

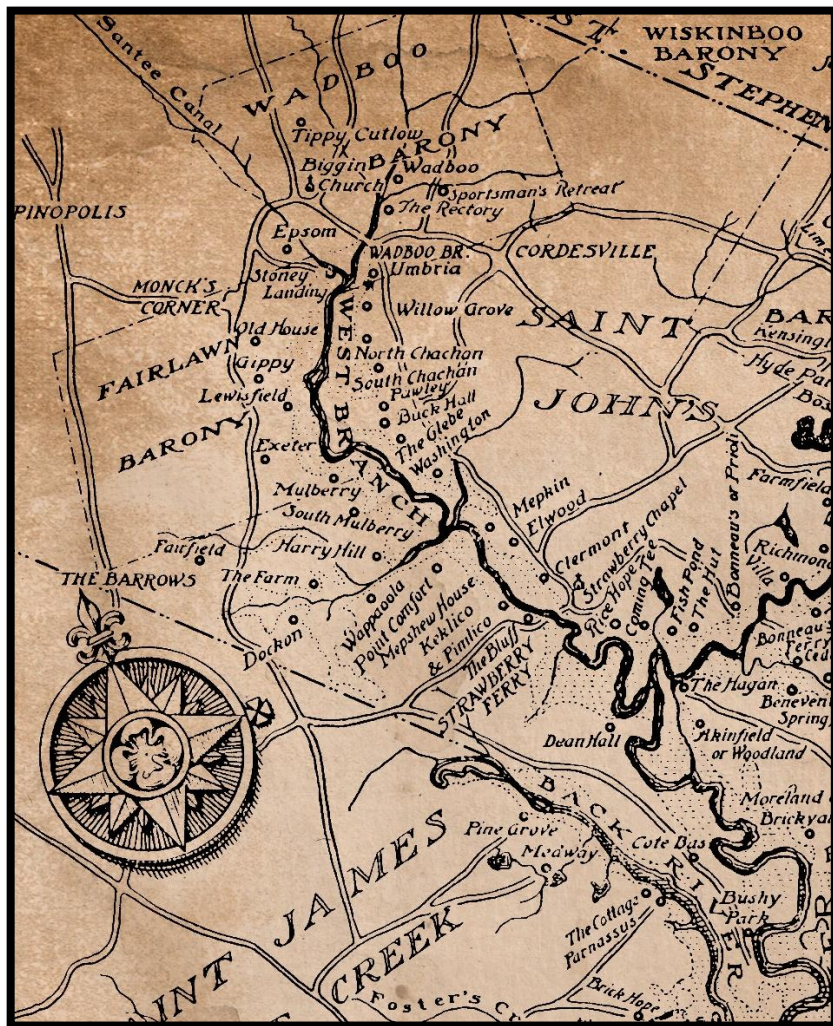
Berkeley County's

Cordesville

A Particular History

by

Keith Gourdin



Cordesville, The Settling of ~

Cordesville, Part II ~

Within a few days, death amongst Our Little Fraternity at Cordesville ~

DIED, at Cordesville, October 16, 1832 – in St. John's Parish Berkeley ~

Departed this transitory life, October, 1832, Cordesville ~

Cordesville, September 2nd, 1837, 2 o'clk p.m. ~

“Western Branch Cooper River, Sept. 3, 1837 ~

Cordesville, September 4th, 1837 ~

Estate Sale, Thursday, the 7th of February 1850, All that Plantation ~

Hyde Park Will be Sold ~

House in Cordesville, Will be Sold ~

DIED, in Cordesville, Mr. John Ball ~

Cooper River Land to Rent – Richmond Plantation, January 1867 ~

Fire in Cordesville, 02 November 1868 ~

A Gentleman of the Old School. 1893 ~

A Hospital in Cordesville ~

State Missions, Wayside Notes ~

A Gala Night at Cordesville, 1896 ~

Tobacco in Berkeley – Wednesday, Nov. 11, 1885 ~

Cordesville's Charms – A Pineland Village and its Historic Surroundings ~

Exciting News for the Lowcountry Girl Scouts, January 5, 1963 ~

Near Cordesville ~

Various Stories Told ~

Cordes Ville (Cordesville), the Settling of ~

This popular summer retreat is situated in St. John's, Berkeley, about thirty-eight miles from the City of Charleston and four miles from the nearest point on the Western Branch of Cooper River. There are several good roads leading to it. It may be approached from all directions. From the *northwest* by Biggin Church, along the old Military Road, passing by the Rectory; or, by the Umbria Road; or, by Mr. Frank (Francis) Cordes'* private road that turns off from the River Road, nearly opposite the 25 Mile Post; or, from the *southeast*, passing through Midway Plantation, and over the Lenud's Ferry Road, along the "Wadboo Path," as laid down in Purcell's old plat of 1786, but which is the old Military Road, cut during the Revolution, by the British, to connect, and keep up a communication between their two Military Posts, established at the head waters of the two branches of Cooper River – mainly, Biggin Church, and Huger's Bridge. From the *east*, there is also leading to it, another tolerable road, known as "the Three Mile Head Road."

