

Spring 2019

## *Caroliniana Columns* - Spring 2019

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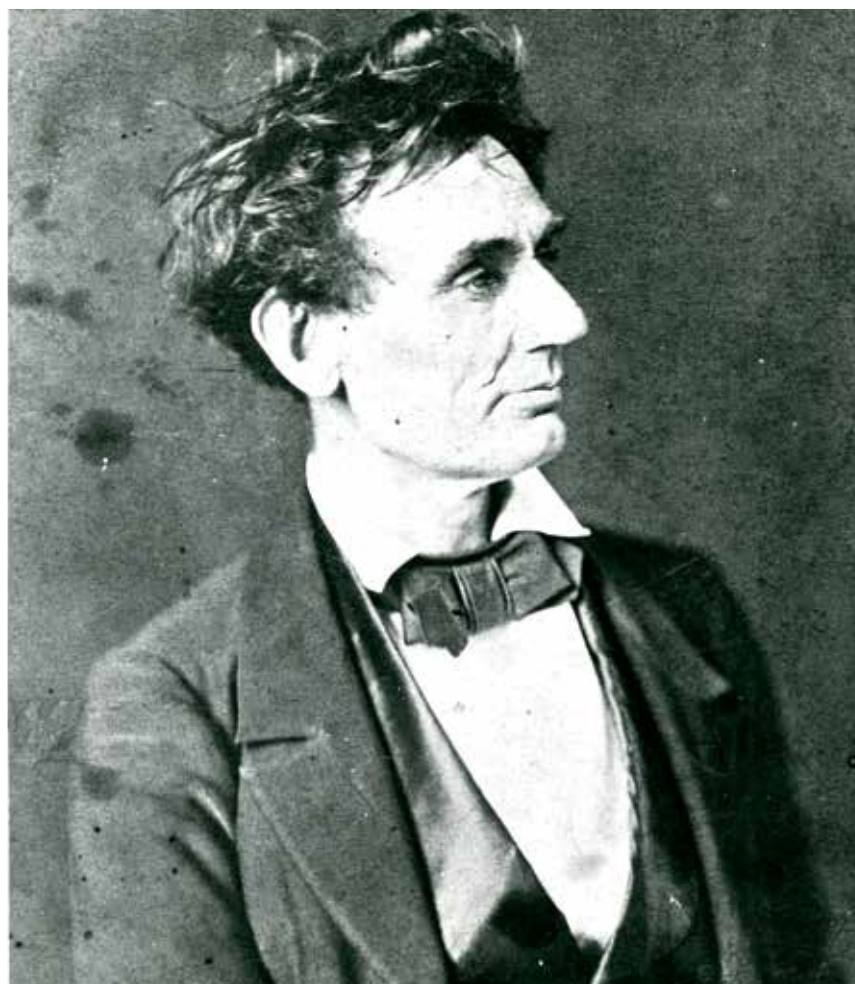
**Graphic Designer:**

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## NULLIFICATION, LINCOLN, AND THE SOUTH CAROLINIANA LIBRARY'S GEM

BY  
WILLIAM W. FREEHLING



*Abraham Lincoln as a young man (Image courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum in Harrogate, Tenn.)*

In 1961, Northern libraries' scarcity of nullification sources had stalled my Ph.D. dissertation research, focused on the 1832-33 South Carolina nullification controversy. At Columbia's University of South Carolina, the South Caroliniana Library apparently contained most nullification documents. Northern rumors warned that a Yankee intruder might encounter provincial suspicions. Still, I booked a room for a year in Mrs. Knowlton's Columbia boarding house and stepped warily toward the South Caroliniana.

## CAROLINIANA FOLK

Before I had even crossed its threshold, America's oldest free-standing academic library mocked my unease. The South Caroliniana Library's facade seemed as old-fashioned as expected—but hardly provincial. Its four perfectly proportioned columns sparked my lifelong pursuit of the sophisticated Anglo-American Georgian aesthetic.

The people inside were as cultivated as the exterior. I early met Clara Mae Jacobs, longtime head of the library's Manuscripts Division. Fifty research libraries later, I still have never seen Clara Mae's equal. She seemed to know her vast holdings' every word and deepest significance. Her compass sped my research.

Other South Caroliniana folk included Ed Hemphill, longtime editor of *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*. Ed took my Yankee interpretations of his Calhoun seriously and sparked great discussions. At the other end of the age spectrum thrived Les Inabinett, the Caroliniana's young director. Heirs had appointed Les guardian of their prize donation, their salacious James Hammond secret diary. No "outside agitator," they had decreed, could see the scandalous prose, and no word could be published without their permission.

Les sealed this non-agitator and Hammond's secret diary in a private room, after confiscating note-taking paraphernalia. He thus honored obligations to both donors and scholars. With such clever maneuvers, he eventually won permission to print the barnburner.

Beyond the enlightened staff, fellow visitors deepened my perspectives. Charles Lee, the native new director of the South Carolina Archives, had lately studied in my hometown, Chicago. Charles offered keen insights to this once leery Illinoisian.

Then came Bob Ochs, the little Illinoisian sporting a big pipe and chairing the University's history department. Ochs recruited his fellow non-native to teach night school classes on world history, a subject I had barely studied. My Southern students, among my best ever, manned nearby Fort Jackson. They delighted to spend after-hours on worlds beyond their manuals. We taught each other about fascinating cultures, foreign to us all.

Finally, two native graduate students, Charles (Chaz) Joyner and Selden Smith, often shared tales of their recent desegregation adventures. Their cause promised more crucial reforms than did my John F. Kennedy liberalism. Thus did South Caroliniana folk endlessly broaden my sights.

## THE NULLIFIERS

Despite the South Caroliniana characters, the main show remained the manuscripts. I relish history as mystery. The nullifiers posed an important puzzle. Why were the South's wealthiest planters, the critical anti-tariff extremists, and poorer slaveholders among their prime foes? In Low Country swamps, fabulous rice plantations only mildly wore out lush soil, in contrast to badly declining fertility in the Cotton Kingdom. Yet booming Carolina rice barons called high tariffs disastrous, while afflicted cotton producers called nullification the disaster.

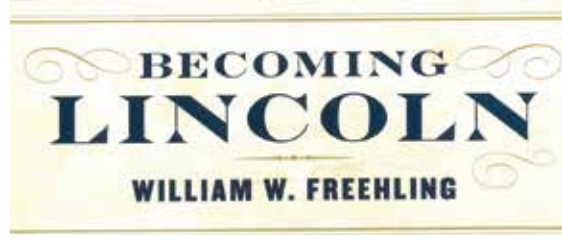
According to nullification dogma, a single state could declare any national law unconstitutional. The lone ranger's veto allegedly prevailed unless three-fourths of the states objected. Then overruled nullifiers could peaceably secede.

In November 1832, John C. Calhoun's South Carolina declared the high federal tariff null and void. President Andrew Jackson, most Southerners' moderate hero, vowed to enforce the nullified law. With civil war looming, the national majority enacted a so-called Compromise Tariff. Then isolated nullifiers retreated while still cursing "outrageous" rates. Their backward steps after forward lunges would recur in the 1850s. So why had a dubiously perilous tariff sparked the first of several aborted South Carolina rushes?

The South Caroliniana's documents offered clues. The state's aristocrats' unusually strong fear of slavery issues lifted their relatively weak concerns about tariffs over the top in 1832. This most widely and deeply enslaved state, with the lowest percentage of non-slaveholders

and the highest percentage of huge plantations, cherished a unique way to preserve despotism from mobocracy. South Carolina allowed only the wealthy to run for the legislature and only the legislature to elect the governor. All white men could then safely vote between only safely wealthy candidates. "Think!" scoffed Daniel Huger, powerful state legislator, when asked what his constituents thought about a pending measure. "They will think nothing about it—They expect me to think for them here."

Elsewhere in Dixie, in the early 1830s, national two-party systems anointed hungry spoilsmen, eager for patronage and experts at rallying white male majorities. Legislators secured higher taxes to finance federal projects. Their proposed schemes included sending blacks back to Africa. Such antislavery talk may have aroused Nat Turner, whose 1831 revolt led Virginians to debate emancipation. Such agitations



Cover of Dr. Freehling's new book: *Becoming Lincoln*

had seeped into South Carolina in 1822, and Denmark Vesey's slave conspiracy had alarmed Charlestonians. In some of Dixie's most northern locales, slavery was dwindling, and the increasing mass of white non-slaveholders scarcely cared.

How to save despotism from mobocracy? Carolina's answer: veto extra federal funds before they arm spoilsmen. Nullify national antislavery reform before it became an avalanche. Keep egalitarian democracy fenced off from its dictatorial opposite. But to consolidate their aristocratic republicanism, the Carolina advanced guard not only had to shutter national openings, as they attempted in 1832, but also stay the course, as they failed to do in 1833.

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN

My 1965 nullification book, *Prelude to Civil War*, led to my two-volume *Road to Disunion* (1990-2007), emphasizing that a divided Southland long paralyzed Carolina extremists. My shorter potboiler, *The South Versus the South* (2001), showed that during the Civil War, a lethal third of Southern soldiers, black and white, battled for the Union. South Carolinians' fear of the other South clearly had some credence. Yet why, my latest puzzle ran, had President-elect Lincoln seemed so dangerous that Carolina aristocrats *finally* struck, exposing Dixie's fault lines to killing wartime pressure?

My search for answers illustrated the computer revolution's impact on historians. No need this time for a year in some Mrs. Knowlton's boarding house. Recent publications and digitizing made most Lincoln sources available at home.

My research in my residential study revealed the telling similarity between my new Lincoln riddle and my old nullification puzzle. Just as the unique Carolina aristocracy's relatively mild economic troubles too little explained their anti-tariff zeal, so Lincoln's relatively mild antislavery too little explained the Palmetto State's ferocious secessionism. After avoiding slavery issues entirely until 1854, Lincoln had only inched toward banning bondage, and only in territories. Lincoln's inaugural address urged a constitutional amendment, forever barring congressional emancipation in states. Why did South Carolina reactionaries call this cautious moderate the beginning of the end?

The answer underlined the telling similarity between 1832 and 1860. Just as apprehension about mobocratic threats to slavery in Souths elsewhere had turned South Carolinians into Dixie's prime nullifiers, so Lincoln's mild antislavery pressure turned the state's squires into the most precipitous disunionists. While Lincoln rejected all federal compulsions to *force* antislavery on a Southern state, he appointed native Southern antislavery men to patronage positions in the most northern South. In this least-enslaved region, he hoped, his moderate appointees could gradually *persuade* huge non-slaveholder majorities.

South Carolina gentlemen wanted out from this mobocracy before Lincoln's spoilsmen uttered a word. We must not "wait in the Union a single day," urged John Townsend, rich rice planter and arch-secessionist, while Lincoln is "organizing his cabinet and distributing his offices," using the federal treasury "to bribe fanatics among us." Thus did Lincoln's open republic and Townsend's closed state approach the blowup.

### THE SOUTH CAROLINIANA LIBRARY'S GEM

To be convincing, such abstractions require vivid tales of striking people. Superb illustrations can top off persuasive words. I could use previous books' splendid image of Abraham Lincoln, hair unbrushed, ready to rally the commoners. But what visual masterpiece equally captured a Carolina patriarch, aching to depart mobocracy?

Beth Bilderback, the Caroliniana's fine Visual Materials Archivist, brought me her collection's answer. Her surprise gift featured John Townsend, immaculately brushed and polished as he set out to galvanize the wealthy. When published alongside the famed Lincoln photograph in my recent *Becoming Lincoln* (2018), the

South Caroliniana's under-heralded gem lent my lifework a sumptuous finale.

—Dr. William W. Freehling is Singletary Professor, Emeritus, University of Kentucky and Senior Fellow Emeritus, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.



*John Townsend (1799–1881), an ardent secessionist, was a planter from Edisto Island, long-time state House of Representatives member and state senator, and delegate at the Secession Convention from St. Philip and St. Michael parishes.*

## LETTER FROM THE DEAN OF LIBRARIES

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The South Caroliniana Library renovation is finally moving from the design phase into the bid process. If all goes well, our bids will be within our budget and construction can begin.

The dedicated staff of the Caroliniana has worked as a team to guide the architects and the exhibit designer on issues that only those who have worked in the building could know. I believe that the contributions of the staff will prove to be an important key to the success of the renovation.

We will have a final meeting that will cover security cameras, data access, floor treatments, and a variety of additional items that will complete our final drawings and cost

estimates. The entire package of hundreds of pages of material will then be submitted to the State Engineer for approval to advertise for contractors to bid.

Next, we will collectively hold our breath until the bids are opened.

Stay tuned for the next issue of *Columns* and I will tell you how it all comes out!

Tom McNally



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

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BY WILMOT B. IRVIN

As of this writing, the University South Caroliniana Society, with the substantial assistance of the wonderful staff of the South Caroliniana Library, has just completed its eighty-third annual spring membership meeting and luncheon. What a marvelous event that was! I hope you were able to attend and that you heard the stimulating address Judge Richard M. Gergel brought us. The Society's membership is growing, our collections are expanding, and all's right with the world—well, not quite, at least not yet! There is much work ahead of us in accomplishing our goal of achieving greater diversity in our membership, our collections, and our leadership—a diversity that mirrors the rich variety found in the peoples and the cultures of our great state.

Your Executive Council has been discussing how we might best accomplish this worthy goal. Many good and constructive ideas have come from those discussions. But first, a little background.

In 2016, the Executive Council established the Nominations Advisory Subcommittee. Contemporaneous with the creation of that subcommittee, we adopted the following guidelines for use in the nominations process:

While they are not considered mandates, aspirational goals that may be considered when deliberating University South Caroliniana Society Executive Council and Executive Committee (officer) nominations include geographic, gender, racial, cultural, and vocational diversity as well as current Society affiliation and anticipated degree of commitment and involvement. Consideration may also be given to those who are in a position to support the purposes of the Society with regard to financial development or collection development.

And, as I mentioned in my last letter to you, the Executive Council has formed two new *ad hoc* committees, one for promoting membership and the other for promoting collections. In doing so, we stressed the importance of advancing diversity in both categories—membership and collections—in the work of these new committees. I believe it is fair to say that diversity as expressed in the Society's aspirational goals is at the forefront of your leadership's efforts at broadening the reach and accessibility of the Society, and, by extension, the mission of the South Caroliniana Library.

We all have a part to play in achieving these aspirational goals. As the *ad hoc* committees get fully underway, it is my desire that the Society's membership and the Library's collections will reflect our commitment to diversity. What can you do? Look for an opportunity to encourage someone who may not currently have a relationship with the Society or much of an understanding of what we do to consider joining us. As new members become active in the Society, many will soon be willing to serve in leadership positions. I am convinced that all of these things can—and will—happen if we all do our part!

It is a great privilege to serve as your president. I hope that you will contact me with any suggestions or comments you may have as we work together to accomplish the goals of the Society. Feel free to email me ([wilmot@wilmotirvinlaw.com](mailto:wilmot@wilmotirvinlaw.com)) or call me (803-606-0550). Thank you.



