

## Museum Around the Corner

### The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

#### Quarantine of the *Juno* ©

An article from the Cheraw "Farmer's Gazette" of February 1, 1845 tells the story of sad event in Georgetown, and emphasizes the need for better facilities for the treatment of communicable diseases, so rampant at times in our history and of the hysteria attending these awful periods.

"The commercial interest of Cheraw being intimately connected with those of Georgetown, every thing injuriously affecting the latter place, must in a greater or less degree, have its influence on the former, and all impediments thrown in the way of commerce there must necessarily result in retarding commercial enterprise, enhancing the expenses of transportation and preventing that free competition in trade by which alone we expect to live and prosper.

"With these views, we feel that we have a right to complain of any obstacles thrown in the way of trade in Georgetown. We do not pretend to question the right or duty of the authorities there, to enact and enforce municipal regulations to prevent the spread of contagious disorders – their safety in this particular is our preservation. But such laws should be enforced with humanity and kindness. Proper provision should be made for the comfort of the sick and the preservation of those who are not afflicted. Misfortune should not be construed into a crime, and punishment by fine and imprisonment. The following extract of a letter received by a highly respectable merchant in this town from his correspondent in New York, will explain more fully the nature of our present complaint. If the facts are truly stated, it is evident that some reform is absolutely necessary.

'New York, Jan 17, 1845 – several of the vessels which have been in the Georgetown trade finding they can obtain better freights, have gone to other places. The treatment of officers and crew of the *Juno* received when last there, was certainly not very creditable to the authorities of Georgetown. Having a man on board sick, she was sent down the Bay, and no person permitted to go on board or go on shore from her for two or three days. A Physician at length ventured on board and rendered medical aid. After a detention of some two weeks, she was allowed to take in cotton from lighters, remaining at Quarantine ground until she left for New York. Ports of so much importance as Georgetown, should be supplied with a Hospital in a suitable position to receive and administer to the necessities of sick and disabled mariners, instead of confining them on board vessels, without allowing them the benefit of a dose of medicine or the aid of a physician for two or three days.'

"We cannot deny the charges set forth in the preceding declarations. It is unfortunate for us that there is room to make such grave charges against a port of so much commercial importance as Georgetown. All could have been avoided if the U.S. Government had a regular marine hospital in this place. But as no asylum is provided, the Town Council were unwilling to offend the large majority of their citizens who objected to the landing of the diseased man, and implored Council not to allow any of the crew to have any communication with the town. We offered a house and servants as nurses, but Council was unwilling to disobey the public protestation against the course, and ultimately procured the site of the old Fort at Waties' Point, and used it as a Lazeretto. Only one of the crew died, but it is too true that he and three others contracted the disease after the brig was in port and by being confined to the vessel

when she was driven to quarantine in Winyah Bay. *All this for want of Marine Hospital in Georgetown.* The disease can at any time be confined to a single room in any dwelling with proper care.

“To our knowledge, the disease, Small Pox, has been imported here seven times within the last thirty years, and in every instance, save in 1825, it has been confined to a single house. Then it was spread by accident, but was checked as soon as it was generally known.

“Capt. Norris, when at quarantine complained loudly, saying that the course pursued towards him was without precedent. That in France, England, and Spain, and even in Haiti, no diseased person was ever kept on board more than 24 hours, and that he personally knew this.

“We sincerely hope that Government will forthwith provide a Marine Hospital in Georgetown and that two such cases as the brigs *Richmond Packet* in 1837 and the *Juno* in 1844 may never again occur in this port.”