**Francis Cordes (b. ca. 1701-d. ca. 1743) and lived at North Chachan. He was a son of Dr. Anthony Cordes, Huguenot emigrant, who settled on the north branch of the Cooper River. Dr. Anthony Cordes married Esther Madeleine Balluet and they had the following children: Isaac, Magdeline, Esther, James, Francis, Ann, and Thomas. Dr. Cordes, son of Paul Cordes and Mary Dupuech, came to Carolina in 1685 from Languedoc, France.*

Cordesville, having established a character for health, has within the last thirty years become a very favorite resort, during the summer, for the Planters and their families, owning property within a convenient distance. Its population has increased so wonderfully of late, that its early history, and who were the Pioneers to test its safety, as a residence, the first to peril their lives during a summer, in this *terra incognita*, this wilderness of Pine, becomes a matter of interesting inquiry.

From the best sources of information within my reach, it appears that Mr. and Mrs. (Anthony) Cordes, the father and mother of our respected fellow Parishioner, Mr. Frank (Francis) Cordes, of "North Chachan," were the first persons to spend a summer in Cordesville. The former old gentleman, in consequences of impaired health, having been recommended to try a change of air, and to escape from the malaria of the swamp, removed the frame of a building from his plantation to the spot, now occupied by Col. John M. Harleston's residence, and established a maroon there. A few months satisfied him with an improvement in his health, which induced Mrs. Caw to follow the example, and to put up a small house immediately in front of him. This house was subsequently removed after Mrs. Caw's death, but the spot

may easily be traced where it stood, even at the present day (1851), from the foundation of the chimneys, &c., remaining.

This experiment of Mr. and Mrs. Cordes was tried about fifty years since (which would be early 1800). When old Mr. Cordes died, his son, the present Mr. Frank Cordes, took down the house his father had put up in a hurry and erected a larger and more convenient residence for his widowed mother, further west, nearer his plantation, and then opened the road, which is now known as Cordes' road, leading in a straight line direct to his plantation, a distance of about two miles and a half. This house is now standing in the village, having within the last four years been put in through repair by its different occupants. Mr. John Laurens, of Mepkin, resides there, with his family, this summer.

In compliment to old Mr. Cordes, who was the first settler, the name of "Cordesville" was given to the village.

Major Samuel Gourdin, of "Buck Hall," and the Rev. Peter M. Parker, the Rector of the Parish, were the next to put up a house, and they did so upon the *Tontine** system, the longest liver to take it. This house stood on the lot now occupied by Dr. William Moultrie. Reverend Parker soon after moved to Charleston, having been appointed in 1801 as Assistant Minister to St. Philip's – he soon after died, and was buried there. It is a circumstance interesting to record that St. John's has furnished two worthy ministers to St. Philip's – the Reverend Parker, and our present venerable and excellent Bishop, Dr. Gadsden.

Mr. Bartley Gaillard, of Umbria, was the next to build; he put up a house of limited size at first, but pulled it down afterwards, and erected the present comfortable residence, which was purchased a few years since, at the death of Mr. Gaillard, by Mr. James W. Read. Col. Peter Broughton, of "Elwood," about the same time with Mr. Gaillard, move to the village with his brother Philip Broughton, living exactly on the spot where the Church now stands.

The gentlemen that I have so far mentioned, are to be regarded as the Patriarchs of Cordesville – they were the first to give "a local habitation and a name" to it; two of them Major Gourdin and Mr. Gaillard, raised large families there, and established, beyond a doubt, the healthfulness of the place.

*A *Tontine* is a financial arrangement where participants pool their money together to receive an annuity. As members pass away, their shares are redistributed among the remaining members, continuing until only one member is left, who then receives the entire amount. This concept originated in the 17th century and was used as a means for governments to raise capital.

This brings us down to the year 1812, when Dr. Henry M. Holmes, of “Willow Grove,” built a fine house for the accommodation of himself and family. About the same time, Col. Peter Broughton pulled down his first house and put up one on a larger plan in every respect, on the lot that had been first selected by old Mr. Cordes, as most eligible, and from which, after his death, his son removed the old building, as I have already explained. This house, belonging to Col. Broughton, was purchased by Dr. William D. Gourdin. After the death of the Doctor, Col. John M. Harleston, of the “Woodlands,” became proprietor of it, and still occupies it with his charming family.

Found in a September 2, 1824 edition of the *Southern Patriot* newspaper, “Dr. Henry M. Holmes informs the inhabitants of St. John’s, Berkeley, that he has recommenced the Practice of Medicine during the Summer. Calls will be attended to during the summer from Cordesville, and from his usual place of residence in Winter.”

I must state, by way of making this record as complete as possible, that Dr. Holmes’ house was burned in April 1845, and has since been rebuilt.