Staff members of the South Caroliniana Library are shown, left to right, Jenna Conant, Kendall Hallberg, Jacinda Okoh, Taryn Cooksey, McKenzie Lemhouse, Edward Blessing, Sarah Earle, Ron Bridwell, Nicholas Doyle, Rose Thomas, Henry Fulmer, Brian Cuthrell, Beth Bilderback, John Quirk, Elizabeth West, Graham Duncan, and Todd Hoppock.

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## REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY HENRY G. FULMER

Summer's approach on the University of South Carolina campus brings with it a relative quiet to what is during the academic year a fast-paced urban setting. But at a time when students in the main library may be fewer in number, special collections units like the South Caroliniana Library find their reading rooms packed with researchers. Even in our temporary headquarters in the Graniteville Room in the Thomas Cooper Library, we are experiencing increased research traffic from international students, teaching faculty from across the country, TRIO McNair Scholars participants, and summer scholars supported by South Caroliniana Library research fellowships.

Between May and August 2019, research visits by five summer scholars, representing City University of New York, Emory University, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Edinburgh, and Vanderbilt University, will be made possible by the Lewis P. Jones Fellowship in South Carolina History and the Governor Thomas Gordon McLeod and First Lady Elizabeth Alford McLeod Research Fellowship Endowment Fund. The foresight of those who established

these endowments and other dedicated funds in support of educational opportunities at the South Caroliniana Library has continued to make possible focused periods of scholarly research which otherwise might not take place. Look for reports from this year's summer scholars in the Fall 2019 issue of *Caroliniana Columns*.

Meanwhile, the library staff continues the work of processing incoming collections, engaging with donors of collection materials, and supporting in an advisory capacity the architects and engineers now finalizing plans for the renovation of America's oldest freestanding academic library building.

The partnership of those throughout our community and beyond—as well as you, our most loyal friends—guarantees the success of our mission and the excitement of fresh new discoveries by those who benefit most from the preservation of primary materials from which our state's past and our shared human experience are revealed.

For that we are most grateful and extend our sincere thanks.

## USCS ANNUAL MEETING, 2019



*The Honorable and Mrs. Richard M. Gergel*



*Left to right, Henry Fulmer, Richard Gergel, and Tom McNally*

The eighty-third annual meeting of the University South Caroliniana Society was held on April 6, 2019. The beautiful, springtime day brought with it 114 guests who gathered in the University's Capstone Campus Room for the luncheon and business meeting. Everyone appeared to be in a festive mood as they enjoyed one another's company and the traditional Caroliniana champagne punch.

The Honorable Richard M. Gergel, U.S. District Judge of the Charleston Division District of South Carolina and author of *Unexampled Courage: The Blinding of Sgt. Isaac Woodard and the Awakening of President Harry S. Truman and Judge J. Waties Waring*, delivered the keynote address entitled "Unexampled Courage."

Following the invocation, Society president Wilmot B. Irvin introduced Dean of Libraries Tom McNally, who welcomed the Society members and guests and gave an update on the South Caroliniana Library renovation, focusing his remarks specifically on the gallery and other aspects of exhibit design.

At the business meeting, thanks were extended to officers and councilors who concluded their terms of service. The following members were elected by acclamation: Ms. Lynn Robertson, of Columbia, to a second three-year term as vice-president; and Mr. H. Freeman Belser, of Columbia, Mr. Edward E. Poliakoff, of Columbia, and the Reverend William M. Shand III, of Saluda, N.C., to four-year terms as councilors.

Judge Gergel was then introduced by University of South Carolina professor of history Dr. Patricia A. Sullivan. The text of Judge Gergel's lecture will be published in the 2020 annual report of gifts.

# MEMORIALS & HONORARIA

## Memorials

Dr. Gilbert S. Guinn

Mrs. Christie Zimmerman Fant

Margaret and Edward Outen

Ms. Marian H. Stewart

## Contributors

Dr. Susan H. Guinn

Ms. Jane A. Barnhill

Dr. Ben F. Hornsby

Mr. and Mrs. David Williams

Donna and Lon Outen

Ms. Linda C. Stewart

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## In Honor of

Mr. Henry G. Fulmer

Mr. Steve C. Griffith, Jr.

## Contribution from

Jim and Mary Nichols

Ms. Lee Gordon Brockington



## ARE YOU A MEMBER?

Members of the University South Caroliniana Society receive this newsletter, *Caroliniana Columns*, twice a year. If you're not a member, and you're enjoying this issue of *Caroliniana Columns*, please consider becoming a member today.

Go to [sc.edu/libraries/USCS](http://sc.edu/libraries/USCS) and follow the links under "Becoming a Member." Or call 803-777-3131 to request a brochure and membership form.

*The University South Caroliniana Society is the patron organization supporting the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina. The Society works to acquire and preserve materials documenting South Carolina's history and culture.*

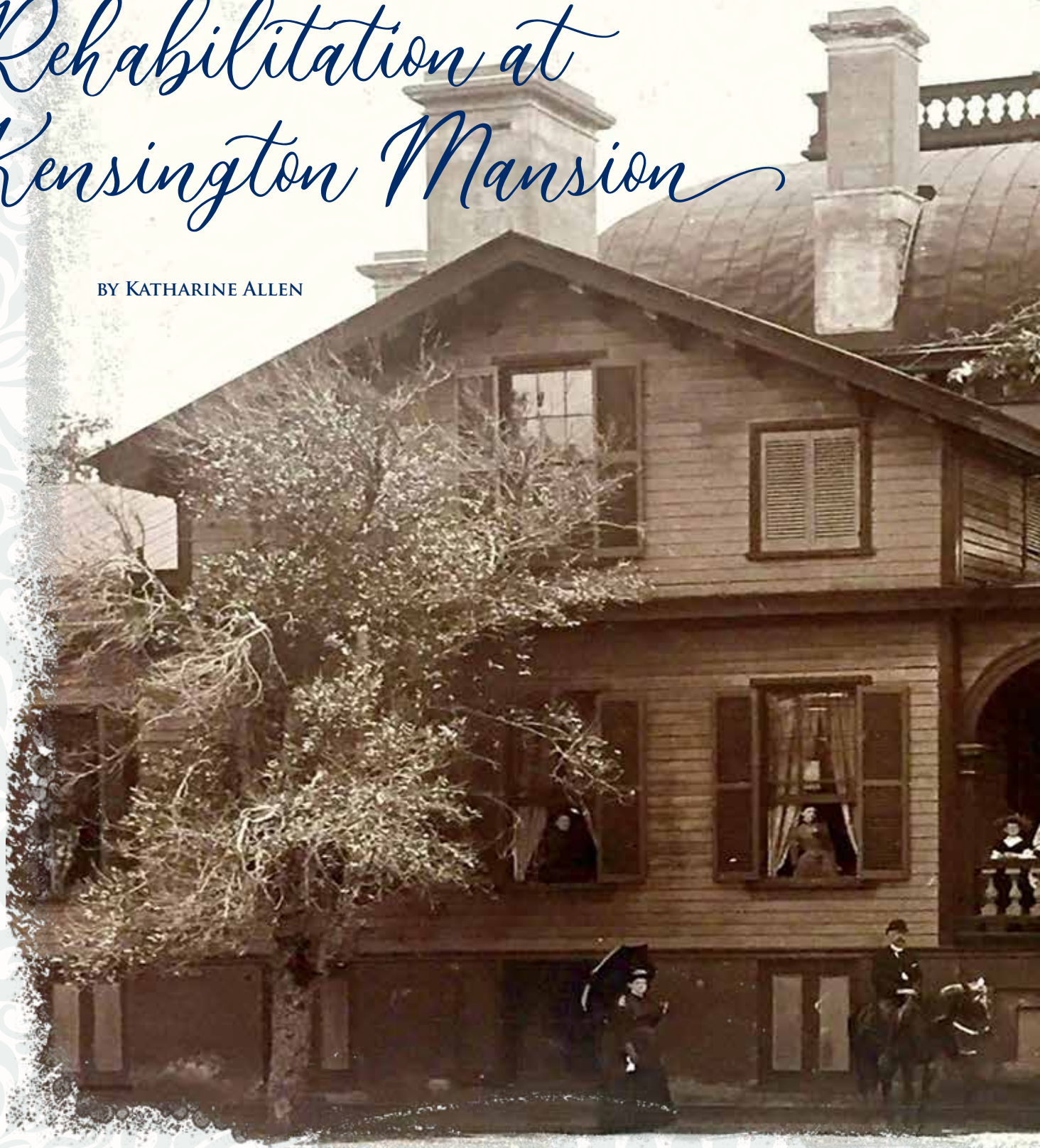
*The Society was founded in 1937 at the invitation of University President J. Rion McKissick and the Caroliniana Committee to help build the University's South Carolina collection. To assure the permanence of its work, the Society was incorporated in 1951. Since then the Society has functioned as a private, non-profit organization with the purpose of promoting a better understanding and appreciation of South Carolina, its history and culture.*

*Membership dues and income from the Society's endowment are primarily devoted to the purchase and preservation of South Carolina materials for the South Caroliniana Library's collection. Scholars from around the globe use the collection to enhance our understanding of South Carolina's history and how that history has helped shape the South, the United States, and the world.*

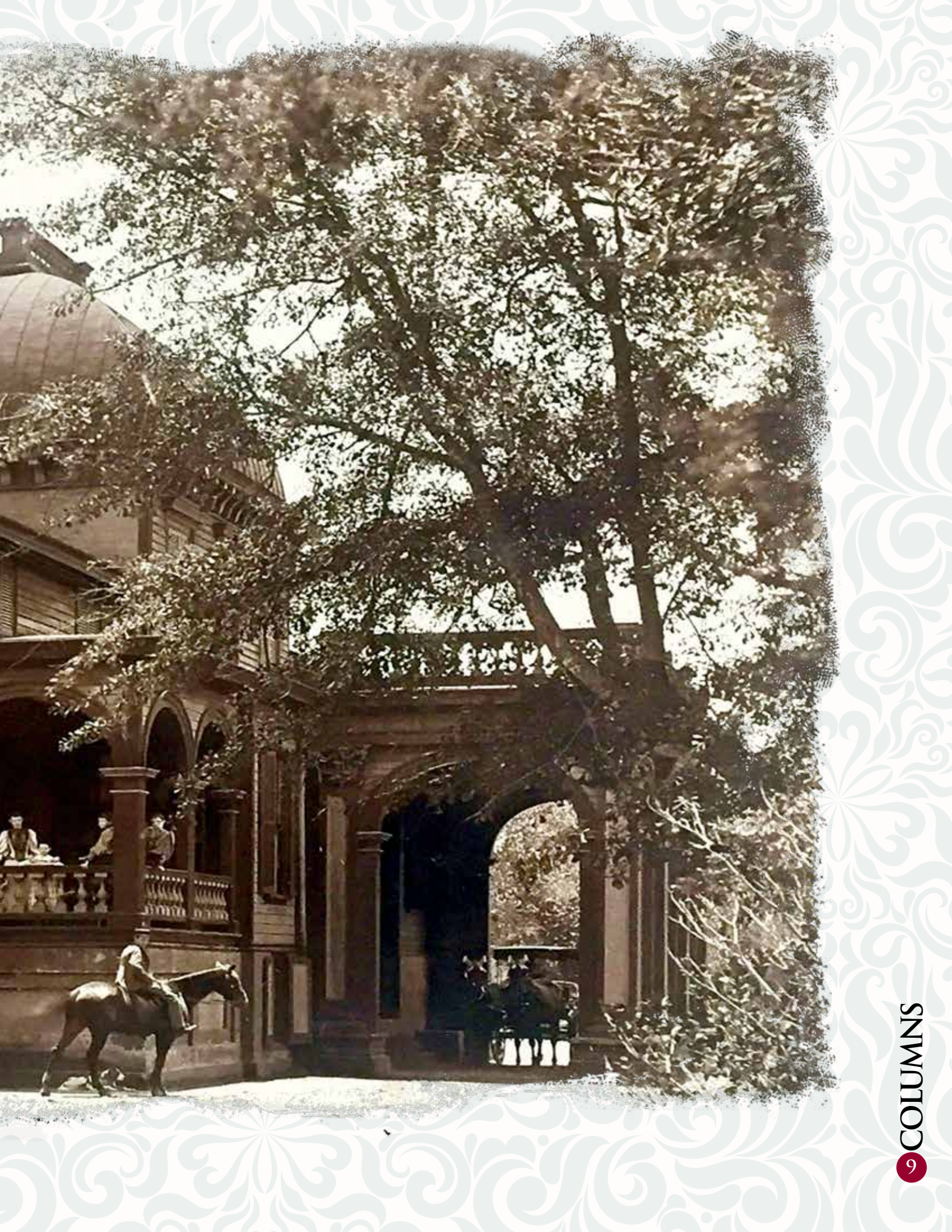


# Renaissance and Rehabilitation at Kensington Mansion

BY KATHARINE ALLEN



*Following the death of Matthew Richard Singleton's wife, Mattie, in 1892, the family gathered at Kensington Mansion. They took a series of photographs to document the occasion including this rather artfully arranged one showing family members framed by the windows and porch, two men on horseback, the family carriage, a lady with her parasol, and even the pet dog. (Image from Singleton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library)*



*The Estate of Richard Singleton in Account*

Date	Description	Amount
1852		
Dec: 2	To Cash paid Milo H. Berry undertaker for burial expenses & services	\$ 100 ..
" 6	" Cash paid Boatwright & Bankulos their of for medicines	8 11
" 21	" Cash paid Perry Moses his of for glass & hinges in fire night	27 50
" 22	" Cash paid John A. Miles for cattle & for services rendered	74 ..
1853		
January 1	" Cash paid Edmund L. Garner his wages for managing Fork plantation for the year 1852 in fire night	500 ..
" "	" Cash paid the same for balance of wages for the same for 1851	350 ..
" "	" Cash paid Walter Walker for 1/2 coil of rope for Fork plant	18 54
" 3	" Cash paid G. H. Thompson for shoes for Fulton plant in fire night	37 50
" "	" Cash paid the same for do for Home place ..	26 25
" "	" Cash paid W. F. Turner his wages for managing Head Quarters plant for 1852 & for balance due him for some 1851	750 ..
" 5	" Cash paid Jim. Watson wages for boat hands in fire night of W. H.	5 ..
" 13	" Cash paid S. Glover, Ordinary of Orangeburg dist for fees	2 50
" 22	" Cash paid D. W. Ray his medical of for attending ..	

“The Estate of Richard Singleton in Account” shows debts paid by the estate of Richard Singleton, 1852-1853. Of note in this excerpt is the \$100 payment “for expenses and services” to Milo H. Berry exactly a week after Richard’s death in a train accident. Berry was a prominent Columbia cabinetmaker and undertaker, and this payment likely included the cost of building Richard’s coffin. Other payments were made to overseers, including William F. Turner at Head Quarters (Kensington) plantation; to Dr. D.W. Ray for medical services at Fork and Head Quarters plantations; for shoes for enslaved workers at Fulton and Home Place plantations; and to Jim, the Singletons’ enslaved patroon (captain) for wages (\$5) for his boat hands. (Image from Singleton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library)

Kensington Mansion, constructed between 1852 and 1854 for Matthew Richard Singleton (1817-1854), stands as a tangible monument to the excesses afforded to large slaveholding families during the antebellum period. During the following 160 years, the site experienced periods of societal upheaval, economic ruin, and long stretches of vacancy. Its National Register listing, accepted in 1971, notes that the twenty-nine-room mansion had been unoccupied for forty years, was in “a state of disrepair,” and was being “used to store hay and farm machinery.” Union Camp, today known as International Paper, purchased the property in 1981 and undertook a major restoration before reopening the mansion as a traditional historic house museum in 1985. For nearly three decades, the Scarborough-Hamer Foundation operated tours at

the site, performed research, and managed a collection of more than 3,000 artifacts.

