become an immensely rich and influential businessman with diversified interests in warehouses, ships, wharves, hotels, plantations and slaves.

⁶⁶ Bonham, *The Life and Times*, page 830.

⁶⁷ That Bonham had known Trenholm socially is confirmed by a comment in Bonham, *The Life and Times*, page ____.

In 1828, Trenholm married Anna Lee Holmes of Charleston and had thirteen children. Anna Lee's brother⁶⁸ was Professor Francis Simmons Holmes (1815-1882) of the College of Charleston who also served as the curator of the Charleston Museum.

When the War began, Trenholm placed the ample financial and transportation resources of his company at the disposal of the Confederate government. The company's Liverpool office became the overseas depository of the Confederate treasury from which it advanced credit to the purchasing agents of the Confederacy and arranged for the payment and shipment of vital supplies to the South. Early in the War, when many leaders argued that cotton should be withheld from the market in hopes that it would cause the British to recognize Southern independence, Trenholm urged Confederate leaders to ship as much cotton as possible, thus accumulating as much cash as possible for the purchase of war materials. Trenholm's shipping interests received great praise for their part in running the naval blockade of the Southern ports.

Throughout the War, Trenholm had been a trusted advisor to the Secretary of the Treasury of the Confederacy, Christopher Memminger, a fellow Charleston and close friend. When Memminger resigned in June, 1864, President Jefferson Davis appointed Trenholm to the post. As secretary, Trenholm advised the Confederate government to strengthen its financial position through direct taxation, reducing the supply of paper currency, and purchasing its own fleet of blockade runners rather than relying on private shippers. Despite Davis's strong backing, Trenholm's proposals were all turned down by the Confederate Congress. He continued to push for reforms through the balance of the war. When Davis and the other members of the Confederate cabinet evacuated Richmond, Trenholm remained behind. He resigned his position on April 27th and was arrested shortly afterward. He was imprisoned for several months until being paroled by President Andrew Johnson in October, 1865.

Pardoned the following year, Trenholm set about trying to rebuild his business empire. Although he had to declare bankruptcy in 1867, he ultimately recovered much of his former wealth through a new cotton brokerage firm, George A. Trenholm and Son, and through timely investments in the State's postwar phosphate mining boom. In 1874 he was one of the few Democrats elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives. Trenholm died in Charleston on December 9, 1876, after a long and successful career.⁶⁹

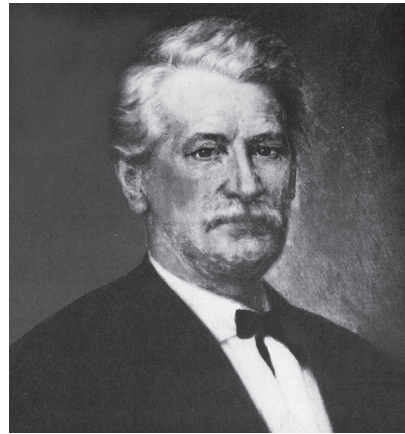
⁶⁸ Some sources have suggested that Holmes was Mrs. Trenholm's uncle, but Holmes family sources make clear he was her brother.

⁶⁹ Edgar, Walter, Editor, *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, South Carolina Humanities Council, University of South Carolina Press, 2006, pages 978-979.

Although he had purchased Darby in the summer of 1863, there is no evidence that he, his wife or his children ever lived here. Indeed it is clear that the purchase was intended to assist his brother-in-law in a worthy cause – the preservation of the artifacts of the Charleston Museum.

Professor Francis Simmons Holmes, the Charleston Museum & Balmoral

In the fall of 1863, shortly after Trenholm acquired Darby, Trenholm's brother-in-law, Professor Francis Simmons Holmes (1815-1882), a professor at the College of Charleston and the curator of the Charleston Museum, loaded up 106 boxes with the artifacts of the museum and prepared to transport them to Edgefield where he would preserve them for the duration of the war. Apparently Holmes had leased a home in Edgefield as early as 1861, for on October 11th of that year, he attended a meeting of the Trustees of the Charleston Museum in which he told the Trustees that he had "already carried thither [to his leased home in Edgefield] some of the more valuable specimens of shells and some rare fossils." The Trustees, seriously concerned over the fate of the Museum should Federal troops invade Charleston, readily approved the plan of Holmes to pack up and ship to his Edgefield plantation most of the fossils, rare birds, minerals, all of the shells, specimens preserved in alcohol, the "collection of Quadrupeds presented by Mr. Audubon," the Stephen Elliott herbarium, and other prized items.⁷⁰ However, the decision to remove them was delayed for the time being.⁷¹



Professor Francis Simmons Holmes

In November, 1861 Holmes was appointed Director of the Charleston Wayside House and Hospital, but within just a month's time, he was apparently overwhelmed with over 3,000 men who needed medical and food supplies. His friend, the noted botanist Henry W. Ravenel, wrote

⁷⁰ Stephens, Lester D., "Ancient Animals and Other Wondrous Things, The Story of Francis Simmons Holmes, Paleontologist and Curator of The Charleston Museum," Contributions from the Charleston Museum XVII, Charleston, SC, February, 1988, page 28, note 50 on page 54.