Mrs. Rivers, owning property by Biggin church, near the (old Santee Canal) Lock, whose daughter married the Rev. Albert Muller, at this time, built a house on a lot still known as *the Rivers’ lot*, northwest of Dr. Moultrie’s present residence.

A Mrs. and Miss Evans occupied a modest little cottage, situated near Dr. Holmes’. When they left the village, which they did, after a residence of a few years, Dr. James Ravenel built a house on the same spot – this house, after the death of Dr. Ravenel, was left unprotected, and shared the same fate that many others have done, having been destroyed accidentally from the pernicious custom of setting fire to the woods in the early spring.

In 1832, Nicholas Harleston of “Bossis,” settled in the village – also, William Harleston, of “the Hut,” and John Harleston of “Elwood” – the former established himself very comfortably indeed, and *with considerable taste*, procured some choice trees, apricots, apples, cherries, plumb, peaches and nectarines, and set them out. By paying proper attention to them, he is now, and has been for many seasons, literally gathering, *the fruits of his labor*.

The climate and soil seem admirably adapted to the culture of all the varieties of fruit. The habit of setting out trees, immediately before the doors of the different

houses, is becoming more and more general, contributing not only to health, but the luxuries of life!

Mr. Harleston was so unfortunate as to have his house burned down last Spring twelve months but has since rebuilt it.

In 1834, Dr. Benjamin Huger of "Richmond," assisted by his brother, Major John Huger, erected a house, for an occasional resort. Major Huger passed portions of a few summers there – this house burned in 1844. The lot remained open, and unoccupied until the Spring of the present year, when Dr. Irving purchased and established himself upon it.

In 1832, Philip J. Porcher built on what is known as the Parsonage lot – he spent two summers in Cordesville – then the house was bought by the Vestry, as a residence for the Minister – the Revd. Mr. Tschudy, took possession of it, and live in it till he died in 1834. It was soon after burned to the ground from the same cause that led to the destruction of so many others, namely, burning the woods in the Spring. Mr. James Caward has recently purchased this lot and has just completed a comfortable habitation for his family.

In 1834, Mr. Alwyn Ball and his family were added to the number of the inhabitants of Cordesville. He employed Mr. Suaffee, who built for him a very well-furnished establishment – two years after it was built, it was purchased from the Executors of Mr. Ball, by Col. Keating S. Ball, of "Comingtee," who has made it his headquarters ever since, during the summer.

In 1844, Dr. Pinckney built on the lot originally selected by Major Samuel Gourdin. On his moving out of the Parish to town, he sold it to Dr. William Moultrie, who has lived there with his family for eight summers and enjoyed uninterrupted health.

Dr. Hall was next to select a site and put up a house. This estimable gentleman died last summer (1850) on his family removing to the city, his house was sold, and was purchased by Dr. Henry M. Holmes, who has tendered the use of it to the Rev. Mr. Howe, the minister of Lower St. John's.

Keating Simons, of Lewisfield, put up a house in 1844, which after being burned, his cousin Keating Simons, Jr., erected on the same lot his present residence.

Thomas Ashby, of "South Chachan," Dr. Prioleau of "Priuli," and Dr. Deas of "Buckhall," have provided themselves within a few years with comfortable houses.

Dr. White also owns one, which is this season occupied by Mr. Edwin Gaillard, formerly of Pineville; the family now owns "Sportsman's Retreat," on the Western Branch of Cooper River.

The land which constitutes the village of Cordesville belongs to the estate of Mr. Bartley Gaillard, and to Dr. Henry M. Holmes, with the exception of the lots, the latter gentleman has from time to time sold. The houses erected on the former property pay a ground rent of \$20, whilst Dr. Holmes disposes of all rights, title, and interests to an acre lot for the sum of \$100. The land on which the Church stands – Mr. Corde's house – Mr. Ashby's – Dr. Hall's – Dr. White's – Dr. Irving's – Dr. Deas' – Mr. Caward's (Coward's?), and of course Dr. Holmes' own house, are on Dr. Holmes' Willow Grove tract; all the other buildings and improvements, are on the Umbria tract, and liable to ground rent.

Previous to the year 1845, the religiously and devoutly disposed persons in the village, were in the habit on every returning Sabbath, of meeting for public worship in each other's houses. As the number of attendants increased, this was found to be inconvenient, and it was resolved that a suitable place of worship should be forthwith erected. Dr. Holmes immediately came forward and gave a lot to the village – a subscription was then set on foot by one of the pious ladies of the congregation, by which an adequate sum was raised to purchase materials, and to erect the building.

As the title was given to the residents in Cordesville, the Vestry of St. John's has no jurisdiction over it, it is therefore an independent Church, although only a minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church, that I know of, has as yet, been invited to hold service in it. The Rev. Mr. Howe, the Rector of Lower St. John's, officiates every alternate Sunday, morning and afternoon, and on every Friday afternoon; devoting Wednesday evening in every week, to the instruction of the colored people in the neighborhood.

