

## Excerpts from Bob Edmonds' books

During the initial period of settlement present McCormick County was part of Granville County. Granville County was a vaguely defined region that extended from the Atlantic coast to the Cherokee Nation. Given bounds in 1685 during the rule of the Lord Proprietors, Granville was one of the four counties created in South Carolina, the others being Berkeley, Colleton, and Craven. The counties laid out were used to locate land grants and as election districts until 1769.

South Carolina's government was highly centralized. The King appointed the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Governor's Council. The Council also served as the upper house of the legislature, of which the popularly elected General Assembly was the Lower House. The power of the Assembly often eclipsed the Governor.

The judicial system of the province was highly centralized also. For the whole province there were only two courts above the level of the justice of the peace – the Court of Common Pleas, with civil jurisdiction, and the Court of General Sessions, possessing criminal jurisdiction. The same bench, consisting of the Chief Justice and four assistant justices, served both courts. Law enforcement was similarly centralized in the office of the Provost Marshal appointed by the King. All the government of the province was centered in the capital Charles Town.

Local government in South Carolina was fragmentary and divided. The four counties as such were merely geographic entities possessing neither officials nor powers.

All able-bodied South Carolina white males were required to serve in the militia. The prime function of the militia was frontier defense against Indian attack. The secondary function was to maintain order. The militia was occasionally called on by justices of the peace to supplement law enforcement activities of constables. The Assembly appointed local commissioners to supervise such special activities as the maintenance of roads and ferries.

Travel to Charles Town was difficult. The 250-mile journey required about a week for a horseman and one to two weeks longer by wagon. Individual Back Countrymen necessarily visited Charles Town to swear to the headrights to their land grants. Justices of the peace and deputy surveyors reported to their superiors in Charles Town periodically. Wagoners drove covered wagons, pulled by four to six horses or mules, down the Cherokee Trail hauling corn, grain and other farm products, furs and hides, and returned with merchandise for settlers in the Back Country. The wagoner was an important occupation that not only provided transportation for hire, but also served as a letter carrier between the Back Country and the Tidewater region. Planters involved in large-scale cattle raising drove herds to market to Charles Town.

The Church of England was the established church of South Carolina, strong and well organized in the Low Country parishes, but hardly existed in the Back Country. With the heavy Calvinist population of Scots-Irish of the Long Canes and French Huguenots of New Bordeaux, their Presbyterian Church by 1768 served 500 families and was the largest of the twenty-one Presbyterian churches scattered in the Back Country. The Germans on Hard Labor Creek organized Lutheran churches, and the Baptist organized Buffalo Baptist Church.

Back Country congregations found it difficult to raise elaborate buildings and to attract and support regular ministers. So, these Protestants often resorted to their hymn singings, in which the people gathered in a private home, often without a minister for an evening of singing and sociability.

Anglican Missionary Charles Woodmason, with his customary critical remarks, condemned these assemblies as "occasions of debauchery, assignations, and blasphemous songs masquerading as hymns." But the assemblies, in fact, hit upon an informal practice, the hymn singing, which combined religion with conviviality, and afforded one of the few means of relief from the toil and isolation of Back Country existence.

Rev. William Richardson, a Presbyterian minister, visited the Long Canes for four or five weeks during 1764, during which time he baptized sixty children. The Scots-Irish pleaded to the Presbytery for a regular minister.

"A Scots-Irish man," gave the land for Hopewell Presbyterian Church in the Long Canes, with the provision that "no grave yard should ever be made there." It was in that log building that Rev. John Harris ordained the first elders for Hopewell – William Calhoun and A. Barksdale, and where "he preached with his rifle at his side."

Back Country life in the 1760s was rampart with bickering and dissension. Hot-tempered Scots-Irish frontiersmen were a quarrelsome and contentious lot. Disputes over land, the brands of cattle, debts, business transactions, and petty grievances produced ill feelings and feuds often.

The justices of the peace were important men in the Back Country. Though their judicial power was slight, they performed several other duties. They issued warrants of the peace, administered oaths, took depositions, attested the returns of appraisements, and issued certificates for the heads of animals, so that the owner could get his land bounty.

Justices of the Peace were Patrick Calhoun and William Calhoun for the Long Canes, Jean Roger and Jean Louis du Mesnil de St. Pierre for New Bordeaux, Frederick Meyer for Londonborough on Hard Labor Creek, and John Scott for Stevens Creek on Savannah River.

The role of the justice of the peace became prominent on Saturday, the day he held his sittings. The community came alive, and a carnival atmosphere prevailed. There was talking, boasting, dancing, drinking, and swearing.

The swearing had best be out of earshot of the justice of the peace. In his court William Calhoun convicted Hugh Calhoun "for curseing & swearing ten oaths, & curses in my own hearing on June ye 10th 1769." In another session, Calhoun convicted Charles Boyles "for swearing seven profane oaths, viz., By God." The conviction obviously did not properly impress Boyles. The journal reveals, "Charles Boyles (was) convicted a second time on ye same day for swearing one profane oath viz., By God, before me."

On Saturdays merchants had their auctions and planters met to bargain and trade. Militia officers held their musters.

Respectable small planters formed the nucleus of Back Country society. These planters devoted their energies to raising poultry, livestock – cows, hogs, horses, and to crops: corn, tobacco, wheat, barley, rye, flax and madder. Most farms had orchards of apples, peaches, plums, and pears. There was serious vine culture for wine production in the New Bordeaux colony. The French Huguenots in New Bordeaux also produced silk.