⁷¹ The reason for the delay may have been that Holmes was simply not able to undertake the move due to his other obligations, or it may have been because his leased home (a property other than Darby) was inadequate to store the artifacts. Perhaps he then undertook to try to get George Trenholm to purchase Darby so that he would be assured that an adequate location for the artifacts would be available as long as needed.

in his diary that “The hospital is overflowing . . . and [Holmes] is nearly broken down by the press of work.” Holmes was apparently transferred shortly afterwards to direct another Wayside hospital in Edgefield, which he felt compelled to close in early 1862 because he was finding it difficult to secure even “firewood and cornmeal.” In May of 1862 he was assigned to oversee the strengthening of certain Charleston fortifications. He was also appointed Chief Superintendent of the Nitre District encompassing Edgefield.⁷² Nitre is the mineral form of potassium nitrate, commonly known as “saltpeter,” which is an essential component of gunpowder. Holmes also had the responsibility to collect “scrap and fabricated metals” for the manufacture of bullets. Because of the urgency of this work, he found it necessary to spend most of his time in Edgefield. The local newspaper appealed to citizens to “lend Prof. Holmes all possible aid,” bearing in mind that “powder is the most powerful, and lead the most eloquent messenger we can send to these villainous Yankees.”⁷³

By mid 1863, as the bombardment of Charleston and the fear of imminent invasion wore on, the Trustees ordered that the museum artifacts be sent to Edgefield, out of harm’s way. In August of 1863, Trenholm completed the purchase of Darby and the artifacts were sent on to Edgefield where Professor Holmes stored them at Darby. The professor and his family lived at Darby for the balance of 1863, all of 1864 and most of 1865, coming back to Charleston only in the last months of 1865. Interestingly, the Professor apparently decided that he did not like the name “Darby” but instead preferred “Balmoral” as the name of his Edgefield residence.⁷⁴ Very likely he adopted the name from the Scottish estate which had been purchased by Queen Victoria as her retreat just a few years earlier.⁷⁵

Meanwhile the College had closed its doors and could no longer afford to pay its faculty or even its janitor. Holmes paid the janitor out of his own pocket in order to keep the museum in as good a shape as possible. As 1864 opened, the fortunes of the Confederacy continued to go down. In August of 1864 the District Nitre and Mining Bureau was closed and Holmes was released from his duty. He decided to use the mules and horses of the Bureau to plant some 235 acres of crops at Balmoral and did so until he was ordered to send the livestock and equipment elsewhere. In September of 1864 he wrote to his friend Lewis Gibbes: “Thank God we have a pound of bacon or two, and my crops of wheat & corn will suffice to carry us through the year – if not molested by the Yankees.”⁷⁶

⁷² *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 30, 1863.

⁷³ *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 9, 1863, as quoted in Stephens, page 28.

⁷⁴ The first use of this name “Balmoral” which the author has been able to find is in a March 16, 1864 advertisement in the *Edgefield Advertiser*.

⁷⁵ Wikipedia article on Balmoral, the Royal Estate in Scotland, October 24, 2012.

⁷⁶ Stephens, page 28.

Holmes had struggled valiantly for the Confederacy. Indeed when the morale of the citizens began to wane in the spring of 1864 he found time to present a series of five lectures for the citizens of Edgefield. According to the *Edgefield Advertiser*, Holmes lectured on “The Natural History of Creation, On the Minerals, Plants and Animals of the Earth.” Based “in the first chapter of Genesis,” his lectures drew a large crowd and formed an Oasis in the desert of these turbulent times.” They were, added the newspaper, “delightful and edifying” and afforded citizens “a rare privilege” to hear “the learned and polished gentleman.” Holmes allowed all proceeds of the lectures to be used for “charitable and patriotic purposes.”⁷⁷ A month earlier he had found time to present lectures to “the young ladies of Madame H. B. Bonnetheau’s Seminary” in Augusta, Georgia.⁷⁸

A wonderful glimpse into Darby at the time of Professor Holmes’ tenure there is provided by an article in the *Charleston Daily Courier*. The editor of that journal had visited his friend Professor Holmes at his Edgefield home and provided the following account of his visit:

With the matchless tints of a rising sun still lighting up and painting with gorgeous splendor the Eastern horizon, there came a few mornings since to your correspondent a very polite note conveying to him an invitation from our esteemed and very useful citizen, Professor Francis S. Holmes, that he would visit and spend the day with him at Balmoral, the refugee home and plantation of the Professor, distant about four miles from Edgefield village, and about two miles from the nearest point to which the railroad from Columbia to Hamburg will approach the former place.