I have never seen a more attentive congregation that is to be met with at this humble place of worship and one more regular in its attendance. There is something very charming to me in family prayer, and this partakes very much of that character.

Delicacy forbids me to speak of the gentleman, as I really wish to do, who officiates here, with evident usefulness. I shall only observe, therefore, that I recognize in him much purity of character, innocence of life and many traits which most adorn the Christian and the gentleman, affording a pleasing assurance, to all who attentively listen to his discourses, that without any pretension, he is striving to

do the work that is set before him in a manner best calculated to set the cause of that great Master in heaven, whose humble ambassador he feels himself to be, on earth!

For a “first families” listing of those who came and built [in most all cases, summer homes], we have: Dr. Anthony and Esther Cordes [my 7th Great-Grandparents], Francis Cordes [my 6th Great-Granduncle], Mrs. [Catherine Chicken Serre, later] Caw, John Laurens, Major Samuel Gourdin [my 3rd Great-Granduncle], Rev. Peter M. Parker, Col. John M. Harleston, Dr. William Moultrie, Bartley Gaillard, James W. Read, Col. Peter Broughton, Philip Broughton, Dr. Henry M. Holmes, Dr. William D. Gourdin [my 3rd Great-Granduncle], Mrs. Rivers, Mrs. & Miss Evans, Dr. James Ravenel, Nicholas, William, and John Harleston, Dr. Benjamin Huger, Major John Huger, Dr. Irving, Philip J. Porcher, Rev. Tschudy, James Caward, Alwyn Ball, Col. Keating S. Ball, Dr. Pinckney, Dr. Hall, Keating Simons, Thomas Ashby, Dr. Prioleau, Dr. Deas, Dr. White, and Edwin Gaillard.

(to be continued)

Resources / References:

Collections from the Library of Keith Gourdin

The Charleston Courier, 1851. History/author unknown.

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Compiled & Edited by Keith Gourdin



Plantations along the Cooper River in 1842. Courtesy of Keith Gourdin collections.

Cordesville, Part II ~ (July 1851)

“Come, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.” Solomon’s song.

I have thus far briefly traced the rise and progress of Cordesville. It is destined, I think, year after year, to become more and more popular, as a summer retreat, with the Planters owning property in the vicinity. I have heard many objections raised in a pineland residence. Some of these objections, I confess, are not without weight. I cannot undertake to answer all of them, but there is one, I have often heard urged by people not familiar with the country, that much surprises me, indeed; - it is this, that there is nothing to admire in a pineland, that the prospect is dull, and sad, and monotonous.

Is there no beauty, let me ask, in a scene, when the sun shines in a slant between lofty trees, making a path of golden light here and there, thro’ the long stems in its range, then lighting up, as in a picture, other trees, not quite toppled over by the wind, quietly and gracefully lying across the branches of the more robust pines, as if the arms of the stronger, had been stretched out to catch their weaker companions ere they fell!

If there no grandeur, when bodies of giant trees are seen, bark stript, and blasted, yet standing stately, and as it were impiously up, as if with heads uncovered, daring the elements to strife, whilst others are stretched out with their long lengths upon the ground, as if in repose, seeking shelter from the rays of the sun, mixed up here and there, with green leaves of oak, and wild flowers of various hues, in picturesque confusion?

Is there no beauty, when in the far distant recesses of the forest, may be traced outlines of “the long drawn aisle, or fretted vault” – the ruin of some classic temple, or castle, roofless, and open to the sky, yet with there and there, a window perfect, formed from overhanging arches of boughs of trees, whilst green paths, intersecting each other, may be detected winding thro’ the woods, leading to the many houses of happy independent families, in the not far distant village?

Besides this, from the more shadowy wood, comes forth the ceaseless music of birds; from the long grass, all day long, is heard the whistle of the partridge, and the tapping of the woodpecker from some tall trunk of a tree, save when, he seems to interrupt his own work, as if he fain would listen for a while, to the buzzing of happy insects disporting in the bright sunshine around him.

There is beauty, and “a pleasure,” depend upon it, in the lonely woods, where nature is everything, and man nothing! I am confident no one whose heart is in any measure attuned to holy things, can walk thro’ the woods, either when all nature sleeps in the ardent noontide, or in the soft twilight, or in the still softer moonlight, without feeling the immortal spark within him, kindling into a flame, and waving up, heavenward; and in spite, alas! Too frequently of a proud nature, breathing this inward acknowledgment to himself of this own insignificance; “O God, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man, that thou so regards him.”

This, with the writer, is often a morning’s meditation!

“Alone, alone all, all alone,” in the deep, deep woods, he loves to commune with nature, and then to turn from nature, to commune with nature’s God! And, often when the day is drawing to a close, at the twilight hour, there is another source of pleasure frequently open to him near *his Pineland home!*

There is amusement and *profit* to be derived from contemplating, as the evening shades prevail, a group of happy children, gathered together in play, around the portals of the village church – “their custom always of an afternoon.”

