

## Museum Around the Corner

### The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

#### Peaceville ©

Elizabeth Allston Pringle, daughter of South Carolina Governor, Robert Francis Withers Allston and owner of Chicora Wood Plantation, tells a story of life in the years after the War Between the States in a quiet little hamlet called Peaceville. This is one of the places where former planters' families would go to escape the heat and mosquitos, but after the war, it was the only home many of them still had in one piece.

“Peaceville is a little village in the midst of a Southern forest of stately long-leaf pines. It was settled in the olden time as a health resort for the rice planters; a refuge where mosquitos never buzzed and fever never burned, though it was only four miles west of the PeeDee River and its malaria-breeding rice fields. Those four miles were travelled by a road which made a sharp angle half way between the hamlet and the river, because our forefathers thought that fever, like duty, only followed straight lines, and they felt sure that because of that sharp bend malaria would lose its way and never reach the village; their wisdom being proved by the fact that malarial fever was unknown there.

About the twenty-fifth of May, the planters moved their families to this oasis of health in a desert of chills, fever and congestion. The pine-land houses were built hastily and crudely by plantation carpenters, and were a great contrast to the handsome winter homes, being unlined and unceiled, just huge rooms with many big windows and doors and wide verandas, in the midst of tall pines. The health of this summer Mecca was supposed to depend on the pines and the unbroken earth steeped in pine needles for years and years, so that as one entered the village one scented the delicious aromatic odor.

No turning of the soil was allowed by the Peaceville Company, which was very strict in its health regulations; not even a rose bush could be planted. There was a severe examination to be gone through before a person was allowed to buy a lot and build there; no one could enter its charmed circle who had not been declared by vote to be a neighbor acceptable to all.

Every spring all who were as fortunate as to own houses there sent hands and a competent foreman to direct the cutting away and burning of all the underbrush, the raking and turning of the fragrant pinestraw and leaves, as well as the opening of all the ditches which drained into an adjoining swamp. Every householder hauled in from the woods great loads of lightwood and as soon as dusk came, huge bonfires were kindled in front of the houses, thus drawing the gnats, moths and beetles, which might otherwise have been drawn into the houses when the candles were lighted. It made the little village beautiful by night, the gleaming low houses in their fresh coats of healthy whitewash, the tidy whitewashed fences, all shone out in the leaping fireglow against the solemn dark background of the pine forest; just as must they have lighted bonfires in the old days to keep away the wild beasts which prowled around by night as

well as the even more dreaded stealthy human foe. There was no need for lanterns to make an evening visit in the Peaceville of old days, the whole road was as bright as day and the children could play toucher, and run races as safely as in the sunlight.

Alas! Peaceville's glory had faded – no bonfires illumine her pathways now. As the riceplanter is a thing of the past, so are the nightly illuminations for lightwood cannot be cut and hauled from the woods without money, but Peaceville has her wonderful health-giving air, and a wealth of honorable memories, and her mystic charm, but no money. Some of the families of the former rice plantations, when things became more and more difficult, sold their plantations for what they would bring, and moved to Peaceville where they could live all the year round, and tried to make their lares and penates [their possessions] fit into the rough open summer houses. That was the chief trouble; the houses that are airy and cool in summer proved very cold and drafty in winter, but they could live there, and keep the home feeling and the family life which are so much to those who cherish the old ideals. If Peaceville believed in woman's suffrage she could carry everything for the predominance of the gentle fair sex is very great, the inroads of war show very, very heavily in this peaceful spot. Neighborly kindness, the traditions of Peaceville remained unsurpassed, and the desire to be neighborly survives the power to send more than a basket of figs, or a tray of roses; for they have broken through the old rules of the Peaceville Company long since, and each house has a flower garden, and oh, such roses as grew there. The soil seems made for roses and violets – those two blessed old fashioned flowers can one have with only a little outlay.”