This kind invitation was accepted and after arranging a few minor preliminaries, and trotting a few minutes over a delightful road, your correspondent found himself at the spot designated. Balmoral was purchased by Professor Holmes a year or so ago from our once warrior fellow-citizen, and now our very popular and patriotic commander-in-chief, his Excellency M. L. Bonham, and is situated on the turnpike and stage road running between Hamburg and Edgefield Court House. This late gubernatorial and palatial mansion is delightfully located, or set, on the crest of a gentle slope or lawn, which rises with an unusually even ascent for, perhaps a distance of four hundred yards from the roadstead and gateway to, perhaps a hundred yards or more of level, and then with almost a like evenness descends at the rear or back of the building for, perhaps, a like distance. The grounds around the mansion are sufficiently shaded

⁷⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 30, April 6, 19, 21, 27, and May 4, 1864.

⁷⁸ Stephens, page 29.

with trees mostly of forest growth, and with others of a domestic origin, interspersed with rare shrubbery, plants, etc., renders them quite attractive. The air and water enjoyed at this delightful retreat are alone almost sufficient to sustain animal life, one would suppose, and with their purity and exhilarating tendencies, irrespective of innumerable other inducements, would render this property not only highly desirable, but indeed even invaluable to whoever may prove himself so fortunate as to enjoy ownership over it. The fields of Professor Holmes, which are extensive, and which have been quite fruitful and productive this season, under his peculiar and superior management, stretch out in full view from his residence, both in front and in the rear; the most productive of them, however, being in the rear, and unseen from the public road. His finely wooded and timber tracts extend southwardly from his mansion for several miles, and their yield will prove inexhaustible. This very valuable and desirable property, although turned over to Major Holmes in tolerably good condition, has, under his scientific mind and indomitable perseverance, been not only greatly improved, but is, indeed, completely transformed. It is true, both the mansion and the grounds bear unmistakable evidence of the refinement and taste which characterized their former possessor, but it is equally true that the genius of our friend Holmes has triumphed in their complete transformation.

The reception and entertainment of your correspondent by Major or Professor Holmes – give him whichever title you please – was about what your correspondent had conceived it would be – as easy and as hearty as it was friendly and sincere; as graceful and as polite as it was unsophisticated and unpretending – the friend, the scholar, the man of science, the refined gentleman and the plain planter all happily blended, and each distinction, without any effort, fully playing its part. After a brief interchange of courtesies and civilities, and to your correspondent of improved converse in Professor Holmes' business office, he said: "Sir, from the enormous and exorbitant charges which are exacted for every description of labor now, and from the great amount of original and job work required on such a place as this is, added to the necessity of providing property for a numerous progeny of children, finding it incumbent to me to surmount and counteract these drawbacks and necessities as much as possible, I sedulously set myself to the accomplishment of the task of rendering my entire establishment as nearly self-sustaining as it is susceptible of being made, and will now show you some of the practical results of my operations and endeavors to that end." The true secret of the success which has attended the management of Professor Holmes at *Balmoral* is that he *believes in economy*

and working. Everything by his scientific attainments is made subservient to his will and energy, and is turned to some practical and useful account. Added to his many and onerous and very useful public duties, he has become on his plantation his own blacksmith, his own wheelwright, his own cooper, his own basket maker, his own engine repairer, his own spinner and weaver, his own saddler, his own castor oil maker, his own lumber and grist sawyer and grinder, and boils and prepares for use his own sorghum and vinegar, etc., etc. The first point or object of interest to which Major Holmes directed the attention of your correspondent, was his blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter, cooper and basket-maker shop. Here the busy hum of industry pervaded every yard of space. Carpenters, as circumstances would require, were transformed into blacksmiths, coopers, etc., etc. and in whatever department. The work here being performed by them is not only good and substantial, but even in some instances unusually neat.

The next and very prominent object of interest visited was the carding, spinning and weaving factory. The Professor employs in this department only what may be termed his refuse force, such as old women and small girls that are entirely unfit for out-door and field work of any kind whatever. The cloth made at this factory is equal to the best Graniteville, and is entirely adapted to the wants of all about him. In the rear of this building, Major Holmes exhibited to your correspondent a refuse engine exhumed by him from among the rubbish and accumulated saw dust around some mill hard by. When first dug up some of its bolts were so much eaten by rust that they would not turn, and consequently had to be broken. This engine now stands before the spectator a beautiful piece of machinery, as bright as a new silver dollar and worth perhaps some fifteen or twenty thousand dollars. The saddler work done on his plantation is performed by the Professor himself. He exhibited specimens of it to your correspondent that would almost put to shame any similar work done at McKrazir's, or Love & Wienges' establishments.