It is no unusual pastime with me to join them, and to listen to the sound of little feet, and to hear the music of sweet innocent voices, and to see bright young eyes, glancing up into mine, and as my eyes follow them on their artless play, with softened heart there comes back to me, *the light of other days*—a hallowed memory, whispering to me of times when I perhaps was like one of these little ones; my stubborn heart is turned to peace and love, made soft almost to penitence; I put my cheek upon one of theirs, and I bless them, *for the lesson* they impart!

There was a time, as I understand, when children were “few and far between,” in Cordesville – when the place, notorious as *the resort of Bachelors*, suffered from a reputation by no means flattering to *female influence*; and to show that this opinion is still prevalent to a certain extent, I was very much amused not long since, by a very interesting young lady saying to me, that the only possible objection she could have to Cordesville was, that there were, as she heard, *too many Bachelors in the Village!!*

The remark was made with so much ingenuousness, I could not help replying, “if you, my pretty little friend, will only consent to come with me, and pass a summer among them, I will undertake to promise, that there will be at all events, *one Bachelor less* there, before the winter.”

But, “a change has come over the spirit of things” in Cordesville, and the little village can boast now of as large a family circle, and as refined a domestic Society, as any hamlet of the same size and population – a domestic Society, I mean, that the fairer part of our race polish and adorn, and in which, woman, virtuous woman, is made as she ought always to be, the companion and the friend of man!

Like all other places, where more than two or three are gathered together, Cordesville has its amusements. These consist in social interchanges of hospitable civilities, enlivened among the ladies, by an occasional cup of tea with each other, and among the gentlemen, by a game of nine pins at the Bowling Alley in the afternoon, or a game of chess in the evening, at each other’s houses.

By the aid of several friends, I am enabled to subjoin a list of the former and present inhabitants of Cordesville:

Former Residents – Mr. and Mrs. Cordes, Mrs. Caw, Major Samel Gourdin and family, Bartley Gaillard and family, Col. Peter Broughton, Thomas Broughton, Dr. Broughton, Mrs. Rivers, Mrs. and Miss Evans, Samuel Gourdin, Isaac Ball, Dr. James Ravenel and family, Rev. Mr. Tschudy and family, Henry B. Mazyck, Alexander H. Mazyck and family, Nicholas Harleston, Sr., Dr. William D. Gourdin and family, Dr. Pinckney and family, Alwyn Ball and family, Dr. Huger and family, Philip Porcher, Philip J. Porcher and family, Dr. Hall and family, Peter Gourdin, Keating Simons, Sr., Dr. Christopher White and family, and James W. Read.

Present Residents – Francis Cordes, Dr. Henry M. Holmes and family, Nicholas Harleston, John Harleston, William Harleston, William Gaillard, Keating S. Ball, Dr. William Moultrie and family, Keating Simons, Jr. and family, Thomas Ashby, Thomas Ashby, Jr., Rev. Mr. Howe and family, Mrs. Keating Laurens and family, John Laurens and family, Mrs. J.W. Read and family, Dr. T.G. Prioleau, Jr. and family, Dr. Deas and family, Dr. J.B. Irving and family, Dr. Amelius Irving, Edwin Gaillard, Mrs. Gaillard and family, R. Villeponteau, James Caward and family, and Dr. Price.

Within a few days, death has been amongst Our Little Fraternity at Cordesville,

And removed from us, one of whom it is not too much to say, that a more generous and less selfish man, never lived! I have reference to the recent demise of Mr. James Withers Read, who passed from time to eternity, on the 28th of June, in the 35th year of his age.

Free from the incumbrance and contracting influences of pecuniary cares and pursuits, he acquired very early in life, habits of great liberality, valuing whatever (from the adventitious circumstance of birth he possessed of this world's goods, as the means, not of private gratification, but of promoting the convenience and enjoyment of others. Peculiarly formed for the duties and delights of friendship; mild and accommodating in his disposition, and cheerful at all times, it cost him no effort to oblige and entertain his friends; his kindness and hospitality, therefore, became proverbial in his neighborhood!

He was buried by his own request in the family burial ground at Richmond, *the scene of his boyhood's years!* He sleeps there, until that final day, when he will arise, as we trust, to find a *Heaven* in the mercy of God!

This is not the fitting place exactly for an obituary, but it seemed to me that I could not close this article on Cordesville, without strewing, as I have done, my eye press over the grave of a friend, that I have had every reason to believe, from his infancy, always regarded me as an elder brother, and at the same time to bear my testimony to the wholesome state of morality and good feeling that exists in the region where he died, and which tends to reconcile me to a spot, in which Providence has mysteriously fixed my destiny, perhaps, forever.

The anniversary of our country's natal day was to have been celebrated with unusual ceremonies in the village, but on the occurrence of Mr. Read's death, with one consent, it was immediately resolved to dispense with the festivities that were arranged for the occasion – it was felt, the transition would be too great from the tomb to the festival.