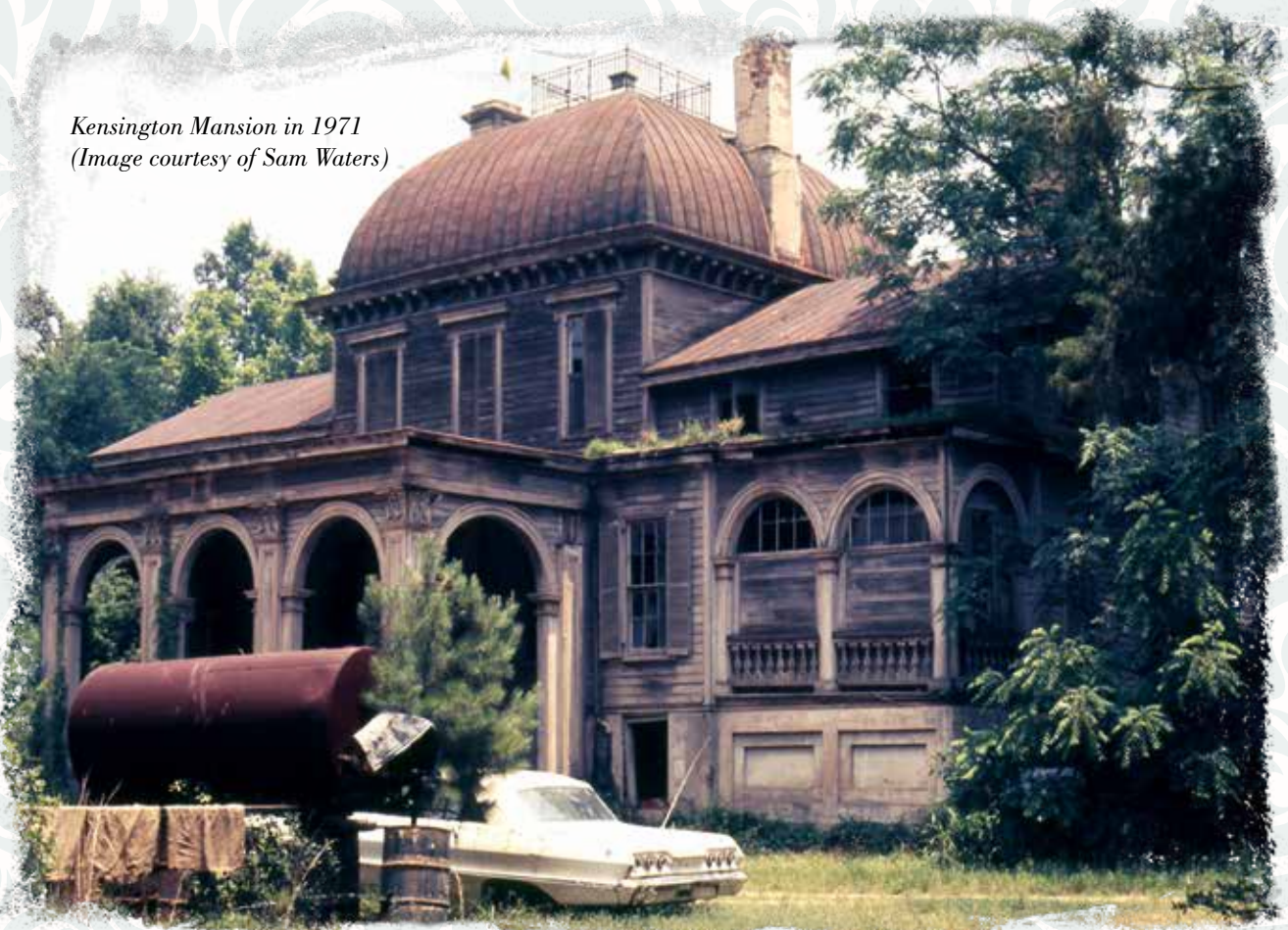
After an ice storm severely damaged the mansion’s iconic mansard roof in 2014, preservationists successfully lobbied International Paper to undertake a comprehensive restoration and rehabilitation, which took place over several years. Installation of a new roof was conducted by the Carolina Slate Company. The remainder of the project was managed by Huss Construction. This work included upgraded building systems and comprehensive exterior and interior work. Dillon Construction Services was responsible for restoring and repairing the mansion’s celebrated plasterwork, which sometimes features four or more different trim motifs in a single room.

# Kensington Mansion

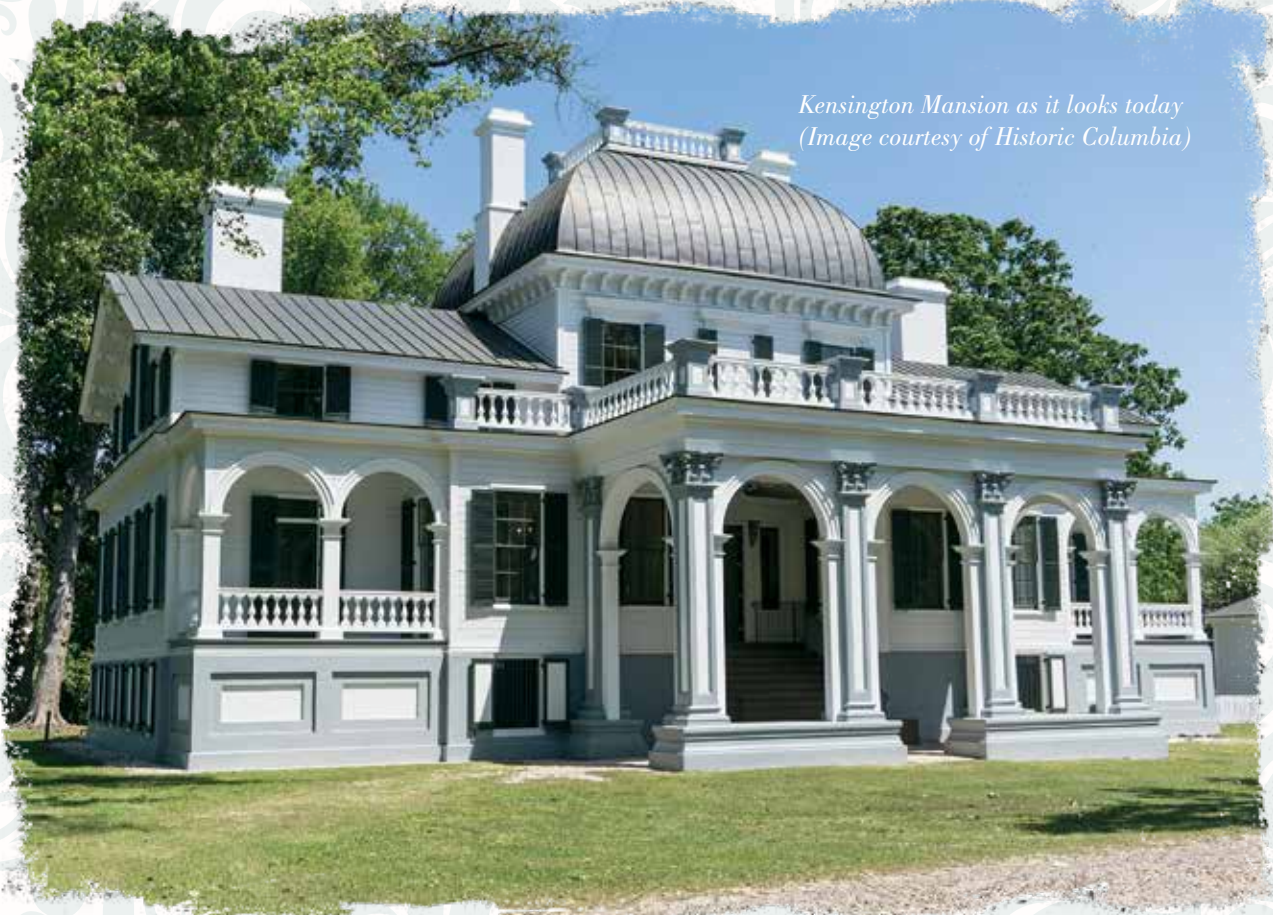


*Another 1892 portrait shows members of the Singleton family posing (again with the dog) on the front steps of Kensington. Shown left to right are: back row, Virginia Taylor, Mary Lowndes, Lillian Singleton; middle row, Eliza Green Singleton, Richard Singleton, Governess Sallie "Miss S" Gillespie, Eliza Singleton; and, front row, Matthew Singleton. (Image from Singleton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library)*

*Kensington Mansion in 1971  
(Image courtesy of Sam Waters)*



*Kensington Mansion as it looks today  
(Image courtesy of Historic Columbia)*





*Interior of the restored Kensington Mansion  
(Image courtesy of Historic Columbia)*

With the structure's physical renaissance complete, International Paper partnered with Historic Columbia to craft a new visitor experience at the site. Research focused on the two-year period of the mansion's construction and relied on an array of primary and secondary sources, including:

- Census records for 1850 (Agricultural, Population, and Slave Schedule)
- Wills and estate appraisals for members of the Singleton family
- Interpretive manuals, reports, and research files created by the Scarborough-Hamer Foundation
- Family records of the Singleton family
- Personal research files of Carl Dubose, former volunteer of the Scarborough-Hamer Foundation
- Jacob Stroyer's memoir, *My Life in the South*

Historic Columbia made a conscious choice not to build upon or reuse earlier interpretations, but instead, relied on records created during and prior to the 1850s. This allowed staff members to craft a new narrative that granted equal weight to the hundreds of enslaved people that labored at the site. Key to this was the incorporation of the memoir *My Life in the South* by Jacob Stroyer (circa 1846-1908), an enslaved child at the site. His remembrances of loss and family bonds offer visitors a more authentic understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the many men, women, and children who lived in bondage at Kensington Plantation.

Of primary importance to the reinterpretation of the site were the will and estate appraisal of Richard Singleton

(1776-1852), available through genealogy sites like Ancestry and Heritage Quest, and also in the Singleton family papers at the South Caroliniana Library. Richard was Kensington Plantation's legal owner until his death in 1852, although he turned the plantation's administration over to his son, Matthew Richard, sometime in the early 1840s. Under the elder Singleton, the site was known as Head Quarters, likely due to its central location amongst his other holdings. The property appraisal included the names of 251 enslaved individuals, including those believed to be Jacob Stroyer and several of his family members. The appraisal also lists occupations for some men, including Jim, a patroon or boat captain, and Billy, a shoemaker.

More insight into these individuals' lives comes from a legal dispute between Matthew Richard Singleton and the other Singleton heirs over the "floating force" of eight highly skilled enslaved people, commonly called "mechanics," who moved between Singleton plantations building structures and fixing machinery. These men, as well as three enslaved apprentices learning trades in Charleston, were often separated from their families at the whims and needs of their owner. This document, as well as the accounts for Richard Singleton's estate during the mansion's construction (which include payments to various plantation overseers and clothing and medical treatment for enslaved individuals) helped contextualize daily life for these individuals in the early 1850s for the site's new visitors.

Of chief importance to the new interpretation was correspondence with the mansion's architects, Jones and Lee of Charleston. Although most of these records are held



*Ceiling showing restored detailed plasterwork (Image courtesy of Historic Columbia)*



*Corinthian pilaster (with posing bird) (Image courtesy of Historic Columbia)*

in UNC Chapel Hill's Southern Historical Collection, the Scarborough-Hamer Foundation collection housed at the South Caroliniana Library includes photocopies sorted by topic. These letters address the sophisticated plumbing system at the site and identify businesses and artisans who contributed to the physical structure. Other more contemporary items, including deed research by former Scarborough-Hamer employees, confirmed the date of the site's acquisition by the Singleton family (circa 1822), which was often misstated in past interpretations.

This new interpretation, in the form of ticketed tours managed jointly by International Paper and Historic Columbia

and led by three members of Historic Columbia's full-time staff, debuted over three days in 2018. Thus far, 331 visitors, including relatives of Jacob Stroyer, have had a chance to view Kensington. Additional tours will be offered in 2019.

For information about visiting the site, go to [www.historiccolumbia.org](http://www.historiccolumbia.org) and subscribe to the Historic Columbia mailing list.

*—Katharine Allen is Research and Archives Manager at Historic Columbia.*

# Kensington Mansion



Chandelier (Image courtesy of Historic Columbia)



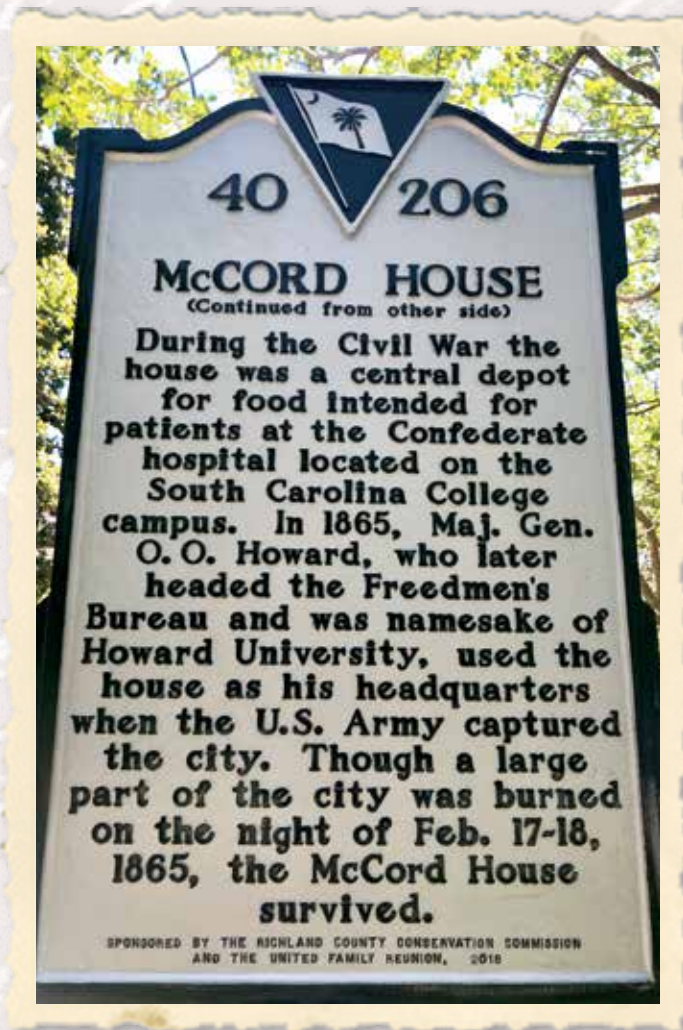
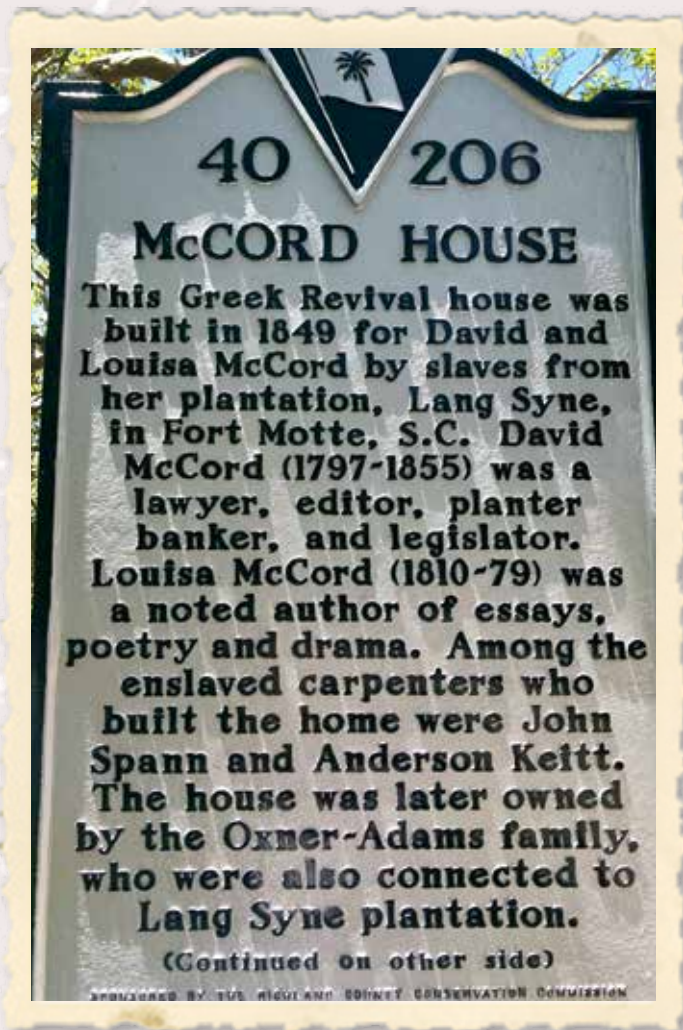