The next and perhaps the most prominent and important works yet visited by your correspondent on this place, were the sorghum and vinegar grinding and boiling apparatus; but as Professor Holmes, as a model for those who may desire to adopt it, has promised a written description of these works by himself for publication, your correspondent will not attempt to forestall him by any description of them of his own. Dining hour being near at hand, we retraced our steps to the mansion, where an introduction furnished your correspondent the pleasure of an acquaintance with Professor Holmes' refined and accomplished lady and daughters. Refined training has worked

so great a charm in this household, and the politeness of each to the other is so marked, that your correspondent could not resist the conclusion, mentally indulged at the time, that happiness supreme reigned therein. Having enjoyed the pleasure of knowing Professor Holmes in his earlier and unmarried life, the retrospect and contrast of this earlier status around a numerously filled household was very impressive and satisfying to your correspondent. Then, the cares and responsibilities of life had not gathered around our friend – now, with them all to baffle, he presides with the dignity of a patriarch (he is still a young man) over a family almost unprecedented in number. The cherub children and grand-children, whose innocent prattle now forms the sweetest music to which he can listen, and the charms and accomplishments of his very pleasant lady and daughters, doubtless to him is a full offset against all the ills of this life, and for which the gold of the entire world would be spurned in exchange.

Dinner over, your correspondent, with his kind host, enjoyed a ride to the mill, about a mile distant. The motive power for this mill is obtained from a stream that takes its rise near Professor Holmes' residence, with several feeders which unite with it in its tortuous course. At the mill, Professor Holmes has, to the extent, perhaps, of two hundred yards, secured these streamlets by a dam thrown across the gorge of two noble sized hills. This gives him about fifteen feet head of water which is quite sufficient at all times and puts in operation the entire machinery necessary to a full supply of both lumber and grist for his entire place.

Returning from the mill, we rejoined the ladies in the drawing room. Here now was approaching a test of your correspondent's modesty and diffidence, and although they had served him sufficiently on many former and similar occasions, he certainly began to see them becoming deficient on this. Bombarded on every hand by flashes that would have lacerated the heart of the most obdurate and determined bachelors, and barricaded by crinoline, as escape through which would have proved as difficult as effecting a passage through a canebrake in the Mississippi Valley, your correspondent was really becoming uneasy, when to his great relief and aid, Colonel James T. Bacon of the *Advertiser*, the prince of good and folly fellows, and a noble musician and ladies' man, joined our party. Col. Bacon being the only single gentleman of the premises, of course, had diligently to employ himself the balance of the evening; the residue of which was delightfully spent in social converse, interspersed and spiced with vocal and instrumental music of a superior order.

Major Holmes in politics is as true as steel; and has that confidence

in our leaders which creates the conviction that, before long all our trials and difficulties must terminate and be anchored in a thorough and a glorious independence.

Such as has been related is but an outline of the experience, improvement and happiness enjoyed by your correspondent a few days ago at Balmoral; and as such, will be cherished in his memory, if life should continue, for many a long day and year to come.⁷⁹

A sad sequel to the sojourn of Professor Holmes in Edgefield is that much of the precious collection of artifacts of the Charleston Museum, together with his entire library and a great deal of scientific equipment, were destroyed by fire when an outbuilding at Darby burned in September, 1865.⁸⁰ Perhaps demoralized by this major loss and wanting to return to Charleston now that the War was over, Professor Holmes determined in late 1865 to return to Charleston. In October he advertised in the *Edgefield Advertiser* that he was selling his furniture, farm produce and equipment and removing to his home in Charleston.⁸¹ In November the family began to leave and by the end of the year all of the family members had arrived in Charleston.⁸²

George Alfred Trenholm had continued to own Darby throughout the War and the first years of Reconstruction, but he had to deal with a number of difficulties during this period. To begin with he was arrested as

⁷⁹ *Charleston Daily Courier*, September 28, 1864, page 1.

⁸⁰ *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 6, 1865, "Most Lamentable Fire: We regret exceedingly that it becomes our duty to tell of a great misfortune which has befallen that learned and popular gentleman, Professor F. S. Holmes, late of Charleston College and for three years past a citizen of Edgefield. On Friday night last, or rather between two and three o'clock on Saturday morning, an office, adjoining Professor H's dwelling house, containing the Professor's entire library, geological museum, and philosophical apparatus, was destroyed by fire. Besides his library, one of the most rare and valuable in the South, a vast quantity of costly scientific instruments and novel geological and natural specimens were stored in this office. Also several hundred dollars worth of table silver. And, saddest loss of all to a literary and scientific man: all the notes, manuscripts and reports of researches, made by the Professor from his youth to the present day – and preserved by him with almost parental care. We beg leave to offer to Prof. Holmes our most honest sympathy at this his great and irreparable loss. The fire is supposed to have been the work of an incendiary. Most richly does the vandal wretch deserve to hang as high as Haman."

⁸¹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 13, 1865: "Selling Off: Removing to my home in Charleston in a few days, I propose Selling at Private Sale, all my Corn, Wheat, Rye, Peas, Fodder, stock wagons, carts, ploughs, Spinning Wheels, Looms, Blacksmith Tools, etc., etc. Also, my Furniture, consisting of Mahogany and Walnut Bedsteads, Bureaus, Wardrobes, Dining Table, Chairs, Book Cases, Book Stands, Desks, What-not etc. Anyone desirous of purchasing must apply at once at Balmoral Plantation (formerly owned by Gov. Bonham), 4 miles below Edgefield C. H., on the Hamburg old Plank Road. About 150 lbs of Domestic Yarn, 20 tanned hides, undressed, 2 Large Sorghum Kettles and 1 Wooden Sorghum Mill also may be had. Frans. S. Holmes. P.S. Whatever of the above remains unsold will be offered at Auction on Wednesday, November 1st."