How much propriety and holiness there was in this tribute of sympathy! It proclaimed, no less the amiable qualities of the deceased, than the good feelings of the survivors, who thus “let their moderation be known unto all men,” and who, in the midst of all their long anticipated enjoyments and pleasure, could not but remember, that *in the garden, there was a new sepulcher!* Cordesville, July 7, 1851.

DIED, at Cordesville, October 16, 1832 – in St. John’s Parish Berkeley,

Nicholas Harleston, Esq. in the 65th year of his age. The memory of this gentleman will be cherished with respect by all who enjoyed his acquaintance. Gifted with a strong understanding and a generous heart, and possessing manners eminently polished and conciliating, he combined, in a high degree, the qualifications of the respectable gentleman, the pleasing companion, and the valued friend. The place which he occupied in the regards of his immediate parishioners, cannot well be supplied, and an extensive circle of relatives and friends have sustained a loss in his death that will be long felt and deplored.

Departed this transitory life, on Tuesday, the 2nd of October, 1832, Cordesville.

John Pepper Harleston, eldest son of the late Mr. C. and Mrs. Margaret Richards, aged twenty years and two days. He died under the full assurance of a blessed immortality, and with pious resignation. He was truly a promising young man, who performed his duties with indefatigable zeal. He was esteemed by all who knew him; and his memory will long be held precious, as his death is greatly lamented. He was the solace of a fond and widowed mother, a sister, and an only brother.

But early death hath snatched him to the tomb,
From whence again he will immortal bloom.
Weep not fond parent for his early death,
He looks on you from yonder heavenly sphere;
And when to God you yield your latest breath,
He’ll be in waiting to receive you there.

Cordesville, September 2nd, 1837, 2 o’clk p.m.

“I went to Bossis (plantation) this morning with a view of crossing over to Longwood, as well to see my patient as to give some details of the injury sustained by yesterday’s rain. I could not accomplish my objective. It is a perfect sea, from high land to high land, and every boat and bridge is carried away. I never in my life saw such a fresh (freshet / flooded area). They tell me it surpassed that of 1804, and by ---- measurement, it is higher by 18 inches, than the fresh of 1834. Great will be the destruction—we cannot, at present, ascertain the situation of the banks. They are 3 or 4 feet under water. Your barn yard must be covered. ----- had upwards of a hundred barrels of rice, screened for market, and ready to ship---the water came a foot over every barrel in his Mill, and in addition to his standing crops, he sustained a considerable injury. Fortunately, his sloop was under the shelter of Nisbett’s Bluff and rode out the gale uninjured—she will be up tomorrow as the water is falling

rapidly. Mepkin Bridge is swept into Dr. Holme's Field, from his Sawmill Bank blowing up, and I am afraid Quenby Bridge is gone. I could not get to Longwood in any emergency. Every boat and flat and bridge carried away. The gentlemen will not be in before sunset---if they give any additional news, I will inform you. This goes by -----, who makes a desperate attempt to reach town.

“Western Branch Cooper River, Sept. 3, 1837.

“On Thursday, it commenced raining, continued all Friday, the greatest fall of water that I have ever witnessed. The whole plantation covered with the exception of a small part of the hill on which the negro houses stand---one continued sheet of water as far as the eye can reach. The water is now within six inches of the stable and partly in the yard---every thing completely covered, corn, rice, potatoes, &c.---three feet deep in barn yard---the shed at the landing one foot out of water, consequently the whole of my banks from five to six feet under. I look upon my loss as a total one. The only hope I now have is that my banks may stand the immense pressure and current now upon them.”

Cordesville, September 4th, 1837.

“We cannot ascertain the extent of injury as yet. Many River Banks are gone on the Western Branch. The water on our branch is falling but rising on the Western. I saw all the gentlemen last evening, they concur generally, that it is the greatest flood ever known to them. The loss on some Plantations will be complete. I could not get to St. Thomas under any emergency---Huger's Bridge 'gone---all boats and flats lost--- and Bonneau's Causeway under water. I wrote this on my hat---excuse haste and inaccuracies. By first opportunity I will give you a full account.”

Estate Sale, Thursday, the 7th of February 1850, All that Plantation ~

Or tract of Land, situate on the Western branch of Cooper River, known as Umbria, containing about 1298 acres, 91 acres of which is prime Tide Swamp, under bank, the balance consists of a fair portion of cleared Cotton, Provision, Wooded and Pine Land, including a healthy Summer Retreat, known as Cordesville, which for more than fifty years has been safely resorted to for health, during the summer, by the Planters on Cooper River. Ten settlements have already been there established, leaving abundant room for many more. If desired, the above property will be subdivided by cutting off, say 300 acres, comprising the village of Cordesville, thereby securing extent to ensure the health of said village, according to past experience. The above property may be treated for according to above proposed

sub-division, up to the 1st of February, after which time will only be sold as an entire tract.