# KATE SIMPKINS

William Gilmore Simms Visiting Research Professorship



*McCord House*



Just after joining the South Caroliniana Library on the William Gilmore Simms Visiting Research Professorship last summer, I saw an article published a week before—a story by Eva Moore of *Free Times* called “Reckoning: Charleston Apologized for Slavery. Should Columbia?” A photograph shows African Americans of all ages gathered around for the dedication of a historic marker at 1431 Pendleton Street, the location of the McCord House. Not too far from the Library, the McCord House is one of the few structures to have survived the burning of Columbia (1865), and its marker says that it was built in 1849 by people who were enslaved by the McCord family at Lang Syne Plantation near Fort Motte, about forty miles down the Congaree River. Moore’s article says the dedication of the marker was “the most Columbia of scenes” as “the descendants of the enslaved people who’d built the house mingled cautiously with the white families who’d previously owned the house.”

I had missed an important moment. David James McCord, the original owner of the house and William Gilmore Simms’s literary comrade, was my great, great, great-grandfather, and I had come to the Caroliniana to study the writings of Simms as well as the Library’s McCord collection for my current book project, *The Absent Agronomist and the Lord of Poison*,

which builds on prior research from my 2016 dissertation in nineteenth-century American and Early Caribbean literatures.<sup>1</sup> In my readings of texts from Saint-Domingue (or pre-revolutionary Haiti), France, England, and the U.S. South, I identify two twinned and competing figures of power: that of European colonial knowledge embodied in the absent agronomist and that of creole African knowledge embodied in the “lord of poison,” or the maroon slave whose knowledge of soil and plants enabled revolution from below. While the plantation is traditionally seen as the site of enslaved labor rather than social production, I show that the plantation was a site of dynamic modern social assembly in which subaltern ecological knowledge emerged in tandem with agricultural science. I trace the ecological nature of modernity through science and Atlantic West African culture, which I argue is rooted in the monocultural plantation economies of the American South.

The project traces a network of literary works about the Saint-Domingue slave, priest, maroon, and mythohistorical figure, François Makandal, also known as “The Lord of Poison.” As far back as 1758, French planters described Makandal as an enslaved African healer who became a poisoner when his arm was severed in a sugar mill designed

to pull cane into its jaws.<sup>2</sup> Colonial judicial documents and planters' letters show that Makandal's knowledge of plants enabled him to become a skilled poisoner and to lead a campaign that presaged the Haitian Revolution. Although critics have tracked the heroic figure of Toussaint Louverture in novels such as Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* (1826), I argue that in tracing a Makandal tradition across genres, from those early colonial criminal logs in French Saint-Domingue, to British pantomime, and finally to the first American translation of Hugo's novel, *The Slave-King* (1833), the literature demonstrates the centrality of ecological knowledge (from above and below) to an understanding of modernity. The literature of the Global South can be read as shaping new and competing ways of knowing and inhabiting the world that are both modern and ecological in nature, and the project demonstrates that modernity grew from the seeds of Creole African knowledge ways and European agronomy, which were both created on colonial soil.

In the book's last chapter, the deconstructive power of counter-modern expressions first located on the eighteenth-century plantation in the Caribbean endure in the U.S. literary imagination. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) begins on a fictional Kentucky plantation, but I show that Saint-Domingue is the historical soil framing her frequent direct address to the Southern planter and the spiritual malleability of her story's slaves. Like Makandal, Tom is the center of culture, the noble "soul" of the plantation, who is betrayed by the master's absence or cruelty. Where Makandal turns to unreliable spirituality and the knowledge that he learns from maroons for vengeance, Tom is the spiritual restoration of Makandal who resists the dangers of Creole culture given the proper spiritual guidance in the New Testament.

Through Stowe and Simms, Makandal meets with the McCords, since as Southern planters and slave owners, David and his wife, Louisa Susannah Cheves, wrote scathing critiques of Stowe's novel, including Louisa's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (1853), an essay that Simms commissioned and published in the *Southern Quarterly Review* because he sought a Southern woman and plantation owner to counter Stowe's far-reaching saga. I argue that their defense of slavery and critique of Stowe's novel rely on an agricultural authority based in the traditions of French agronomy and a critique of Afro-Caribbean knowledge economies. They pay particular attention to the role of these forms of knowledge in bringing about the Haitian Revolution and they fear its repetition in the United States. Like Stowe, Simms and the McCords were participating in an ongoing discourse engaging a global debate over pan-African cultural expansion sparked by Haiti's revolution and the establishment of the first free black nation and agricultural state. The possibility, in Louisa's words, of another "Haytien tragedy" in the U.S. because of abolitionist sentiment fuels her opposition to Stowe, who Louisa likened to a sorceress whose novel would poison the public.

I began my research understanding some biographical details that put Louisa and David in contact with Saint-Domingue, but was still surprised by the way that France and its colonial history saturated their world politically and personally. While the Cheves and McCord families drew wealth from British and French sugar, their shared societies of Philadelphia, Charleston, and Columbia included literary relationships with white refugees from the Haitian Revolution. For instance, Cheves was educated in Philadelphia by a French couple, Charles and Marie Picot, who were refugees from Saint-Domingue. Then, Louisa's translation of Bastiat's *Sophismes Économiques* is a reminder of her fluency with the language and mastery of French discourse on political economy. Though David's grandfather, John McCord, had come from Ireland in 1748, he showed more interest in retracing his Huguenot heritage through his mother, Hannah Turquand, the daughter of a sugar refiner whose family had escaped religious persecution and fled to London following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The Turquand Huguenots settled in Charleston and Columbia.

David McCord was in Paris during the 1830 July Revolution. While travelling in England, he acquired a manuscript (1813) by Leonard Turquand who had transcribed and translated his grandfather's oral account of the family narrative. Leonard's text is one located in the South Caroliniana Library's McCord collection, and its presence affirms the way in which agricultural economy, knowledge traditions, and inheritance of both Franco-American history and landed identity intertwine in the intellectual and cultural makeup of the South. It traces the family to Guillaumes Turques, President in the Parliament at Paris and appointed Advocate General to the French King in 1413. McCord's matrilineal line of grandfathers served as Privy Councillors and in other high offices for the next 150 years in Paris. Before his escape, Turques' grandson, Paul Turquand, served Henri IV, who is historically associated with the beginnings of French agricultural science and reform and who granted Turquand land at Châtellerauld and Poitiers for his service.

Another relevant and interesting piece in the Library's collection is David's July 1831 letter to physician, agronomist, and Consul at Paris David Bailie Warden, which is a letter better known for its treatment of President Andrew Jackson and the Petticoat-Eaton affair. But it also confirms his active epistemological exploration as an *agronome* in his own right through correspondence with one well-known to those Franco-American intellectual relationships; in an 1809 letter, for example, Warden writes to Thomas Jefferson and encloses twelve kinds of rice grain meant for Southern germination. McCord's letter also suggests that he desired a return to a form of aristocracy-driven territorial and French cultural sovereignty; he felt sure of a second American revolution of sorts on home soil with slavery intact.



David McCord's 1831 letter to David Bailie Warden

Yet, it was in reading the McCord pamphlet collection, items comprising what is essentially a portion of the libraries belonging to David, Louisa, and her father, U.S. Representative Langdon Cheves, that confirmed for me the way that the fear of a free African agricultural state shaped their thinking. What had happened with Haiti represented a cultural apocalypse, and their identification with the fall of an actual and cultural empire is reflected in the way Santo Domingo (Saint-Domingue) peppers the essays, letters, speeches, and sermons they wrote or collected. One letter from Langdon Cheves to the *Charleston Mercury* in 1844, forty years after the end of the Haitian Revolution, uses “St. Domingo” as an example of the “desolation” that will take place in the South if war comes over slavery. In the same volume, the “Speech of the Hon. Mr. (William) Preston on the Abolition Question” (1836) refers to the “panic” that has overtaken “western Europe and eastern America,” both of which have been “lashed into excitement on the subject” of abolition. Preston’s address stirs the political pot through metaphors of agriculture, food, and consumption, saying that “the daily press, the periodicals, works of political economy, and of fiction, the whole mass of literature” in the North “is filled

and reeking with abolitionism,” adding, “every channel which feeds the public intelligence is choked on [abolitionism]” and the “cheap and fruitful subject” of slavery. The pamphlet’s reader (McCord? or Cheves?) has underlined and marked the margins of a passage that recalls the “scene of blood and massacre” of Haiti. Meanwhile, the effects of abolition have been “lying fallow for the seed which is now sown broadcast” even in the South, where “honorable gentlemen . . . around whose hearths, and in whose bed chambers the cry of thousands is invoking murder in the name of God and liberty—with the example of Jamaica and St. Domingo before them,” but they cannot be aroused to emergency. The colony’s “disastrous history,” he hopes, has not been “recorded in vain.” Next, an address from President Van Buren (and discussion with John Forsyth and General Memucan Hunt) on the annexation of Texas says that French and British monarchs should be proud that “their progenitors” have taken possession of Texas for the production of sugar and cotton. A speech by John Campbell given in the House of Representatives in 1842 says that getting rid of slavery (and therefore cotton) would “reduce millions to wretchedness” and “cover the earth with barbarism.” Without it, the African “turns to penury and

laziness” as they have in St. Domingo. These are just a few examples among many in multiple volumes.

As members of the planter and intellectual elite of South Carolina, Simms and the McCords shared common visions of the annexation of Texas and the Caribbean as a Southern empire and supported the spread of race slavery and plantation agriculture. The sowing and replication of French agriculture surrounds the possibility of envisioning their futures.<sup>3</sup> To this point, another key item in the collection is a map that surely guided Langdon Cheves’ and McCord’s plans for the 1841 trip to Texas, which was intended to be a trip to scout the purchase of land for plantation development. McCord fell ill on the journey and only made it as far as New Orleans, but their plans might be inferred from the nature of the document itself: the map is French and situated within a longer French-language cultural and topographical text on the quality of land in Texas and its suitability for sugar planting, *Coup d’Oeil Historique et Statistique sur Le Texas Par Henri Fournel* (1841). The map is a rare and important piece by French royal geographer and cartographer Adrien-Hubert Brué and augmented by physician and botanist Frédéric Leclerc and Charles Picquet, who was a member of Napoleon’s *Cabinet Topographique*. (His 1787 map of Charleston is one of the earliest available.) How the map came into McCord’s possession is not clear, but “Mad. Causici” [Madame Causici] is written in pencil on the title page in a handwriting unlike other markings. From further research, there was a Mrs. Causici in Paris, the daughter of a land dealer named Henri Castro. She was in charge of the finances in making deals to colonists as the Castros recruited them from France. Castro’s son-in-law, attorney Angelo Causici served as a governmental official in Medina County, Tex.<sup>4</sup> Fournel’s geographic map/history tells the reader that the French were the first to sign a commerce and navigation treaty with the Republic of Texas in 1839, and his wealth of descriptions of the agricultural benefits of the region are drawn in relation to the tropics and previous success with sugar. He details that the land in Texas will yield twice as much as a plantation in Haiti in a fraction of the time.

The McCords’ world-views emerge intensely in the shadow of rebellion and revolution in Jamaica and Saint-Domingue—the colonies through which their families had derived wealth from cotton, indigo, and sugar production—and are threatened by the prospect of scientific knowledge bases beyond their understanding or by a future inclusive of free black agricultural states, especially in a period when African knowledge of root chemistry exceeded that of European scientists. In order to counter the possibility of such a future, their writings promoted the race science that began with the treatises of planters like Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry in Saint-Domingue, asserted rationales for apprenticeship through the master-slave relation, and promoted Southern

sectionalism through comparative agricultural authority, often through derisive commentary on African religion, fetish-making, and healing arts. For example, Stowe’s novel implies the natural domesticity and rootedness of people of color in her focus on Tom’s cabin and humble garden. But with *Africans at Home* (1854), David McCord argues their essential malleability and transient nature and asserts that the worn fetish is the African’s “home.” His perspective seems ironically to meet Stowe’s on the same ground in arguing the need for European cultural guidance for the African, but they diverge with the prospect of immediate or gradual autonomy or freedom. According to the race science produced in the reflections of planters in Saint-Domingue and according to McCord, Africans were historically static and developmentally inferior; they would never meet the standard exemplified by European culture.<sup>5</sup> Slavery was a civilizing condition for a people that would not assimilate or advance. His scientific pamphlet recirculates some of the most well-known writings by agronomists, physicians, and other naturalists from France and Britain such as François de la Harpe and Mungo Park as a means to critique Stowe and Tom’s cabin. His perspective on Africans as essentially nomadic and cultureless is fed by the scientific imperial eye on the West Indies and Africa relaying scenes of savagery, cannibalism, and the ritual use of “swearing drinks” (herbal intoxicants) in worship.<sup>6</sup> And McCord’s piece again circles back to Makandal literature, in that one of his sources for *Africans at Home* repeats J. Cartwright Cross’s sourcing in the 1801 pantomime, “King Caesar, or The Negro Slaves,” which is a performance that brought Makandal’s healing arts and poisoning to life on a London stage; they both source Mungo Park’s *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799).

