

Museum Around the Corner

Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

Georgetown has been visited by royalty, famous Americans, and at least five American Presidents. In April of 1791, George Washington journeyed down the east coast to see how the new American form of government was working. According to his daily journal, on April 28, 1791, he arrived at Mr. Pawleys private house by midday, then on to the plantation of Dr. Flagg for the night. In the morning he departed for William Alston's Plantation on the Waccamaw River. The next morning, April 30, the President crossed the Waccamaw in a beautifully painted boat, manned by captains of vessel of the harbor, dressed in dazzling uniforms of blue, gold and white, who rowed the President to Georgetown where he spent the day giving speeches and enjoying the hospitality of the citizens of the town, including the Winyah Indigo Society. He departed in the afternoon for Hampton Plantation.

In 1819, James Monroe arrived at Prospect Hill on April 21. The next morning, the President walked the entire distance from the house to the landing on a red carpet, said to have been lavish even at half this length. He arrived in Georgetown to appropriate fanfare.

In 1842, Martin Van Buren, after recently leaving the office of President, visited the Black River home of diplomat Joel Roberts Poinsett, famous ambassador to Mexico (for whom the popular Christmas flower "poinsettia" is named). President Van Buren was the guest of the Planters Club on PeeDee where he was made an honorary member.

In the aftermath of the War Between the States, Georgetown suffered economically during Reconstruction and for years beyond. In 1894, Georgetown hosted President Grover Cleveland who was here on a duck hunting expedition. These abandoned rice fields were a haven for waterfowl and the President was aiming to make his mark. In a skiff in Winyah Bay, he tripped and fell into the water. The depth was only about 12 inches at low tide, and he was probably wet and uncomfortable at the worst. However, newspaper headlines across the nation read, "President Cleveland Briefly Lost and Rescued in Winyah Bay While Duck Hunting". That let the news of Georgetown's fabulous hunting and fishing known to the world. This precipitated what came to be known as "the Second Yankee Invasion" when wealthy northerners swooped in to buy many of our abandoned ricefields and plantations to use as hunting lodges. Our economy was improved by these hunting parties which lasted for months.

In the dead of night of late April, 1944, a caravan of black limousines rolled through Georgetown, heading north. The identity of the passengers remained a mystery. Finally, word leaked out that President Franklin DeLano Roosevelt was visiting Bernard Baruch at Hobcaw Barony. This elegant, secluded plantation was completely self-sufficient with its own electricity and other necessities. The quiet tranquility of Hobcaw was just what the doctor ordered for the exhausted and ailing President. After a month, he left Georgetown in a grand public style, waving and speaking to the astonished citizens. He returned to Washington in much improved health, but more burdens of the war awaited him.