⁸² "Incidents in the Life of A. Baron Holmes," copy in the possession of the author. This also recounts a visit of A. Baron Holmes to his father's Edgefield plantation, Balmoral, in January of 1865.

a member of the Confederate cabinet in May of 1865 and spent more than five months in prison. Upon being released, he returned to Charleston to try to salvage his business empire. However, the toll of the War on his affairs had been tremendous and in 1867, his firm, John Fraser and Company, filed for bankruptcy. Somehow, Trenholm's Edgefield plantation, Darby, was drawn into the bankruptcy and was sold in 1871 to cover the debts of the company. The purchaser of Darby was none other than former Governor Milledge L. Bonham.

When he had sold Darby in 1863, Milledge Bonham's family had gone to Columbia where they lived in a house on Taylor Street. However, they were all too fond of the country, and so Bonham rented a farm out near Millwood, the plantation home of General Wade Hampton. The following year, he purchased "the Guignard place," a plantation on the Saluda River in the Edgefield District, where the family was able to go at the end of his term as Governor in December of 1864. After the War ended, Bonham found it extremely difficult to manage Guignard. The end of slavery meant that the former slaves, the "freedmen," had to be paid for their work and the whole system of plantation management changed completely. This required considerably more time and management experience than Bonham was accustomed to. As a result, he resumed his law practice in Edgefield Village. In order to be close to his office and to enable the children to attend school, Bonham rented "the Sullivan place," two miles from Edgefield on the road to Columbia. Several years later, the family moved into "the Wardlaw place," now known as "Holmewood."

Very fortuitously, Darby, their old plantation home, now came on the market and Bonham was able to arrange to purchase it. By deed dated June 2, 1871, he purchased from the Trustees for the Creditors of John Fraser and Company the Darby tract containing 1,014 acres for \$8,000.⁸³ The Bonham children, having been moved to several homes in Columbia, out to Guignard, down to the Sullivan place and then to the Wardlaw place, were delighted to get Darby back. The Bonhams lived here through most of the 1870's.

One interesting story of Darby during this period was that the Governor reached an agreement with his son Milledge that the son could have all the cotton, over a certain amount, he could produce at Darby. The proceeds from the sale of this he could use to pay his way at college. So when his share was determined, he loaded his bales on a wagon and set off with a negro driver, to Augusta to dispose of his cotton. On the way, he lighted a cigarette, sparks from which ignited one of the bales. The cigarette smoke and the direction of the wind, for some time prevented the two men from perceiving that their load was on fire. When they did discover it, every

⁸³ Deed Book SSS, Page 104, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

bale was badly damaged. Milledge netted so little from this wagon load that he had to put in another year managing the plantation.⁸⁴

Bonham continued to struggle through the 1870's. Like so many of his neighbors he was "land poor." He had two plantations (Guignard and Darby) as well as some other properties in and near the Village of Edgefield. Most of his property was mortgaged to the limit and he found it increasingly difficult to pay the interest on his mortgage loans. In 1874, with the assistance of Franz Melchers, a German immigrant and friend, he tried to sell his properties to newly-arrived German immigrants. In the sales information provided to these prospective immigrant purchasers, Darby was described as being:

four miles from the village of Edgefield and two miles from Pine House Depot on the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta railroad. This depot was fifty-nine miles from Columbia, fifteen from Graniteville, twenty-six from Augusta. The plantation contained 1100 acres of "light, sandy soil with clay subsoil, well watered and entirely healthy – a superior cotton plantation. There were four tracts: the homestead, of about 500 acres with a comfortable dwelling with ten rooms, with a fire place to each, and every outbuilding needed on a plantation, with houses for fifty laborers; Pine House tract of 200 acres with two frame tenant houses; Radford tract of 200 acres with three new log cabins; Medlock tract of 200 acres with two frame tenant houses. Six hundred of the entire eleven hundred acres were fully timbered with yellow pines; about four hundred fifty acres were under cultivation.⁸⁵

Bonham was prepared to sell Darby "in a quick sale" for \$20,000, but no buyer emerged for either Darby or Guignard.⁸⁶ He continued to struggle on during this period.

As the record is clear how much a man like Governor Bonham had to struggle during these post-bellum times, it is heartwarming to discover that he nevertheless was always helpful to others who were also experiencing difficulties. The following Edgefield story provides a glimpse of Governor Bonham's concern for his fellowman:

The Mims cow, which had been faithful, failed one day to give the usual quantity of milk, which fact convinced us that she had decided to "go dry." The disastrous news reached [General Bonham] and he at once said to my husband: "Robert, send to my yard and I will lend

⁸⁴ Bonham, *The Life and Times*, page 937.