These ideas do not disseminate without Simms as Louisa’s editor and publisher. The materials in the Library’s Simms collection confirm his own beliefs in scientific racism, which articulate the cultural, intellectual, and physical inferiority of people of color. Such science as polygenism (or theory of separate creation), promoted in textual and visual projects like Josiah Nott and George Gliddon’s *Types of Mankind* (1854) or Louis Agassiz and Joseph T. Zealy’s daguerreotypes of slaves from plantations around Columbia, originate and circulate at least in part from French planters and scientists in Saint-Domingue such as Moreau de Saint-Méry in his *Description topographique . . . de l’isle Saint-Domingue* (1789), a text that measures race in drops of African blood, uses algebraic equations and tables to taxonomize gradations of blackness and whiteness, and attaches physiological particulars and moral qualities to Africans according to their geographic origins from the continent. It makes sense that Simms’s scrapbooks collect such materials in relation to the figures of Haiti’s young nation.

THE EMPEROR SOULOUQUE.—Soulouque was by birth a mountaineer. He belonged to the very blackest of his race. In stature he is beyond the middle height, with broad shoulders and a compact and powerful frame, and with all his assumed blandishment of manner, there is a stern and savage temper in his expression seen beneath it. Though fierce in temper he was ever cool and collected in the hour of danger, and always prompt and energetic in action. His features are rather European and his head quite bald. He has some dignity at times, and somewhat of a military bearing. He is famed for his admirable horsemanship, and so conscious is he of this that he is never seen in public on foot. One remarkable peculiarity about him is that he seems to be formed without a neck, and his head rests as it were on his shoulders, without the intervention of that necessary appendage. This is rather a drawback to the imperial presence. But his sable-half—the sharer of his dignities—is by no means of the some abnormal proportions. She has a neck which, if it does not rival the swan's in all respects, sits gracefully and at full length upon rounded shoulders that have no slight stamp of royalty. With a bright and rather expressive face, marked with the characteristic features of the race, she has as neat and trim a little figure as any of her compeers in the imperial drawing-room. She is affable and condescending and a little brusque in manner, which may be pardoned in a Haytian Queen. She is a very exemplary wife after the Haytian fashion, and it is said, but we do not vouch for its truth, adroitly keeps her sovereign lord in most admirable order.

*Physical description of Faustin-Élie Soulouque, Faustin I, Emperor of Haiti*

For example, as with all of the Simms scrapbooks, which are not constructed according to any particular chronological or other order according to topic, it is difficult to mark authorship or origin of their contents, but at least one of the clippings he pasted in the pages is taken from a publication after 1849, when Faustin-Élie Soulouque became Faustin I, Emperor of Haiti. Faustin, the piece (in Scrapbook E, Part I) says, is “the blackest of his race” and “savage” in his expression in comparison to his “Haytian Queen,” who is of a different shape and “proportions” than the king. The author’s physiological critique of the emperor’s “remarkable peculiarity” in stature—as a man who has been “formed without” the “necessary appendage of a neck” aligns with Hugo’s *The Slave-King*, which had been recently published in the U.S. by Carey, Lea and Blanchard, an antebellum

publishing house with which Simms also had a relationship. In Hugo’s novel, Bug-Jargal has an Obi priest accomplice called Habibrah, a kind of court jester whose sole function was to follow the planter for entertainment, who wears bells on his clothes and sings, and who was a gift to the master from a visiting agronomist.<sup>7</sup> Habibrah’s body is not suited for labor; he is described as being malformed, “short but of amazing bulk . . . supported on limbs . . . inadequate for their burthen” and having a head to which there are “attached a pair of ears” as large as those of an ass—large enough to carry a handkerchief if the planter needs one in the heat of the day.<sup>8</sup> So, much like a popular novel from the same publisher about Haiti’s slave/king and the plantation’s jester, Simms collects satirical clippings about the “sovereign lord” of “abnormal proportions.”

Simms had his own interest in Africans, the religions formed on Saint-Domingue plantations, and the dangers they posed to the planter, but he turned that anxiety into satire. He wrote his own story about a “princely African” in “Bald-Head Bill Bauldy, and How He Went Through the Flurriday Campaign!” I was able to read this book in manuscript at the Library. The story includes a sub-section among several originally recorded in the 1847 notebook during the expedition’s “LYING CAMP.” I was curious about the short section called “How to Cross an African River” because it includes McCord as a character, takes place at McCord’s Ferry, and like Makandal, centers on an African prince who carries the power of the “fetisch” in his name. I did not know what I might understand differently from reading in his original handwriting.<sup>9</sup> Cudjo, the “famous African” who “had claimed to have been a prince in his own country” is a flat-boatman who takes McCord and others across the Congaree, and on the way, instructs his listeners on how, in Africa, he could cross a river on an alligator’s back rather than a boat. He dominates the current by dominating the alligator and turning him left or right with a thumb in each of his eyes. In *The Slave-King*, Bug-Jargal wrestles an alligator in front of the stunned planter on the banks of the river.

Simms makes a point in his story that Cudjo was not the “princely” African’s given name, and in a tone typical to the planter’s treatment of African spirituality, adds that his name is preserved as such since he died “in the odour of sanctity” with that name “in the bosom of the Fetisch church of Mumbo Jumbo.” Cudjo, the “Prince among the Gullahs,” is not the African’s birth name, but in a strange turn, the manuscript shows that Simms at first names the boatman Sambo instead of Cudjo, as he crosses out the original name. This repeated change is noticeable given the passage on the importance of the name Cudjo having not been his birth name. “Cudjo” is the only repeated change in an otherwise nearly flawless draft.

Though we may not be able to determine his reason for the change, the repeated edit to the name of an enslaved African character creates a critical moment to consider

another repetition that takes place across Simms’s writing in which enslaved Africans and naming comes into play. Last year, I presented a paper at the Society of Early Americanists Tenth Biennial Conference in Tulsa, Okla. I wrote about another of Simms’s short-stories, “The Lazy Crow. A Story of the Cornfield,” that features a former prince and medicine man.<sup>10</sup> One of the story’s characters, Scipio, is a name (always of a slave) that appears in many of Simms’s works. In “Lazy Crow,” Scipio falls ill, is visited on a South Carolina plantation by an Obi medicine man called the Wizard of the Santee, and believes that he has been cursed by his medicine. (Scrapbook C includes a clipping of a review of the story that aligns this work of fiction with a story about the “negro superstitions” involving the “fetiche” and “obiah” that followed Africans when first brought to America. The review calls it a story

NEGRO SUPERSTITIONS.—That all ignorant races are superstitious, in due degree with their ignorance, is a truth universally acknowledged. That the negro, at first, when brought to this country, was a victim to his fetiche and obiah, and obi superstitions, was also a common history. That gradually, from contact with the superior, in the condition of the slave, the negro grew superior, in a measure, to his old superstitions, is a fact familiar to us all. But the negro, as a freedman, is no longer restrained by salutary authority, and is no longer trained by salutary and superior intelligence. As a

“Negro Superstitions” from a review of “The Lazy Crow. A Story of the Cornfield”

that is “based upon the superstitions of the plantation negro”—one that has been told for the previous sixty to one hundred years.)

Though almost all of the scrapbooks are digitized, Manuscript Curator Graham Duncan assisted me in managing some of the more delicate loose pages of materials in a box kept with Scrapbook E. One of these items forms a path between questions about Cudjo the prince’s name and the repeated appearance of Scipio. The item in the box is a loose sheet of folded paper, four

pages in length, on which Simms neatly lists and takes notes on classical figures of Roman history. One of them is Roman general, Scipio Africanus, and so it seems that his recurring use of the name may, as typical for the period, function as a form of condescension. Where the general is the conqueror in Africa, Scipio is the African conquered. One is a classical model of cultural dominance for the white planter, and the other, a reversal of that authority; his character, Scipio the slave, is incapable of the role of master in either cultural or agricultural development without the guidance of European expertise. Though most of the research will pertain to my book, for the first time, in February 2019, I shared some of this research on Simms at the Auburn University at Montgomery’s Southern Studies Conference where my paper focused on Simms’s Scipio.

Theseus who peopled Athens, the most illustrious  
City in the world, performed the most noble  
achievements, and the most daring exploits,  
almost as soon as he was grown.

Romulus was but Eighteen years of age  
when he founded Rome!

Lycurgus was so young when he ascended  
the throne of Sparta, that many envied  
and opposed his advancement, as being too  
high for so young a man.

Themistocles the great Athenian admiral,  
was distinguished not only for his extra-  
ordinary heroism, but for his uncommon  
wisdom at an early age.

Camillus, the second founder of Rome,  
was fourteen or fifteen years of age when  
he served in the great battle with the  
Aequi and Volsci; in that action he  
spurred his horse in the foremost ranks,  
and received a severe wound in the thigh;  
instead of ~~retreating~~<sup>retreating</sup>, he plucked out the  
javelin, engaged with the bravest  
of the enemy and put them to flight.

Scipio Africanus, Consul of Rome, was  
so young when he determined to carry  
on the war in Africa, that Fabius Maxi-  
mus objected to it, and called each an





*Grave marker for David J. McCord in the Dulles-Cheves-McCord-Lovell Cemetery*



*Grave marker for Ann Heatly Reid Lovell in the Dulles-Cheves-McCord-Lovell Cemetery*

In that same *Free Times* article on the McCord House and its dedication, Eva Moore interviews Jackie Whitmore, descendant of one of the builders of the McCord House. “We only know one side of the story,” he says. “The few remnants of African-American history in Columbia, they tore it all down. They discarded it. Every time you look they’re tearing more of it down.” With this in mind, I travelled the forty miles from Columbia to Fort Motte where the past mingles with the present. Fittingly, I met my first guide to the area in a cemetery while looking for David J. McCord’s grave. I stopped off at the Episcopal Church in St. Matthews Parish where Paul Turquand (South Carolina State Representative) had served as priest after emigrating from England, and that is where I met local resident Lawrence Wienges, a descendant of another Huguenot family (Trezevant), who stopped and took out a trimmer from the back of his truck as I made my way to say hello. Standing out in the hottest field I have ever encountered, he offered me mosquito repellent and wrote down the names of people who could possibly point me to relevant/relative spots in the area, including Jeff Reid, a descendant of Col. William Thomson and Director of the Calhoun County Museum and Cultural Center in St. Matthews. I called Jeff the next day, and after talking for a few minutes, we were not surprised to find out that we were actually seventh cousins, once removed. And Jeff would know. He is an able historian and genealogist and feels a bit more like an older brother than a distant relation. I visited his home, the Thomson house, very near to Lang Syne Plantation, and the library of books, documents, portraits, maps, and family histories he has amassed are its own archive. We spent some time getting to know each other as he and his wife, Jean, offered me lunch. In the afternoon, we drove to and through Lang Syne and spoke briefly with a member of the Peterkin family who was walking her dogs down a path that cuts through a field of live oaks; the Peterkins have owned Lang Syne for a long time. Those familiar will know that Julia Mood Peterkin’s novel, *Scarlet Sister Mary*, on the Gullah culture of the plantation, won her a Pulitzer Prize (1929) and brought literary notoriety as well as controversy to the place. Jeff drove and helped me find what is otherwise unmarked and invisible from McCord’s Ferry Road, the Dulles-Cheves-McCord-Lovell Cemetery. It is quite literally tucked into the corner of a cotton field. We brushed off the stone for Ann Heatly Reid Lovell, the original planter at Lang Syne, who is known for some of the earliest cotton seed experimentation in South Carolina. There, I also visited David’s ledger and headstone, which had crumbled, but been replaced by his family.

I did not grow up in the shadow of Lang Syne or the immediacy of its history of slavery. The appearance of Henry Junius, David’s son and my great, great-grandfather marks the moment when the Alabama McCords diverge and virtually disappear from the South Carolina narrative. Henry’s name is misspelled, and his descendants are absent from the genealogical charts that Leigh Fought carefully builds in

*Southern Womanhood and Slavery*. This is no fault of Fought’s; the reasons for the apparent estrangement between David and his son are vague and the effects of their estrangement, indelible, but it must have some relationship to David’s marriage to Louisa soon after the death of David’s first wife who was Henry’s mother.<sup>11</sup> David left his son a sum of money that was small in comparison to other children, and only “if he mend his ways.” But interestingly, he was named for McCord’s law partner, educator, and author, Henry Junius Nott, best known for *Novelettes of a Traveller; or, Odds and Ends from the Knapsack of Thomas Singularity* (1834), and he was the brother of polygenist Josiah Nott.

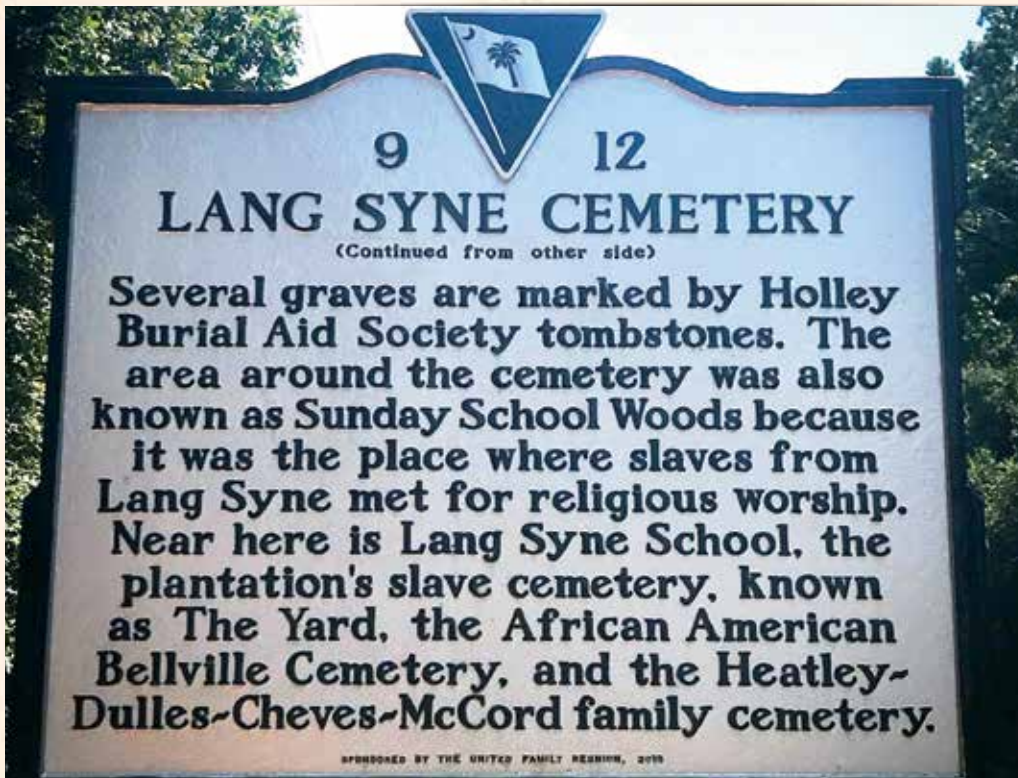
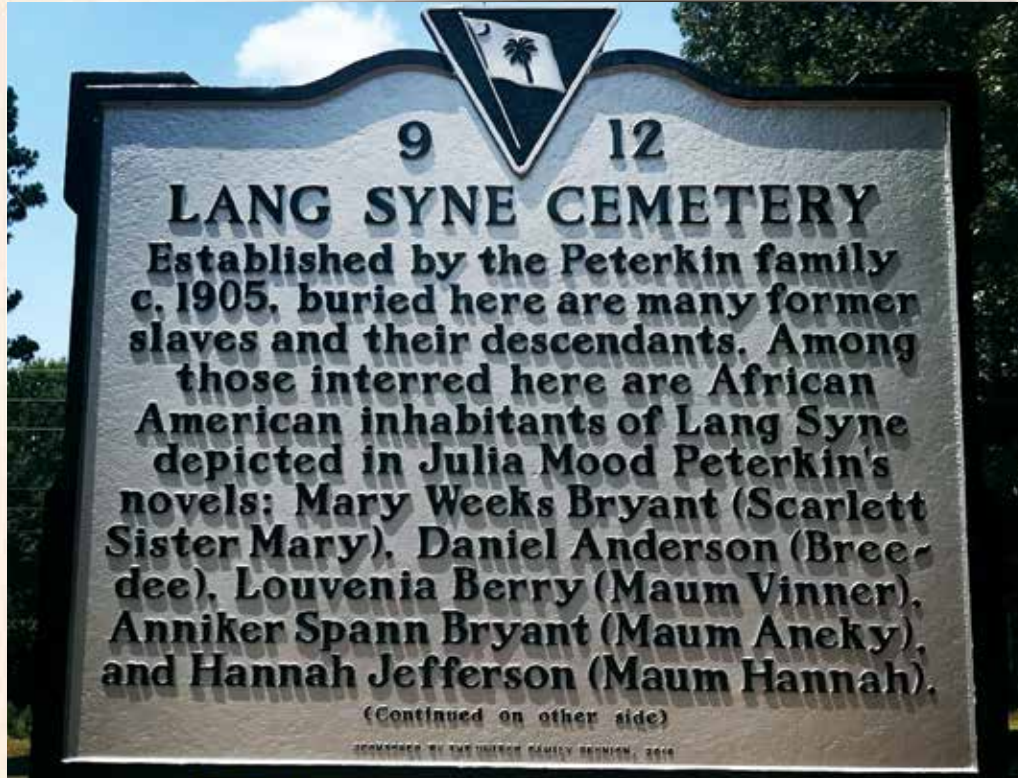
Henry Junius left Alabama and served as lieutenant colonel in the King’s Regiment, Arkansas Infantry, and though his children remained in Alabama with Russell McCord following the death of Henry’s wife, he did not return. We cannot know why Henry did not return to Alabama or why his children remained there, but at least we know that, while his father never made it to Texas, Henry did. I had always heard that David’s brother and Henry’s uncle, Russell Paul, was one of among the thousands of *Confederados* to leave for Brazil following the war, but it wasn’t until my visit to the Caroliniana that I could confirm this by reading a seven-page letter he wrote to his sister Mary from a large sugar plantation in South America.<sup>12</sup> As a surgeon, he details the illnesses and death that plagued the plantation of more than one thousand slaves. He later returned and died in Selma, Ala., in 1874.

