

Museum Around the Corner

The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

“The Second Yankee Invasion” ©

When President Grover Cleveland fell from his skiff into Winyah Bay while duck hunting in December of 1894, he could not have imagined the impact he made on the history of Georgetown by that accident. As with most dignitaries, an entourage of reporters usually accompany them. Soon after his fall, headlines all over the country read, “President Cleveland briefly lost and rescued in Winyah Bay while duck hunting.” Being in only one foot of water, and in no real danger, we see that fake news is nothing new.

Those headlines alerted wealthy Northerners about the fabulous hunting and fishing on the Carolina coast. A few years later, these gentlemen began what was called “the Second Yankee Invasion” into Georgetown County when they began buying the abandoned rice fields and derelict plantation houses. As reporter C.S. Murray of *The News and Courier* (no date given) wrote, “They formed a winter colony, wearied of the perpetual ice and snow which characterizes winter in the North, and are now flocking back to their southern homes near the old City on the Sampit. ‘This section of the country has the best climate in the world, and this is one of your greatest assets,’ Bernard Baruch, well known New York financier, has been heard to remark on several occasions. That he is making this statement in absolute good faith is shown by his willingness to spend several months out of the year on his estate on the Waccamaw peninsula, in spite of the pressure of business. Other members of the colony have expressed the same sentiment. They say that they prefer the climates of the South Carolina coast to that of the extreme South, where it is rather too warm to engage vigorously in sports, and where the air lacks the wine-like quality of the Carolina lowlands.

In palatial private rail cars and chartered Pullman brought to Georgetown at great expense, the Northerners make the journey south every year. The special trains are always met at the station by a retinue of servants, passenger automobiles to convey the travelers to their estates, and trucks to handle the heavy baggage. Trunks, handbags, crates and bulky packages are unloaded with the greatest dispatch and placed aboard the trucks, while the colonists lose no time in setting forth for their hunting lodges where the blaze of log fires greets their eyes. The Northerners who own homes on the Waccamaw peninsula never, by any chance wait for the ferry, for their speedy and luxurious yachts are awaiting them at the city docks.

Bernard Baruch and Isaac E. Emerson arrived in Georgetown several weeks ago with a number of friends, and are already planning several hunting expeditions for the Christmas season. Jesse Metcalf, who is now one the largest land holders in the county , arrived last Friday, whole Mr. and Mrs. Paul D. Mills, who have been spending the summer in northern resorts, made their appearance on the streets about ten days ago.

Estates which compare to the smaller countries of Europe, remodeled plantation homes furnished with every comfort and luxury imaginable, and hunting preserves on which are found deer, turkey, quail, fox, ducks and other game in large quantities, characterize the holdings of these winter colonists.

Bernard Baruch, owner of “Hobcaw Barony”, has title to over 20,000 acres of highland; Isaac E. Emerson, the “Bromo Seltzer King” owns approximately 13,000 acres, while Mr. Metcalf runs a close second with

an estate of 15,000. Mr. Metcalf has recently purchased Sandy Island, a tract which alone contains about 10,000 acres, made up of several ante-bellum plantations. It is said to be the scene of Mrs. Julia Peterkin's "Black April".

Paul D. Mills, who owns an old colonial mansion in Georgetown, last summer purchased Windsor plantation on the Black River, once the home of Governor Alston. A grove of live oaks surrounding an historic dwelling is one of the features of the place.

Among the newcomers is listed Henry M. Sage, who has leased Belle Isle Gardens for a period of ten years, and has moved a century old house from Newberry to the garden spot. The Sages are residents of Albany, New York. Mr. and Mrs. Don M. Kelly of New York, has purchased 8,000 acres on the Black River, adjoining Waddell Ranch. They will take up their abode temporarily at Arundel on the PeeDee. Their new home is known as "Springwood". Vincent Mulford, of New York, some time ago took title to 10,000 acres of land in the PeeDee section known as "Bates Hill" and has turned this tract over to the Winyah Gun Club, of which he is a member. A ten room log cabin has been erected at Bates Hill, finished in the hunting lodge style, and is completely outfitted with everything a sportsman can desire. An artesian well has been driven and an electric plant installed. Well equipped kennels are also found on the place."

The list goes on to dozens of Northerners who have come to take a months long respite from their business pursuits. These people rescued the economy of Georgetown, still running low after the effects of Reconstruction and desolation of the loss of our largest source of income, the rice industry. They also rescued many of the plantation homes that had fallen into disrepair. Today, the stewards of our heritage who occupy these mansions continue to maintain them in good order and beauty.