The typical planter owned one or two hundred acres of land granted to him under the bounty act. For labor he depended mainly on his own labors and the toil of his wife and children. This respectable planter family lived a hard life with few comforts and no frills. The planter was apt to be provoked at anyone who did not work as hard as he did.

Leaders in the Back Country such as Patrick Calhoun, Jean Louis Gibert, Jean Louis du Mesnil de St. Pierre, Pierre Gibert, Peter Dorst, Heinrich Adolph, and John Scott had a high standing in the locality. Others looked up to them and looked to them for leadership in times of distress.

Slaves were rare during this period of expansion in the Back Country because the Back Country man simply did not need them and could not afford the high prices demanded for slaves. Later, many of the more prosperous farmers did own slaves.

From *The Making of McCormick County*.



Bob Edmonds



Miss Emily's Retirement Center – the oak she planted over six decades ago.

-Tom Poland photo

## Across the Savannah

# Miss Emily's oak

By Tom Poland

Walk-On Writer

Back Road Explorer

tompoland.net



She planted the oak some sixty-eight years ago. Miss Emily was around twenty-six then. The years passed, the tree grew, and today it's a setting Normal Rockwell would have appreciated. A classic Southern scene, it possesses the requisite charms. A quaint barn sits at the edge of woods. Oak limbs shade a wooden picnic table. A rocker faces a swing hanging from the oak. Somewhere in the oak's massive limbs I suspect resurrection ferns grow. A fence partitions the pasture from the yard, and cast iron plants prosper next to the fence. And there's that stretch of pasture, still green despite February's cold

touch.

When I look at this setting, "pastoral" comes to mind. Synonyms for pastoral include rural, rustic, sylvan, and a word few utter these days, "Arcadian," a literary way of saying "idealized country dweller." And indeed a country dweller does live near this fine oak, Miss Emily.

I know some nice gatherings have taken place beneath this oak. Some great conversations too. It's inviting, one of those places people gravitate to. I see what appear to be Meadowcraft rockers and an old chair. Winter cold has the chairs and swing empty, but come a summer afternoon six people could gather here with glasses of tea, and even more people if the picnic table comes into play. Or just one person could sit beneath this oak and swing and think. That's what I'd do. Swing and think.

An interesting history accompanies this peaceful setting. Miss Emily created what would become a fine Southern scene when she brought an oak seedling up from Charleston all those years ago. In talking with her, I surmised the young oak was maybe knee high when she planted it. From little acorns grow mighty oaks goes the saying. Here we see literal proof that mighty things do indeed grow from little acorns.

But, what else grew from this acorn that fell from a tree long ago down Charleston way? A place where Miss Emily's family gathers. In a day when few people sit on a front porch anymore, Miss Emily's tree provides a gathering place. I find that not only Southern but also comforting. Her family refers to the oak as the "Retirement Center," and why not. "Let's retire to the swing and chat for a while."

Miss Emily and I might have never met had it not been for coincidences and good fortune. We've long known of one another's family because we're from the same small town in Georgia. But many years had to pass before my words brought us together. She had been reading my weekly columns and a magazine feature or two. Our friendship began with a phone call and later a visit.

On a cool and windy Saturday in February I parked near her Retirement Center, that is that fine oak. Miss Emily invited friends, family, and a retired high school English teacher to share lunch with her. The teacher had taught Pat Conroy down in Beaufort.

"How was Pat as a student?"

He gave me a knowing look. "Pat read paperbacks in class." I got the message.

All of us talked for hours and enjoyed more than a few good laughs. We talked books, writers, back roads, history, and some true characters of the Southland. What Dad used to enunciate as "care-actors."

No, we weren't sitting beneath Miss Emily's tree. The February day had a bite in the air, and a nice long chat inside seemed wise, but sure as the sun rises I see a summer day coming when that swing will be swinging and we'll be talking and a laughing and sipping tea. We'll do so beneath an oak spirited away from the Holy City by a Georgia girl who'd end up in Georgialina, same as me. Miss Emily and I are Georgialinians, and we both love trees, especially stately oaks.

## Kitty's Korner

By Kittye Craig - Jackson

Oh my goodness – how many wonderful moments, days and experiences I've missed because I was looking for something big to come along! This is most definitely one of the things that most saddens me about my life: the number of opportunities that I've squandered because I was looking for something else.

I don't spend my days wallowing in regret, obviously but sometimes I do wish that I could reach back and change the ways that I've reacted to and treated people and things. Regret for the past does no good, but by reminding myself of just how foolish I've been in the past, I can do my best to make sure that I don't make the same mistakes again. I can try my best to enjoy the little things, the seemingly insignificant moments that don't look to be big deals.

I remember taking a few moments to talk to someone who seemed to need someone to talk to. It didn't seem like that big of a deal at the time and I really enjoyed talking to her. A few years later, she mentioned to me that that conversation had been a kind of turning point, that she had really needed someone to listen to her and that she had even been contemplating suicide. The conversation that to me had been no big deal had definitely been a big deal to the other person.

Most of the things that seem little but that end up being big, we'll never know about. I never would have known about the importance of that meeting if she hadn't told me about it, and she told me only because we happened to meet by chance one day.

I try to look at every moment as important, because from our limited perspective on life, we really can't know what's truly big and what's truly small – we can only give our best to each moment, and hope that it's enough, and we can only do our best to enjoy all that we do, enjoy the moments and the gifts and the company we keep, for life is about the little things that add up to make a life.



Buffalo Baptist Church was organized in 1786.

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