There is one photograph that I have seen of Sally McCord Bradley, who was David’s granddaughter, Henry Junius’s daughter, my mother’s grandmother, and my great-grandmother. It belongs to the one living person who remembers her, my aunt, Jean Bradley Jones of Andalusia, Ala. Jean is our family’s memory, and our common interest and long conversations are the only reason I would have ever recognized David’s or Louisa’s names in relation to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* a few years ago.

My time at the Caroliniana served the exploration of kinship in more sense than one—including genealogical, epistemological, and ecological modes of relation; the research touches on both the gaps and connections in knowledge and self that the history of agricultural race slavery has produced for descendants of all kinds.

I missed the McCord marker’s dedication to the skilled people who built the place, but there was a compelling moment for me in visiting the Lang Syne Cemetery on Lang Syne Road at the edge of Sunday School Woods, where further historic markers and stones remind its visitors of what there is to remember and yet to learn.

—Dr. Kate Simpkins is an English instructor at Wallace Community College in Dothan, Ala.



## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>David J. McCord is perhaps best known as an author of the 1834 doctrine of nullification. He also twice served as Intendant of Columbia (1828 and 1830). Following the death of his first wife, he married Louisa Susannah Cheves in 1840. Her writing is equally important to my project, but I am a descendant of his first wife, Emmeline Wagner, who died in childbirth just months before Louisa's marriage to David. Leigh Fought's *Southern Womanhood and Slavery* (2003) has been helpful for understanding the distances and ties between the Alabama and South Carolina McCords. She says that Wagner and McCord had ten children, seven of whom survived beyond her death. Louisa did not serve as stepmother to these remaining children, and none of the children lived with them. Moreover, the marriage was considered to be "in questionable taste" given the brief period of nine months since Emmeline's death. Charlotte, David and Emmeline's daughter, had only recently married Louisa's brother, Langdon Cheves, Jr., and her absence at her father's wedding is what Fought calls a foreshadowing of "later strains" between McCord's new wife and his children. His three boys went to live with their uncle in Alabama, Russell Paul McCord, who oversaw their educations. Among those three was my great, great-grandfather, Henry Junius McCord.

<sup>2</sup>According to Christina Mobley's 2015 dissertation, "The Kongolese Atlantic, Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti," his name, of Yombe origin, is synonymous with poisoner or sorcerer, and poison itself. She writes, "Makandal's name indicates his role as an nganga nkisi, a creator of objects by nkisi spirits known in Mayombe and Saint Domingue as, among other names, 'macandals.'" She adds that a Makanda is a "packet of animal, vegetable, mineral matter wrapped in a leaf," and the name "refers to the large, flat leaf that is like the palm of a hand (kanda)." Makandal brings to mind a host of concepts: magic, sorcery, poison, medicine, garde-corps, fetish-making, and biotic materials such as leaves and roots.

<sup>3</sup>See letters by Langdon Cheves and Andrew Jackson on St. Domingo, the annexation of Texas, and sugar. ("Southern State Rights, Anti-Tariff Anti-Abolition Tract No. 1."; "Letter of the Hon. Langdon Cheves, to the *Charleston Mercury*, on Southern Wrongs, September 1844, Tract No. 1."; and "Gen. Jackson's Letter to Mr. Dawson of Alabama on the Annexation of Texas." Hermitage, AG. 28, 1844). Jackson says, "The sugar planter wants security for his negro property, stability for the Union, an independence for his whole country."

<sup>4</sup>See Bobby D. Weaver, *Castro's Colony: Empresario Development in Texas, 1842-1865*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985.

<sup>5</sup>See McCord Pamphlet Collection, vol. 3 and Virgil Maxcy's speech at Brown University ("The Examiner" vol. 1, no 7. Philadelphia, 1834), in which Maxcy compares the "wandering savage" with the man "strong in science." Armed with science he "fells the forest, subdues the teeming earth, [and] rears the comfortable dwelling or gorgeous palace...." Maxcy was active in the American Colonization Society and in favor of the migration of former slaves to Africa.

<sup>6</sup>*Africans at Home*.

<sup>7</sup>Obi or Obeah and Vodou are focused on worship of different ancestral divinities, but they are both Afro-diasporic religions that can be described as "a set of practices or beliefs produced by the cultural synthesis of enslaved populations drawn from a number of African locations." See William Earle, *Obi; Or, The History of Three-Fingered Jack*, ed. Srinivas Aravamudan (Sydney, Australia: Broadview Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup>Victor Marie Hugo, *The Slave-King, from the Bug-Jargal of Victor Hugo*, trans. and altered, Leitch Ritchie (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1833).

<sup>9</sup>McCord's Ferry crosses the Congaree River and was established by David's grandfather, John McCord, in 1766 as the first public ferry for the area.

<sup>10</sup>"Sectional Literature and Saint-Domingue: Using Topic Modeling to Read African Diasporic Culture in William Gilmore Simms's 'The Lazy Crow. A Story of the Cornfield.'"

<sup>11</sup>Henry Junius Nott joined South Carolina College's faculty in 1824, and along with his Belgian wife, perished in a shipwreck returning from a summer of study at the Sorbonne in 1837.

<sup>12</sup>Mary E. McCord was spouse to Andrew Gordon Magrath, Governor of South Carolina, who was deposed by the Union Army and imprisoned on Tybee Island.



*Lang Syne Cemetery gravestone marked "Frank Bryant, a maroon"*



*Lang Syne Cemetery gravestone marked "Rachel Turquand Spann"*

# The Storyteller's Art

BY  
BOYD SAUNDERS

*This talk, sponsored by the University South Caroliniana Society and University Libraries, was given by Boyd Saunders on March 14, 2019, at the Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library in connection with the publication of A View from the South: The Narrative Art of Boyd Saunders by Thomas Dewey II (University of South Carolina Press, 2019).*

Good afternoon, dear hearts. Thank you for being here. I am greatly honored that the University of South Carolina Libraries wishes to establish this archive of some of my papers and artifacts. I am especially grateful to Elizabeth Sudduth and Henry Fulmer and their associates for all they have done to make this happen.

Many thanks also to Richard Brown and all the very talented staff at USC Press for producing and publishing this very handsome and impressive book, and to Keith McGraw for his skillful photographic assistance in reproducing the illustrations.

And, of course, we are particularly grateful to Professor Thomas Dewey and his loving wife, Alta, for writing this book. It was truly a prodigious and exhausting undertaking for both of them and for the many friends and assistants who helped with this project. We are saddened to report that poor health has kept Tom and Alta from being here today, but our warmest best wishes are with them.

Special appreciation also to Professor Randy Mack for writing his very thoughtful and perceptive introduction to this book. We are deeply saddened by his recent passing after a long and devastating illness. We offer sincere condolences to his family.

When Professor Dewey and our friends at USC Press agreed on the title for this book, *A View from the South: The Narrative Art of Boyd Saunders*, I thought it a bit unusual, but, on reflection, found it also quite appropriate.

I wish to take this opportunity to share with you some observations and reflections about "The Storyteller's Art."

## "The Southern Affinity for...Storytelling"

I was born on a farm in West Tennessee and have lived in the South all my life. It has been quite natural for me to assume the Southern affinity for literature and storytelling, whether from the Bible stories which were read to me as a child, the accounts of hunters around evening campfires, raconteurs spinning yarns to pass the time while working in the fields, preachers and politicians mastering the art of oratory, or that great army of Southern literary giants, too vast to list, who have dominated the world of modern literature.

Indeed, most of the visual art which I saw and loved as I was growing up was intended to illustrate many of these narrative vehicles. It should be pointed out that none of these tellers of tales were under any burden to confine themselves

to strict scientific accuracy in their utterances. In fact, magic, miracles, fantasy and superstition were a vital and integral part of the consciousness of the times, whether as a matter of absolute belief or simply a literary diversion to add texture to a tale.

Ghosts regularly haunted graveyards or abandoned houses, angels and demigods walked about on the earth, conjurers cast spells, and animals sometimes talked and acted like humans. Preaching and political oratory were filled with hyperbole, exaggeration and downright lies.

In that world in which the divinity and ultimate sacrifice of Christ, the violence of his death, and the mystical transformation of his resurrection were paramount and all pervasive, it was perhaps inevitable that human redemption was often found in self-destruction, violent retribution, horror, and magic.

It was equally inevitable that any man who wished to take himself seriously felt compelled to raise himself to the level of the hero or superhuman. Incidentally, it is significant that a large majority of the men who have been awarded the American Congressional Medal of Honor for courage in battle have been Southerners.

## Narrative in Southern Visual Art

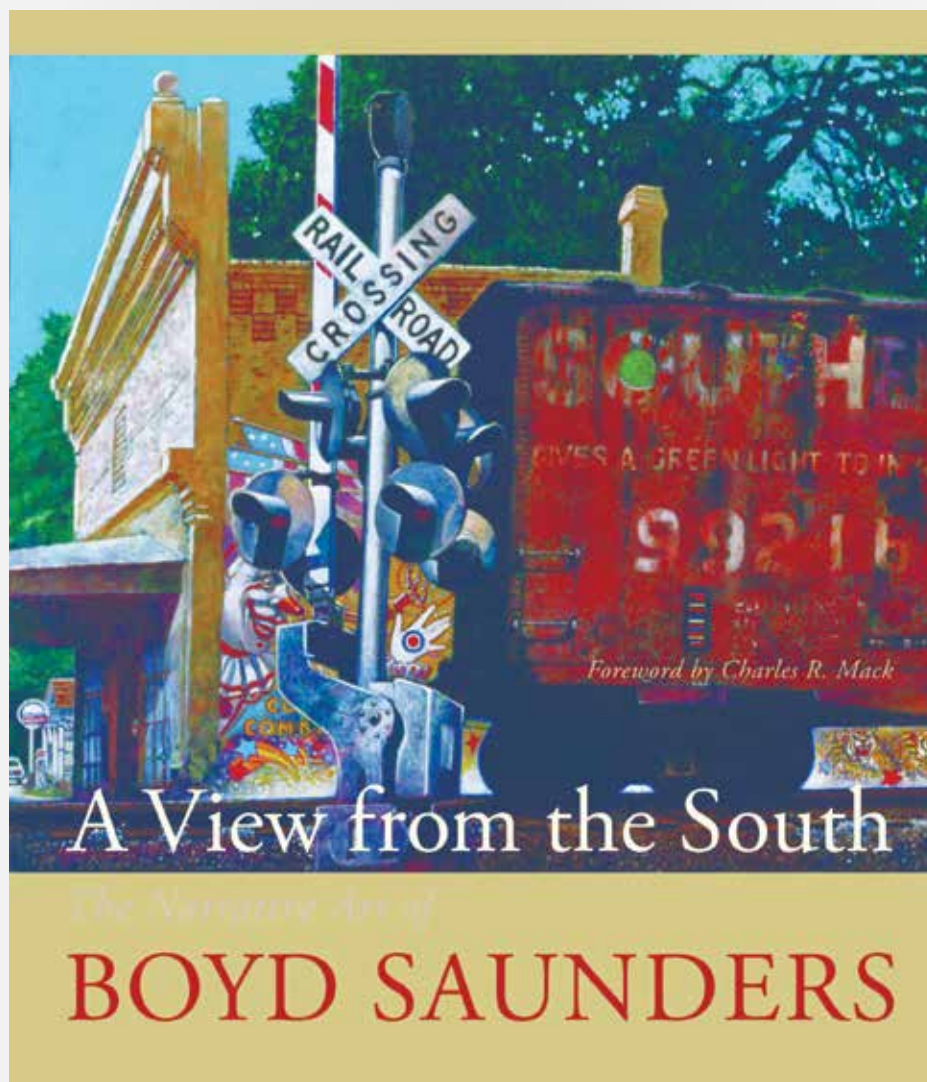
It is easy to understand why much Southern visual art, mine included, has tended to weave a richly evocative texture of narrative and surreal fantasy.

From infancy onward, I was read to extensively by parents and relatives alike. The words had a powerful and evocative effect on me, and my imagination easily turned the descriptive phrases into rich and colorful images.

It was of little concern to me whether or not the Mother Goose stories were based on historical fact, nor was I bothered by the concept of humanized animals who could talk and wear clothes. I was terrified that the Little Red Hen might be eaten by the Hungry Fox and extremely pleased that she just happened to be carrying needle and thread and scissors to facilitate her escape.