⁸⁵ Bonham, *The Life and Times*, pages 950-951.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, page 951.

you a cow to be kept as long as you wish.” My husband gratefully accepted the offer of a cow, but not on the proposed terms. Being a photographer, he requested the privilege of making pictures of the family. His request was kindly granted, and among others he photographed Sophie . . . She was lovely in person and character, which loveliness she possessed throughout her life, as she proved in a visit to me not long before her death. I do not know whether you are a Benedict or a bachelor. If you are the former, your better half will tell you how important it is to have plenty of butter, cream and milk in cooking, in order to have palatable food. If you are only the latter, you will know from personal experience how necessary butter is to hot waffles and cream to coffee. With such knowledge you will understand how much comfort, convenience and pleasure the Mimses derived from the Bonham cow.⁸⁷

In late 1878, Milledge Bonham was appointed Railroad Commissioner by Governor W. D. Simpson. This newly-established position was designed to provide regulation for the railroads which had been a field for fraud and speculation during the Radical regime during Reconstruction. The position provided Bonham a good state salary and positioned him to be relieved from the financial struggles which he had been enduring. However, the position required that the commissioner live in Columbia, so Darby was sold and the family moved to the capital.

Interestingly, in the deed in which Bonham sold Darby he refers to the “Derby Tract,” using the spelling “D-e-r-b-y” instead of “D-a-r-b-y.” This is the same spelling used by Milledge Louis Bonham in *The Life and Times of Milledge Bonham*. It had perhaps been pointed out to the Governor that the noble English family, the Earls of Derby, spelled their name “D-e-r-b-y,” even though they pronounced it “D-a-r-b-y.”⁸⁸ As he became aware of the prominence of the Earls of Derby, one of whom was a three time prime minister of Great Britain, Governor Bonham presumably began to use the “Derby” spelling. However, it is clear from all the local records that the spelling of the Benjamin Darby family who first settled this land was “D-a-r-b-y.” Since the sale by Governor Bonham in 1879, the property has continued to be known and spelled as “D-a-r-b-y.”

Bonham was to live another decade, dying in 1890 at the age of seventy-seven. He was buried at Columbia and now rests in Elmwood

⁸⁷ Ibid., pages 939-940. The Mims family spoken of here was the family of Robert Hayne Mims (1833-1912) and his wife, Isabella Jane Lake (1836-1919) who lived at the “Mims-Norris House” on Buncombe Street. This event probably occurred when the Bonham family was living down the street at “the Wardlaw place.”

⁸⁸ The Earls of Derby lived at a grand estate, Knowsley Hall, Lancashire near Liverpool in England. The author was privileged to visit this estate in 1989 in the company of a Benjamin Darby descendant, John W. Kemp, Jr.

Cemetery. His old friend, James T. Bacon, mourned his old commander in the columns of the *Edgefield Chronicle*:

He treads our earthly ways no more – Edgefield’s great-souled and beloved son – Gov. M. L. Bonham – the statesman, the soldier, the patriot, the princely gentleman. And while Edgefield mourns, she is yet proud of the high luster which the splendid record of Milledge L. Bonham sheds upon her. Having loved and served his country with unparalleled devotion throughout a long life, this modern Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*, has gone home to receive, we trust, the gracious “Well done” of the Father. Of all the brave, true, generous men we have known, no braver, truer, more generous man has ever lived or died than Milledge L. Bonham. The old hero rests far from the home and graves of his fathers, but tearful Edgefield hearts and proud Edgefield memories follow him to that last resting place which becomes to Edgefield now a shrine of glory.⁸⁹

When Governor Bonham sold Darby on September 13, 1879 he was only able to get \$9,160 for the then 971 acres.⁹⁰ The purchaser was his neighbor, Benjamin Hatcher Miller (1824-1892), who lived several miles away at “the Miller house” or “Magnolia Grove” as it was sometimes known. (This is the house that was moved to the Town of Edgefield and now serves as the Discovery Center Museum of the Edgefield County Historical Society.) At the same time Hatcher purchased from James P. Carroll 84 acres which had been a part of the Darby tract.⁹¹ Carroll had apparently acquired this tract at a foreclosure sale sometime earlier. Thus Darby contained in the aggregate 1,055 acres.

The following year Benjamin Hatcher Miller sold the property to his two sons, Walter S. Miller (1853-1915) and James Miller (1856-1921).⁹² The two brothers continued to own Darby together until 1892 when they divided it. James conveyed his interest in 580 acres with the house to Walter, and Walter conveyed his interest to James in 455 agricultural acres.⁹³ Walter and his wife Susie Miller Miller (1855-1930), who was also his first cousin, lived thereafter at Darby.



Susie M. Miller

In 1902, Susie’s sister, who had lived in Barnwell County but who had moved to Charleston, died and her seven year old son, Douglas Levert

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, page 1106.