Hyde Park Will be Sold ~ the 14th February (1854) next, All that Plantation known by the name Hyde Park, situate in St. John's Berkeley, on the Eastern branch of Cooper River, containing 115 acres of Tide Swamp and 420 acres of high Land, bounding north and west on Kensington Plantation, east on the east branch of Cooper River, and south on Lands now or late of Nicholas Harleston, Esq., known as Boss or Bossis.

Also, an acre lot, with the Dwelling and Buildings thereon, in the village of Cordesville, in said Parish; Also, the Tract of Pine Land appendant to Hyde Park, known as the Oblong Square, in the same Parish, containing 465 acres, originally granted to Elias Ball for 500 acres on the 6th January 1714, bounding on Lands formerly of John Ball, but now of Dr. J.B. Irving; Lands formerly of the Estate of Elias Ball, but now of Wm. J. Ball, and Lands formerly of F. Huger, as per plat of Jos. Purcell, from a survey in May 1796.

House in Cordesville, Will be Sold ~

At 11 o'clock, near the Exchange, on Tuesday, 25th Nov 1851. All that large and commodious HOUSE, with all necessary outbuildings, owned by Dr. C.G. White, in the village of Cordesville, on the lot belonging to Dr. Henry Holmes. It may be treated for at private sale. Terms – one-third, cash; balance in bonds at 12 months, bearing interest from date of sale; purchaser to pay for papers.

DIED, in Cordesville, St. John's Berkeley, after a brief illness, Mr. John Ball ~

Obituary. Friday, July 23, 1852. Died, in Cordesville, St. John's Berkeley, after a brief illness, Mr. John Ball (1825-1852), in the 27th year of his age. Men may be known in the relations of life, public and private; and their absence is deplored with different degrees of intensity as they are more or less distinguished in each. In the latter was placed the theatre of action of our friend—the social ties and his own inclinations binding him so strong as to keep him without the turmoil of the former. He kept bright the fires on the domestic hearth, to which his presence became absolutely essential. Possessing qualities peculiarly fitted for promoting the comfort and gratification of others, none had more closely interwoven his own in the happiness of those within the immediate circle of his acquaintance, including friend and relative. Warmth of affection, considerateness and kindness of disposition, and the possession of an equable and amiable temper were the chief features of his character. Fond of books and reading, he encouraged education and mental

improvement and had himself an ability sufficient to confer easy mastery over any task attempted. But the qualities which resided in him in still more marked degree, and which make the citizen so valuable, were an integrity of a lustra ever bright and polished, and an ardent love of State, constituting such fine elements in the character of the Carolina Planter. Though quiet and unassuming there yet lurked beneath his humility a heart ready to suggest, and a will to execute, the duties demanded of him, at the price of any sacrifice and by any self-denial. None too, whilst he sought out distress, it took more pains to conceal the hand which supported or the means which yielded succor. In his death we deplore a friend: his immediate relatives a kind, affectionate, and generous companion; his State a citizen worthy of it. Though his end was untimely, and the summons short, they found him with armor on, secure and tranquil in death by faith in that Redeemer whom in life he had not disowned.

Cooper River Land to Rent – Richmond Plantation, January 1867 ~

Richmond Plantation, located on the Eastern Branch of the Cooper River, was the residence of Dr. Benjamin Huger, always known as one of the most productive plantations on the river, will be rented for one year. On it are all necessary buildings and a fine steam thresher. (Dr. Huger was a prominent and successful rice planter and was widely known as a practitioner of great skill and culture.)

Fire in Cordesville, 02 November 1868 ~

During the last cool snap, a house in Cordesville, occupied by Mr. Edward Harleston, accidentally took fire and was entirely consumed. The fire was communicated to the chimney jam, and the smell of smoke awoke the family, but a careful search failed to discover the cause. A few hours later, they were again awakened by the fire, which had gained such headway that they were barely able to escape, losing everything. After the alarm was given, the neighbors and the Negroes on the premises endeavored to quell the flames, but to no avail, and the house burned to the ground.

A Gentleman of the Old School. The Death of Mr. Peter Gourdin, of Berkeley, at his Home in Cordesville, October 16, 1893 ~

Mr. Peter Gourdin, in his 80th year, an honored representative of a distinguished Huguenot name in South Carolina, and a brother of the venerable Robert N. Gourdin, of the city, died on the 16th instant, at Cordesville, St. John's Berkeley, on Monday morning.

Mr. Gourdin was educated at the celebrated school at Pendleton, the nursery of so many men prominent in the social and political life of ante-bellum times, and

at the South Carolina College. Neither politics nor the counting house offered any attractors to one of his gentle, unassuming character, and the “sweet tranquility, the unapproachable serenity” of the planter’s life under the old regime was his, and was enjoyed by him and his friends for many years at the historic ‘Mepkin’ plantation, on Cooper River, for many years.