The great Bible stories were memorable and did not move me to ponder exactly when or how far away they might have taken place.

One of the great treasures of my early childhood was my sweet gentle grandfather. On winter evenings, I would climb up in his lap in his rocking chair beside the fireplace and



*A View from the South: The Narrative Art of Boyd Saunders* by Thomas Dewey II with a foreword by Charles E. Mack was published in 2019 by the University of South Carolina Press.

According to the publisher, “Dewey exposes the common thread that runs through Saunders’s visual expressions: his intriguing tales that reveal his heartfelt devotion to the people and places of the American South. Dewey has captured Saunders’s life story through intensive research as well as via a series of interviews with the artist over several years. Details of Saunders’s early life on a West Tennessee farm and his family’s long attachment to the land document a profound influence on his life, outlook, and art. But Saunders was also moved by literature—namely that of William Faulkner, whom he met while earning a master’s of fine art at the University of Mississippi. Saunders credits Faulkner with inspiring much of his work, demonstrated in his *Spotted Horses*, a limited volume of lithographs illustrating Faulkner’s short story of the same name, which was published by the University of South Carolina Press in 1989.

“A View from the South features more than 120 color images showcasing the themes, ideas, and techniques Saunders has used in his paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, etchings, lithographs, and woodcuts. His art is exhibited throughout the world and is included in many private and public collections, including the Boston Public Library, the U.S. Wildlife Collection in Washington, D.C., and Shanxi University collection in China.”

Reproductions of Boyd Saunders’ art work accompanying this article were provided courtesy of the University of South Carolina Press.





"Dilsey's Charge" (etching) A.P. George Luin 1880

Dilsey's Charge (etching)

we would pop popcorn with that long handled popcorn popper over the fire while he would read to me, or tell stories, or we would sing little songs together. Dear hearts, it doesn't get any better than that.

I never saw a huge difference between the great Bible stories and the fairy tales in other children's books. For me, the epic Bible tale of David and Goliath was, for instance, quite similar to the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk, and could be enjoyed for many of the same reasons. A good tale was a good tale.

As I learned to listen to radio during its golden era, my mind easily took the words from the old cathedral radio set and provided pictures to accompany them. Tales of the Lone Ranger, or the Green Hornet, or maybe Gene Autry, took on clear visual form for me.

When adult kinfolk came to visit, I heard countless stories of ancestors or distant relatives that I would never in my life lay eyes on. Thus unburdened by fact, my mind could paint them any way it pleased.

On soft summer evenings my family would gather after supper on the front porch. My brothers and I would "play out" in the gathering dusk, often joined by neighbor kids, providing a blood feast for every ravenous mosquito or chigger in the county, until the darkness was complete, then we would join the adults on the porch.

There we would migrate from lap to lap or lie on pallets while we watched lightning bugs in the orchard or listened to the adults talk in relaxed cadence of the farm events of the day, or the war in Europe or the Pacific, or who else had just been drafted, or the local soldier boy who was missing or dead and would not be coming home.

Around 9:30 the streamliner "fast train" (as it was called) would pass across our view on the Southern Railroad, half a mile away down in the river bottom, looking exotic and mysterious, its stentorian baritone horn proclaiming its presence and announcing its rapid progress toward places unknown.

This was my grandfather's traditional signal that it was time for us to go inside and to bed. While my mother would read to her sons from the big Bible storybook about Noah and the flood or Samson slaying the Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey, my father would listen to the radio as H.B. Kaltenborn or Bill Stern talked about the progress of the war or the latest sports news.

## School Days

By the time I started to school, I was doing a pretty good job of teaching myself to read. In school, I learned to read rather easily and was soon reading well beyond my grade level. Naturally, I liked the books with pictures the best.

Then, there were the "funny papers," as they were called then, which were an important part of the daily newspaper, which expanded to their full-color, full-size glory on Sundays.

I followed them avidly; epic pictorial narratives, such as *Prince Valiant*, *Tarzan of the Apes*, *Terry and the Pirates*, *Steve Canyon* or *Red Ryder*, all brought to life in large color panels by some of the finest illustrators of the day.

In direct contradiction of their misnomers as "comics" or "funnies," they were serious dramatic stories, magnificently written and drawn, and I was a serious follower by the time I started to school, which, incidentally, did not work out as well as I had hoped.

Unfortunately, having spent the first half-dozen years of my life on that self-contained farm, my social skills were sorely lacking. The other kids did not take kindly to me and mercilessly taunted, mocked, and shunned me. I soon withdrew into my own world of make-believe which was populated by strong men on fine horses and orchestrated by me and my friend Philip.

Philip was from a farm on the other side of town, was also an outcast and misfit like me, and, like me, had a horse at home. At school recess, we had to get around on



*Saunders's daughter Sylvia (conté)*

make-believe horses. This, of course, caused us to have a rather peculiar gait whenever we went about the school ground and convinced everyone that we were just a mite “tetched.”

In class, we spent many hours making joint drawings of the great epic tales we imagined and acted out. These drawings, which we secretly worked on instead of arithmetic workbooks, were passed back and forth between us and erased and redrawn and improved until the pulp notebook paper they were drawn on virtually disintegrated.

Few if any of the drawings survived because usually, sooner or later, they would be discovered and confiscated, and we would be held up to ridicule and made to stay in at recess, thus reinforcing and guaranteeing our social isolation. We also never got very good at arithmetic.

### A Love for Books

My parents and relatives, impressed with my reading ability, often gave me books as presents for Christmas and other special occasions, which I read avidly. Philip, on the other hand, had some sort of learning disorder (perhaps dyslexia) and never really learned to read. Therefore, it fell my duty to tell him the stories I was reading.

Our favorites were western stories by Zane Grey and Will James. We would play out the Zane Grey stories and imitate the Will James drawings. We felt no compulsion to be faithful to the originals so we freely adapted them to our needs.

On special weekends, I would ride my horse, “Charlie,” the half-dozen or so miles to his house, or he would ride his horse, “Allen,” to my house to visit, perhaps to sleep over.

Sometimes our brothers and relatives or friends would join us and, mounted on every horse or mule available, sometimes two to a mount or just running around on foot, we would play out great epic battles that would range over a vast acreage of woods and fields and last all afternoon long.

There was a lady in town who was the sister of one of my school teachers. She had been a teacher herself before the automobile accident that broke her back and paralyzed her. She had a stay-at-home job as county librarian. Her job consisted of ordering and cataloging the library books for all the schools in the county.

Knowing of my love for books, she gave me the opportunity to borrow and read them during the summer before they were sent out to the schools. About once a week I would ride my horse to her house, stuff my saddlebags with books, take them home and read them when I wasn’t working in the fields.

Sometimes she would ask me to write short reports of my favorites, which were then published in the local weekly newspaper. I still liked the ones with pictures the best.

Many years later, after Stephanie and I married, we had no television and very little money, so many evenings were spent reading to one another.

After our children were born we made it a point to remain televisionless for several years and chose, instead, to spend our evenings with our children in other ways—reading aloud, telling stories, playing games, or sometimes Daddy’s playing monster out in the yard in the gathering dusk with our offspring and the neighborhood kids.

Our daughters learned to read and draw early and well and had very fertile imaginations. Some of our most cherished family possessions were big, lavishly illustrated, storybooks. Our children were introduced to the fine art of storytelling while looking at pictures created by artists such as Johnnie Gruelle, Beatrix Potter, Nancy Eckholm Burkert, the Provensens, or N.C. Wyeth. I must confess that many of the books just may have been selected for acquisition more because of their appeal to Mama and Daddy than for the children’s needs, although no one would have ever admitted it.



*Apparition (pen and wash ink)*

## Night Terrors

One night, somewhat after bedtime, daughter Sylvia discovered, to her considerable terror, that there was a bear under her bed. My assurances to her that there was no bear under her bed were of no avail; she had most certainly seen him reach his claw out and drag one of her shoes under the bed, where she could hear him eating it.

Deciding to fight fire with fire, I looked under the bed, agreed that there was indeed a very large bear under there, and declared that I would get him out. While Sylvia hid her head under the covers, I grabbed a nearby broom, shoved the end of it under the bed, and with much noise and shouting and clattering about, drove the bear out from under her bed, down the hall, and out into the darkened backyard, where I had a loud and violent fight with him before driving him off into the woods.

I then returned to her room breathless and disheveled and covered with dirt and pine straw and claimed that I had vanquished the bear, taught him a lesson, and was sure he would not return. Whatever else, it was great theater. She seemed satisfied with the outcome, settled down and went to sleep. Feeling somewhat smug and smart, I showered and went back to bed.

Strangely enough, about a week later, the bear was back, so the performance had to be repeated. Then again, and again, and so on. Belatedly, I began to realize that she had long ago figured out the scam and, whenever she had done the drink-of-water thing and the potty thing and wanted to stall bedtime, or was just plain bored, she would play the bear card and watch her simple-minded father play out the “Banishing the Bear” skit and again make a complete fool of himself for her amusement. It was great theater.

Her younger sister Rachel, on the other hand, received frequent nocturnal visits from the “Night Mary,” whose red eyes could be seen glowing, even through the drawn curtains, as she peered into Rachel’s bedroom, perhaps intent on eating the child. By the time the resulting outcry had awakened her parents and we had arrived to the rescue, the night visitor had vanished.

It took many of these episodes for us to realize that when the teenage neighbor boys across the street arrived home late at night, drove into their parents’ carport, and pressed on the car’s brake pedal, the glowing red taillights would shine across the street, through the red plaid curtains, and into Rachel’s bedroom. When we came in and switched on the light, the red eyes vanished.

That, of course, still did not explain the child’s asking one morning why we had already repainted her door jamb and covered over the claw marks where “Night Mary” had been clawing at her door trying to gain entrance to Rachel’s room the previous night.

Perhaps a fertile imagination is not always a good thing. Maybe a crazy father isn’t either.

It was some years later that I learned that my young niece and nephew back in Tennessee had been long afraid of the “Great Fearsome Hide-Behind” as described by their Uncle Boyd. The “Hide-Behind” could not be seen because he was always hiding behind something, and no one had ever seen him and lived to tell the tale.

Maybe a crazy uncle is as bad as a crazy father.

## “Our Charlotte”

Early on, E.B.White’s classic work, *Charlotte’s Web*, became a part of our family legend. This whimsical tale of the Garden Spider (also known as a Scrivener Spider), who saved the life of Wilbur the Pig, by weaving mysterious messages into her web, was a top favorite in our house.

Shortly after one of the readings of this story, a real, live Garden Spider took up residence on the terrace just outside Rachel’s bedroom, where we could watch her daily as she went about her duties of weaving a huge web with the mysterious writing in the middle of it, catching unwary insects in the web, immobilizing them, then sucking the life juice out of them.

Rachel was fine with this arrangement as long as there was a double-pane sliding glass door between this drama and herself, and she followed it with some fascination. On those occasions when a spider was discovered in her room, however, it was an entirely different matter, and Daddy was quickly summoned to the rescue.



*The Vixen (etching)*

We all watched as our Charlotte built and filled several egg sacks, then began to grow listless and transparent. Then came the day, as summer was turning into autumn, when our Charlotte stopped moving and shriveled to near nothing, and the long gossamer parachutes attached to the egg sacks caught the breeze and sailed away over the trees, carrying their egg sack cargoes away to another place and another season of life.

### **“Boyd the Bodacious”**

For a number of years I served as master of ceremonies for a country music festival and barbecue picnic which was organized and hosted by my friends Doug and Bunny Williams. It began as an annual Sunday afternoon gathering at their house in the country, expanded year by year, and finally migrated to the stage of the Newberry Opera House.

It pretended to be an old time radio show in the manner of “The Grand Ole Opry,” or perhaps “A Prairie Home Companion,” and was called “A Carolina Jubilee.”

As master of ceremonies, also known as “Boyd the Bodacious,” I introduced the different acts, provided filler between acts, and spun yarns and jokes, usually at the expense of various members of the troupe.

It was there that I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of two dynamite women with extraordinary literary talent: Sue Summer and Andy Hawkins. They each have a separate life with home and family and all that, but when they get together they function like a well-rehearsed dance team, at both the personal and professional levels. Sue lives in Newberry, S.C., Andy resides in nearby Prosperity, S.C.

Both have a wide variety of literary credentials, including a weekly radio show on a Newberry AM radio station and Sue’s newspaper column in the local weekly newspaper. Andy has served as public relations director for a local hospital and currently is host of a broadcast interview show. Sue has recently completed writing a novel. Both are world-class storytellers and were the authors of many of the skits and fake commercials on the Carolina Jubilee.

Their humor is quick, often ribald, and relentless, and can turn on a dime to heartbreaking pathos. They are big on telling and performing stories, and from time to time attend national storytelling conclaves such as the one in Jonesville, Tenn.

Over time, they have created an alternative world, part fact and part fiction, built on the lives and goings-on of the inhabitants of “The Berry”—the more outrageous, the better. As Sue likes to say, “You can’t make this stuff up, honey.”

My life and outlook have been vastly enriched by knowing these women, and my artistic and literary skills have been profoundly informed by their input. Several times, I have appeared as a guest on their morning show on radio station WKDK in Newberry to spin a yarn (in the guise of a columnist or commentator) about some fictional character or happening in the Dutch Fork community. Surprisingly, I have not yet caused the station to lose its FCC license.

### “A Storyteller’s Art”

I must confess that I am a teller of tales, and mine is a storyteller’s art. It seems that every time someone wants to put me down or discredit my work, they dismiss my art as “narrative” or, worse yet, “illustrational.” I am afraid I never have any real snappy comebacks, because maybe they are right. I am just not smart enough to understand why that is so bad. Indeed, most of the art in our common artistic heritage could be described in the same way.

I consider myself a product of a long Southern tradition of storytelling, preaching, and oratory. As if being a narrative artist were not bad enough, I am also a printmaker; that is to say that I produce original prints in deluxe, limited editions from the surfaces of wood, stone, or copper plates. This, too, seems to mystify and confuse the unenlightened.

Often someone demands to see “the original,” to which I reply, “This is ‘the original.’ It was drawn on the plate and printed from the plate. It can’t get any more original than that.” Then there is the occasional question, “was it drawn by hand?” To which I am sorely tempted to reply, “Of course not, you twit. It was drawn by foot.” But, of course, I never do. My mama raised me better than that.

Certainly, throughout history, the printed word and the printed image have been closely associated with one another.

I have special affinity for humor. Jokes, pranks, and ribald anecdotes (many with language too raunchy for polite society) were a regular part of the world I once knew, and composed much of the dialog of my high school classmates and myself.

There seemed to be a constant competition to see who could be the funniest or most outrageous. It was sort of a means of achieving status. Some of the pranks we pulled became legendary.

Of course, in this context, the literal truth or veracity of a humorous anecdote becomes relatively unimportant. “IF IT DIDN’T REALLY HAPPEN THAT WAY, IT SHOULD HAVE.” Good stories, like fine wine or cheese, can often improve with age. With repeated telling, stories tend to edit themselves. Insignificant extraneous details can often be replaced by much better extraneous details.