⁹⁰ Deed Book 4, page 695, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

⁹¹ Deed Book 4, page 697, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

⁹² Deed Book 5, page 338, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

⁹³ Deed Book 14, page 298, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

Wise (1895-1981), came to live with his aunt and her husband at Darby. When Walter Miller died in 1915, he left all of his property, including Darby, to Susie.⁹⁴ Susie, in turn, upon her death in 1930 left Darby to her nephew Douglas “who has rendered me good service and given me much comfort.”⁹⁵ Doug Wise was baptized as a young boy at Horn’s Creek Baptist Church and remained devoted to that church for the rest of his life. He attended schools in Trenton and then volunteered for the Navy during World War I. He was assigned to a convoy warship in which he crossed the Atlantic a number of times during the war. After being discharged in 1919, he returned to Darby where he took charge of the farm, planting cotton as well as dairying.⁹⁶

In 1927 Doug met and married a young teacher who was teaching at Trenton High School, Clarice Donald Johnson (1903-2000). Clarice was from Piedmont, South Carolina in Greenville County and had graduated from Greenville Women’s College, now Furman University.⁹⁷ She was a descendant of Captain James Butler, making her a cousin of the Bonham family.⁹⁸ When Clarice came to Darby, she was welcomed by her husband’s aunt and gradually assumed the role of matriarch of the plantation.

On July 18, 1941, the Edgefield County Historical Society held its Mid-Summer Meeting at Darby. This was a major event with over 200 people in attendance. Miss Hortense Woodson, then Vice President of the Society, had organized a “Short Historic Episode: A Scene at Darby in 1858.” In this re-enactment, Governor Bonham was portrayed by then Judge Strom Thurmond, Mrs. Bonham by Mrs. Lena Long Kemp, Major S. S. Tompkins by Mr. Robert Tompkins, Sophie Bonham by “Little” Clarice, and Milledge Lipscomb Bonham by John W. Kemp, Jr. Three of Governor Bonham’s children were present for the event: Chief Justice Milledge Lipscomb Bonham, Mrs. Gadsden E. Shand (Patience Griffin Bonham) and Mr. Thomas Seymour Bonham, as well as a number of other Bonham family members. The principal address, “The Life and Times of Governor Milledge L. Bonham,” was delivered by the Honorable Jeff D. Griffith of Saluda, Solicitor of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit. Following the event, a booklet was published with photographs of the event, a copy of Mr. Griffith’s address and a large amount of genealogical materials. Doug and Clarice had generously opened their home for this event and acted as gracious hosts.

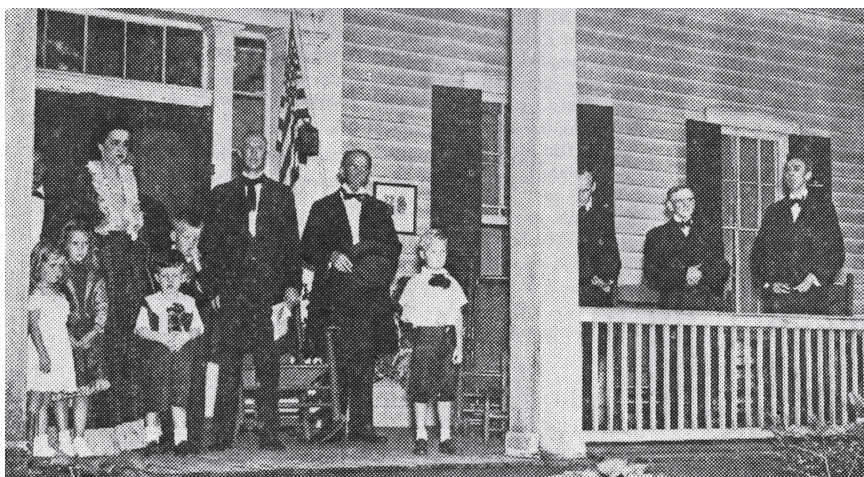
⁹⁴ Will Book H, pages 29-31, Estate Package 141, 5822, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

⁹⁵ Will Book I, pages 79-81, Estate Box 161, Package 6456, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C.

⁹⁶ *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 28, 1981.

⁹⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 20, 2000.

⁹⁸ Edgefield County Historical Society, *Bonham, Griffin, Lipscomb, Smith Families as featured at the Mid-Summer Meeting*, July 18, 1941, page 26.



Pageant performed at Darby in 1941

Congressman Milledge L. Bonham of Edgefield receiving a delegation of citizens in 1858. From left to right: Mrs. John Kemp as Mrs. Bonham; Judge J. Strom Thurmond as Mr. Bonham; Mr. W.W. Fuller as Col. Loudon Butler; Reverend H.L. Price as Dr. J.W. Hill; Mr. L.T. May as Mr. James H. Mims and Mr. J. Robert Tompkins as Major S.S. Tompkins. The Bonham children were represented by (left to right) Clarice Wise as Sophie Bonham; Mary Sue Wise as Sally Butler Bonham; John Kemp, Jr. as Milledge Lipscomb Bonham; Gene Johnson Wise as Dick Bonham; and John Hollingsworth II as James Bonham.

