

## Museum Around the Corner

### The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

#### Hot and Hot Fish Club ©

Following the Revolutionary War, the rise of cultured gentlemen in the Georgetown District saw an impressive leap. Land barons acquired thousands of acres in property and began a society of country gentlemen, much like their European ancestors. Being well educated, the plantations were the seat of culture and entertainment. Outdoor pursuits were often hosted and the bounty of the land and sea were celebrated in lavish dinners.

This lifestyle gave rise to a convivial club along the Waccamaw Neck known as “The Hot and Hot Fish Club”, begun shortly after the War of 1812. Certainly by 1816, a very young Robert Francis Withers Allston recalled that the club was well established.

From the memories of R.F. W. Allston, “The first of five known clubhouses was opened on Drunken Jack Island in Murrells Inlet...The clubhouse, being materially injured by a storm, was rebuilt on the mainland, on the clam-bank of Major Ward’s salt-vats – salt was then a profitable article to manufacture. The next move was to a spot on which the summerhouse of Col. Fraser was afterwards erected, near where Dr. Post now resides. The Club occupied a wall tent here, which was furnished by Gen. J. W. Allston. A new clubhouse was then built on the mainland, at the head of the causeway now owned by Dr. Hasell.

“After some years, this location was deemed to inconvenient for the residents of the upper beach and upper part of the neck. A grant of land was obtained by Col. T. Pinckney Alston, on Midway sea shore, where a comfortable house, of two rooms, was built with a good chimney, to which was attached a bowling alley, and a substantial kitchen, from which for many years have issued fish enough to sustain the reputation which gave the Club its name.

“Upon the erection of this house, with comfortable, dry apartments, the late Joshua John Ward presented the Club with a billiard table and its appurtenances, which is still a source of much interest and amusement to gentlemen who resort thither.” After the building of this house in 1845, a system of rules was framed, and adopted, by which every member is required, at his initiation, to sign thereto, and to pay a fee of fifty dollars.”

Rule Number I of the organization was that the members were to meet at the Clubhouse on Midway sea shore on each Friday, from the first Friday in June, to the last Friday, but one, in October. The appointed time was 12:00. Members would fish in the morning and bring their catch to the Clubhouse to be prepared by their servants. After this sumptuous feast at 2:00, they fished again in the afternoon, and the catch was prepared for the evening meal, constituting two hot meals, thus the name – “Hot and Hot”. There were more rules pertaining to officers and their duties, a quorum, and other organizational points, along with some interesting social regulations.

Members were required to act as President and bring, on rotation, good ham and rice for all, to be on the table by 2:00. If absent, he must send his ham and rice. The Vice President must provide the Club

with water and ice. All members were required to furnish at least one substantial dish for dinner, also one bottle of wine. He must also bring not less than two knives, two forks, two tumblers, two wine glasses and two plates.

Each unmarried member must furnish, in rotation, a pudding. It shall be the duty of each member in rotation to furnish sugar for the Club for one season.

Should any member become the parent of twins, each member shall in rotation, furnish one basket of champagne for the Club, the names of the twins to be announced after the removal of dinner, in an appropriate toast by the President.

Whenever a member has an additional compliment to his family, he shall compliment the Club with a basket of champagne. Any unmarried member who practically illustrates his preference to matrimony by being wedded, shall be complimented by each unmarried member, through the Club, with a basket of champagne, in commemoration of that event.

With the passage of time, these gentlemen became more and more active in local and state politics, being some of the wealthiest and most influential citizens of South Carolina. R.F.W. Allston was Governor from 1856-1858, Plowden Weston and Joshua John Ward were Lieutenant Governors. There was 1 general, 11 colonels, 2 majors, and 23 captains, 10 doctors, and 21 members recognized as Esquires. This last appellation refers to gentlemen who were the epitome of wealthy country gentlemen.

As issues of secession began to divide the members, and after the declaration of war in 1861, there is no record of the Hot and Hot Fish Club ever meeting again. Many of these gentlemen did not survive the war, and many others left, seeking refuge in inland areas, never to return. The gracious lifestyle of the Old South disappeared completely, never to be seen along the rivers of Georgetown County again.