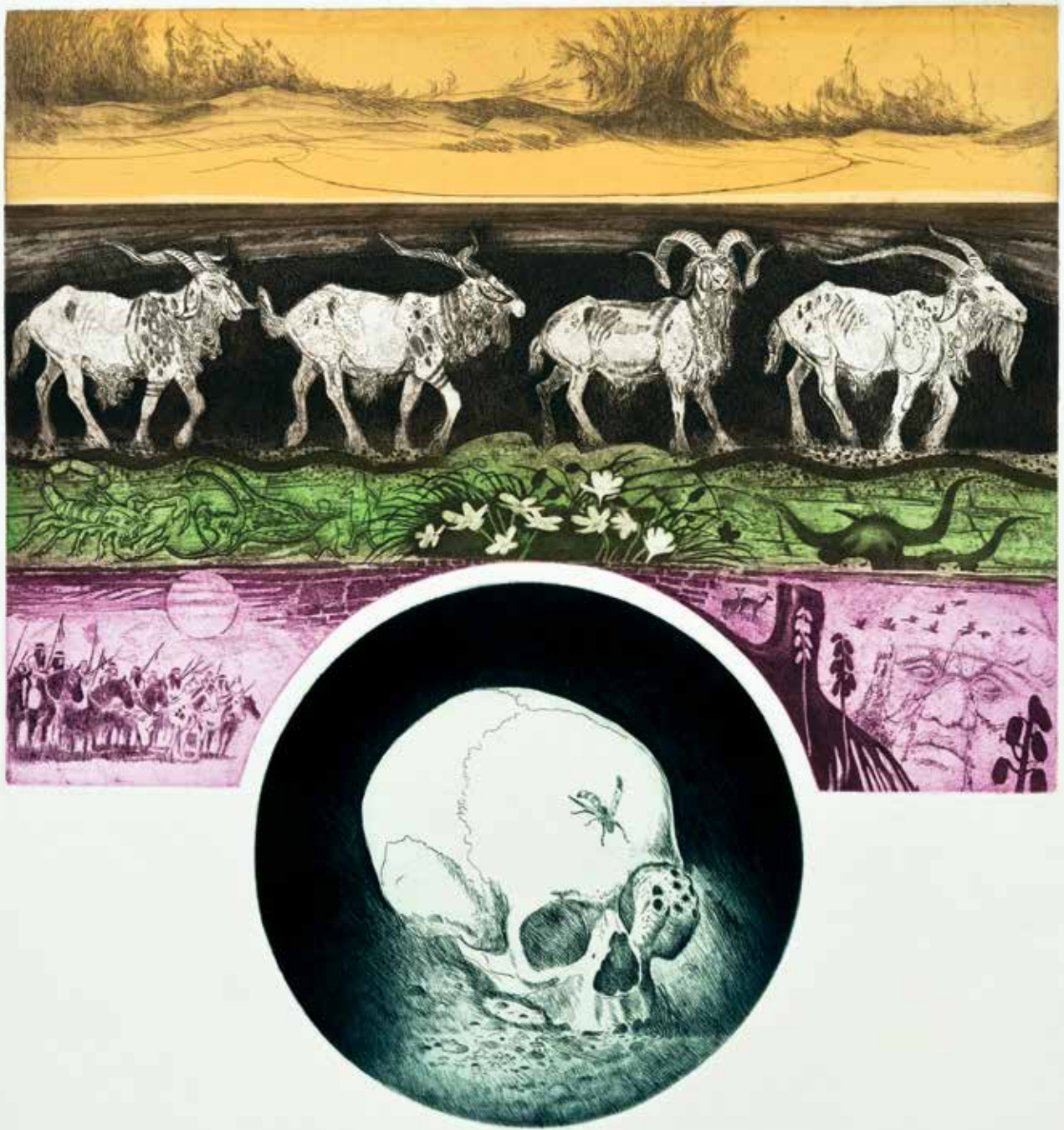
As one might guess, the comic pages and editorial cartoons have always been my favorite part of any newspaper. Indeed, in college I was staff editorial cartoonist for the school newspaper.

### “The American Southland”

In recent years, most of my artistic output has been involved with producing a body of prints, paintings, sculptures and drawings which serve as a sort of epic visual poem about a fictional agrarian community in the American Southland.

Each piece is designed to stand alone or be experienced as a part of this larger collective body of work. In differing contexts several titles have been used: “Southern Cross / A Trilogy,” “St. James Crossing,” and “Return of the Wanderer.” One common goal of all my artistic efforts, however, is that they should always be visually enriching, a feast for the eye.





*The Canyon Wall (etching with shaped plates)*



*Faulkner (ink wash)*

Ever the teller of tales, from time to time I have incorporated the written word into my compositions. At other times, I have written or narrated short fictional stories, often humorous, which convey ideas that I do not possess the skill to realize in purely visual form. Several of them are included in Professor Dewey's book.

However, in spite of my high regard, yea, even reverence, for the spoken tale or written word, it is my firm belief that sometimes a good story is told best with a well-drawn picture.

This is Boyd the Bodacious wishing each of you a good life, filled with love and joy and wonderful stories. And remember, if it didn't really happen exactly that way, maybe it should have.

*—Boyd Saunders is a distinguished professor emeritus of the University of South Carolina. He founded the printmaking program at the University's Art Department as well as a Southern printmakers' organization called the Southern Graphics Council. He is a printmaker, painter, sculptor, illustrator, author, educator, amateur musician, and a storyteller of the American South.*

#### Reviews of *A View from the South* include the following:

"Boyd Saunders enjoys a well-told story—one populated with memorable characters in vivid settings all described in richly varied prose. And this is very much how he tells his visual stories. Saunders's earthy and muscular lines clarify and enhance drama and remind us why a disciplined control of media—which he so clearly commands—remains important to the tale, however tall."

—Will South, chief curator, Columbia Museum of Art

"Boyd Saunders's own 'view from the south' has been vividly projected, through his works and words, during a productive career as artist, printmaker, teacher, scholar, and raconteur. This book chronicles his contributions, with numerous illustrations of his art, and includes several of his memorable stories from his southern childhood."

—Ron Bridwell, appraiser of rare books and manuscripts

"More than an academic monograph, Thomas Dewey's *A View from the South* is a miscellany of delights, all 'caught in the timeless magic of this place.' Combining literary criticism, history, personal reminiscences and tall tales, at its heart are the haunting, enduring, and always beautiful images of Boyd Saunders's art."

—Paul Ragan, author of *Reflections on Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury*

# A Few Words about My Longtime Friend and Colleague Boyd Saunders

BY  
WALTER B. EDGAR

I am absolutely delighted to be here to say a few words about my longtime friend and colleague Boyd Saunders, and they will be few because we need to hear from Boyd.

Now, he's nationally known as a preeminent print maker, "a visual storyteller" as the critics say, and a teacher.

Now, all of that's true, but I think you need to know a little bit more about this wonderful man. He was born in Rossville, Tenn. That's not widely known because a lot of the biographies online say he was born in Memphis. He was not. He was born in Rossville. Now that's pretty important. It's a town of about 600, located in the southwest corner of Fayette County. Right across the Alabama line they call it "Fate." I think you call it Fayette in Tennessee. But more importantly, Fayette County is considered part of the Mississippi Delta. Culturally, that is an extremely important part of his background, especially for anyone who has a credential as a Southern storyteller.

His being a child of the rural, small-town South and reared in the world that had changed little for fifty years during his youth I think is significant. It's a world where, despite segregation, there was daily interaction between residents—black and white, middle class and white sharecroppers—and the small town elite, the local banker, the clergymen, the lawyers.

That small town rural South is evident in his work, including some of my favorites. And I'm taking a chance, but these are some of my favorites: "The Cistern," "The Tobacco Auction," "The Forge," "The Commissary" (that one, "The Commissary," being at the top of my list), "The Gathering," "The Great House." And then I include these in that, "The Crossing" and "The Siding." These works, regardless of form, to me reveal, more vividly than any photograph, a world long gone.

Now, I may be a Southern boy from the big town of Mobile, Ala., a big city compared to Rossville, but I knew that small town South. I had cousins who lived in Dyer County, Tenn. It's a little bit north of Memphis so it's not officially a part of the Delta, but the farmland and the terrain are exactly the same, and today Trimble and Rossville have the same population. And my college roommate was from Tunica County, Miss., which actually separates Fayette from the Mississippi River.

Boyd and I came to Carolina in the same year—1965—he as a faculty member, I as a student. Our paths didn't cross then because back in 1965, a professor was a professor, and a student was a student. And heaven forbid you even think about calling one by his or her first name.

But when I came back to USC as a faculty member in 1971, we met, first on the squash court, and then over coffee in the old faculty lounge in the Russell House. And there actually was a faculty lounge, no students permitted, not even graduate students. There was a big *contretemps* at one point because some members of the law faculty wanted to bring their senior students

into the faculty lounge. That simply was not allowed.

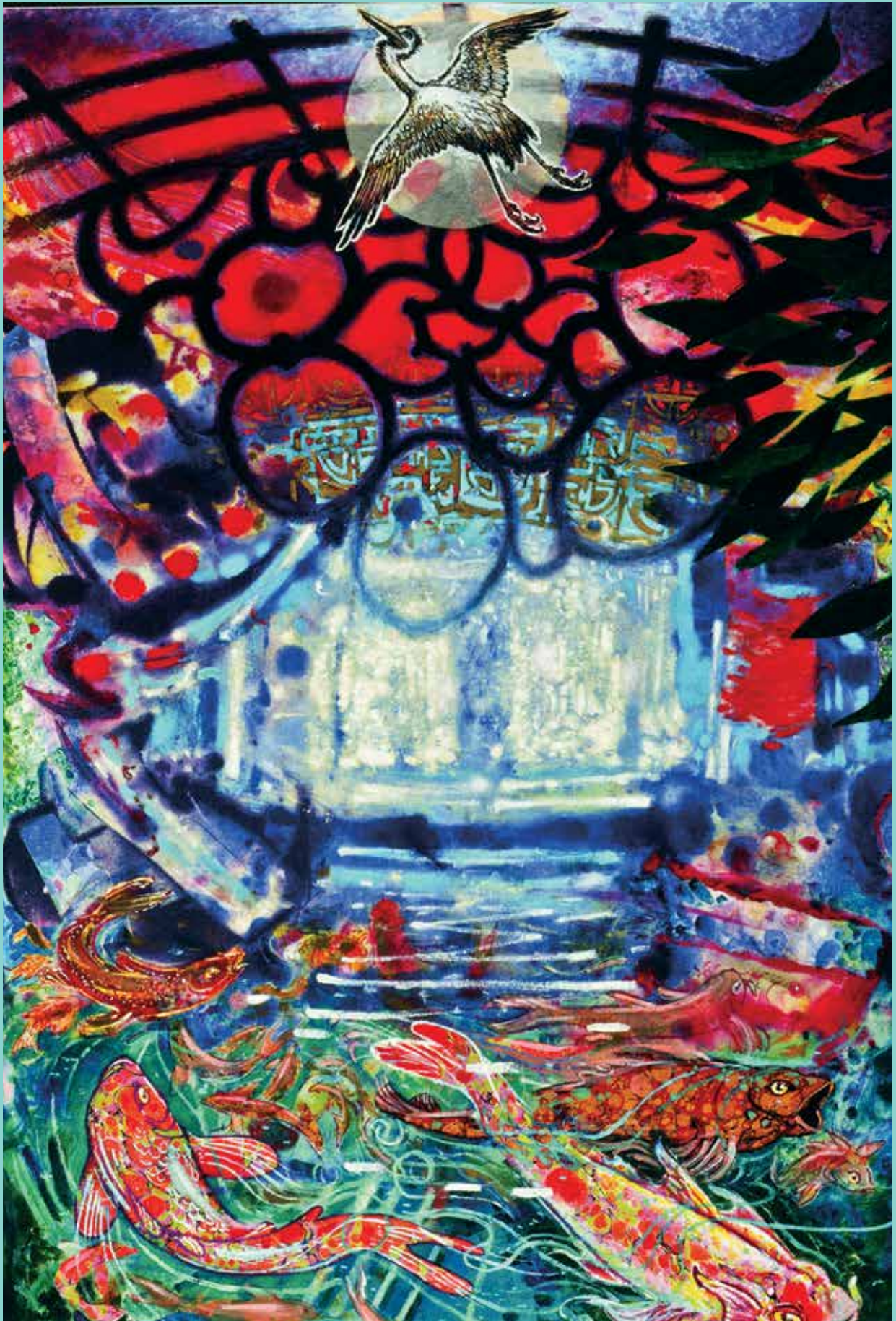
And, given the campus in those days—we were still relatively small in the early 70s—we'd bump into each other on campus, sit out on a bench on the Horseshoe and shoot the breeze. And then, in terms of my academic life and developing the Applied History program—now the Public History program—and the Institute for Southern Studies, Boyd was a constant advisor in making suggestions because he believed very early on in interdisciplinary studies. Now, that's common today. Back in those days, people said, "Oh! You're looking for a discipline to have if you want to do Southern Studies or International Studies."

Boyd was all about interdisciplinary work, and about history, and, I should say, literature. He could easily have taught English, as well as art, and his own work reflects that. He put William Faulkner on canvas. I'd rather look at his work about Faulkner than read some of Faulkner. That may be treason, but some Faulkner is easily read, and some is not. And you may not be quite as familiar with Boyd's works on South Carolina history and culture, his works on the artists of the Charleston Renaissance, notably James Fowler Cooper and Alfred Hutty. He really helped reignite and rediscover what had become a lost generation of South Carolinians between world wars.

I'll finish with Boyd's magnificent painting that hangs in the state museum, "The Battle of Hanging Rock," because that image is the front illustration, the front cover, of my book *Partisans and Redcoats* on the American Revolution. And Boyd, there are more than 40,000 copies in print, so more people have probably seen that than anything else you might have done. At least I hope so!

Now, while that painting was going on, while he was working on it, we had mutual friends, reenactors, from York and Lancaster County. I would go on out to his studio and then he and Stephanie would ask me to have a bowl of soup and some cornbread, and then we would keep talking and talking. I don't think we were fueled by any alcohol, but we may have had a sip or two when we went back to the studio. It was, when I look back on it, two aging Southern boys swapping tales and reminiscences. Those occasions, and his friendship, like one of his pastels that hangs in my home, I will cherish for the rest of my days. And I am a happier, better person because I have known and worked with Boyd Saunders.

—Walter B. Edgar is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the University of South Carolina. He is the author of *South Carolina, A History* and editor of *The South Carolina Encyclopedia*, as well as the host of "Walter Edgar's Journal" and "South Carolina from A to Z" on SCETV Radio.



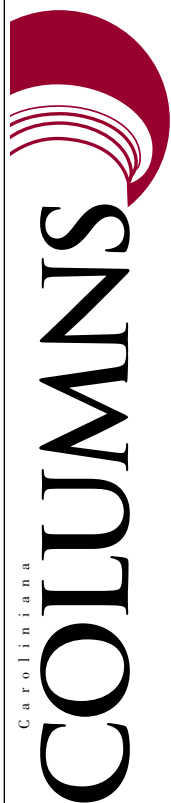
*Suchou Gardens (acrylic on paper)*



*Above, Mustang Bolt Out of the Barn (lithograph)*

*Left, Harlequin (lithograph)*

*Reproductions of these Boyd Saunders lithographs were provided courtesy of The University of South Carolina Press.*



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Correspondence may be addressed to the editor at Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208.