Doug and Clarice had four children: Douglas Levert Wise, Jr. (1928-1967), Eugene Johnson Wise (1932-1981), Mary Sue Wise Motes (1933-1959), and Clarice Wise (1938-). The two sons grew up to work with their father on the plantation, but neither married, and both died at relatively young ages. Their daughter, Mary Sue Wise was married to Simon P. Motes, Jr. but sadly died in childbirth at the time their only son, Douglas Wise Motes was born. Doug and Clarice thereafter raised this grandson at Darby as their own. "Little" Clarice, as she was often called, taught school until her retirement.

Doug and Clarice celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at Darby in 1977, attended by a host of friends and neighbors. During much of his life one of Doug's principal hobbies was the growing of camellias and his camellia garden at Darby was one of the biggest and most significant in South Carolina. Doug Wise died in 1981 at the age of 86, having rendered great service to his county. "Big" Clarice, often known as "the first lady of Trenton" as she had written a column of Trenton news for the *Edgefield*



*Doug and Clarice
Golden Anniversary*



"Little" Clarice at Darby

Advertiser for decades, continued to preside over Darby for another nineteen years until 2000 when she died at the age of ninety-seven. Today, "Little" Clarice presides over the plantation, always welcoming visitors to her historic home. She has a life estate in the property after which the property will go to her nephew, Douglas Wise Motes, who currently lives in Martinez, Georgia.

The Edgefield County Historical Society is immensely pleased to participate in erecting and dedicating the South Carolina Historical Marker for Darby and we wish to express our deep appreciation to Clarice for opening her beautiful and historic home for this 2012 event.



Early photograph of Darby

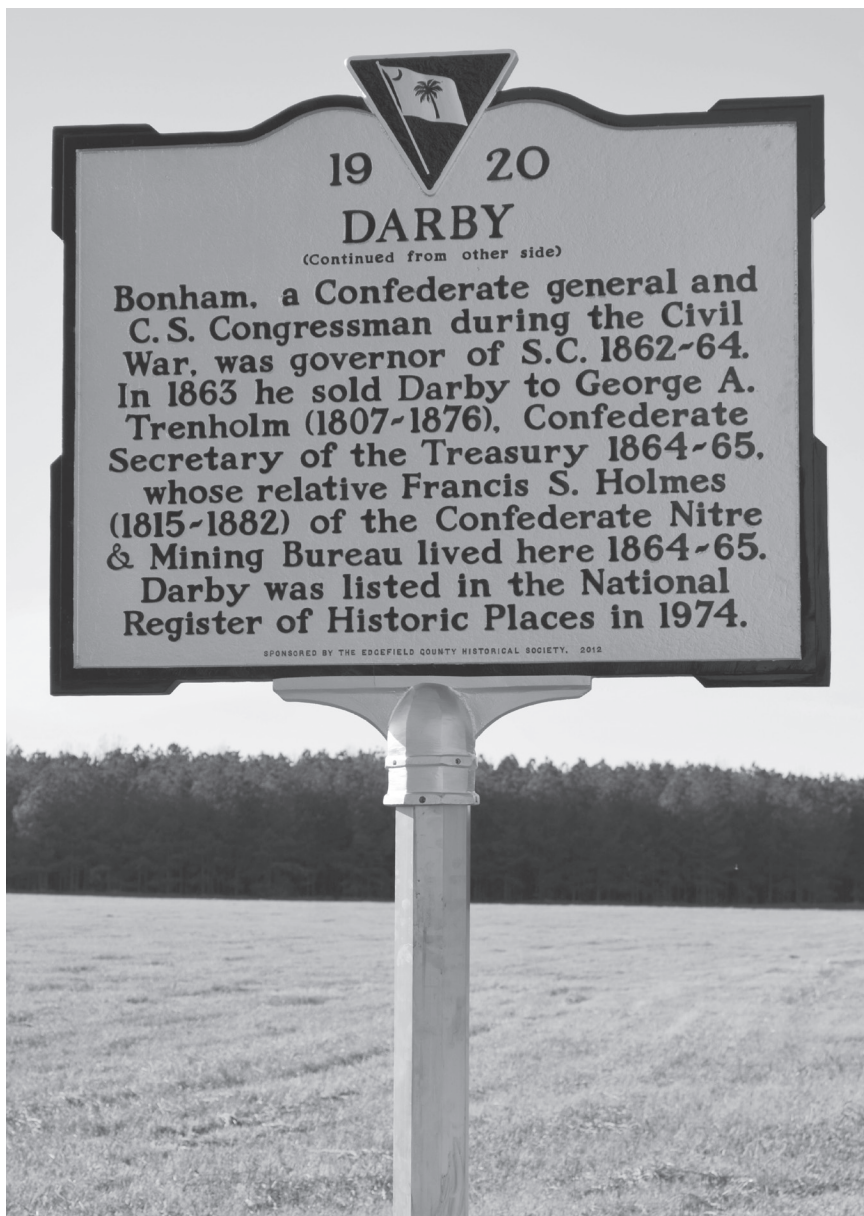


West front room at Darby



East front room at Darby





Edgefield County Historical Society

P.O. Box 174

Edgefield, S.C. 29824

803-637-2233

info@historicedgefield.com