With literary tastes which had been gratified by extensive reading, a lovable disposition which made a friend of every man he met, and the stainless character which made his and his brothers’ name the synonym of all that was pure and of good report, he lived and died without an enemy in the world.

Mr. Gourdin leaves two sons, William Moultrie Gourdin, of the Charleston Bar, and James M. Gourdin, now of Texas. His funeral services will be held at St. Michael’s Church this morning at 10 o’clock.

Capable of Heroic Action . . . A well-merited tribute to my brother’s character, and I will add, though “gentle and unassuming” in his relations with the life around him, he was capable of heroic action when emergency called for it. His saving Mrs. Carson and her son from drowning in the Cooper River illustrated his decision in danger and his intrepidity in action. Col. William A. Carson and my brother were neighbors, planting on the western bank of the Cooper River. Col. and Mrs. Carson, their little son, Willie, and Peter had dined with Mr. Taveau on the eastern bank of the river. Col. Carson preceded the party home in the evening, leaving his wife and son to follow under Peter’s care.

Arriving at Strawberry Ferry, to which you descended by a rather steep road, my brother left the carriage and was following it down to the lip by which it was to enter the flat to take them across the river, when the horses became unmanageable and dashed down the road with the carriage into the river. The ride was running out and the horses plunging into the river in the direction of the current, their struggling contributed to increasing the velocity with which it was carrying away the carriage with its imperiled inmates from the only point from which rescue would come. My brother took in the situation on the instant, dashed after the carriage, plunged into the river as he was, calling the ferryman to follow him with the flat, swam after the carriage, reached it, took Willie through the window, swam back with him to meet the flat, and with the flat reached the carriage just in time to save Mrs. Carson from being drowned, the carriage having filled with water and being about to sink. The coachman and footman were saved, but the horses drowned.

My brother, Peter, was laid by the side of his wife, who died in 1881, in Magnolia Cemetery. He married in April, 1861, Miss Constantia Harleston Moultrie, daughter of William Lennox Moultrie, of "The Bluff," St. John's Parish, Berkeley, Cooper River, by whom he had three sons, Henry, William Lennox Moultrie, and James Moultrie. Henry died in 1881, in his twentieth year, William Moultrie married Mrs. Annie Baskerville Sturdivant, daughter of Dr. George Baskerville Douglas, of Sylvania, Georgia, and is a lawyer at the Charleston Bar. James has moved to Sherman, Texas, where he practices law.

Thus, I am the sole survivor of my generation. *Robert N. Gourdin*, Charleston, 16th November 1893.

A Hospital in Cordesville?

Section 1. Be resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of South Carolina, now met and sitting in General Assembly, and by the authority of the same, That the County Commissioners of the several counties in the State be, and they are hereby, authorized, whenever, in their judgement, it is necessary, to appoint one or more physicians, whose duty it shall be to furnish medical aid to the indigent sick in their respective counties; and whenever accounts are rendered for the performance of such duty, the County Commissioners are hereby instructed to examine said accounts, and if found correct, to audit the same, and give a warrant on the County Treasurer for their payment.

Section 2. That the County Commissioners of the respective counties of this State be, and they are hereby, authorized and required to provide suitable hospital accommodations in connection with the Poor House at or near the county seats of their respective counties, where the indigent sick poor may receive medical and surgical aid, free of charge, and to appoint physicians thereto, except the county of Charleston, where the County Commissioners are hereby authorized and required to cause to be built at or near Cordesville, Parish of St. John's Berkeley, a hospital for the indigent sick poor, and appoint a physician thereto, to be paid as herein provided: Provided, The cost of the said building shall not exceed two thousand (2,000) dollars; Provided, further, That no physician, so appointed to any of the hospitals, shall charge for his services more than one-half the usual fees.

Approved March 1, 1870.

(Was it ever built? If so, where?)

State Missions, Wayside Notes ~ (taken from the Baptist Courier, February 14, in 1884)

By referring to the map of the State prepared by the Department of Agriculture, one will find in the northeast part of Berkeley County, Hell Hole Swamp, and just to the west of it, Little Hell Hole Swamp. I could not ascertain the origin of this dreadful nomenclature. The objective point of my visit was between the two, and my zeal for etymological research was not strong enough for me to adventure any further research into the intricacies of the aforesaid Swamp. The fact is that there are places that it is easier to get into than to get out of. I had already appraised my brother, Cuttino, that I did not intend to visit that locality unless he should go along. I meant to go with somebody who had been there and come back again.

We rested on Monday, and the next day started for Hell Hole, making the journey by easy stages. One thing that struck me was the number of stores. In going seven miles, I think we saw seven stores, without counting those at the railroad depot. I concluded that there must be a good deal of money in that section in order to enable so many merchants to pay taxes.

After crossing the railroad, we passed old Monck's Corner, of revolutionary fame, where I saw some of the most beautiful live oaks I have ever seen, with their long festoons of hanging moss. The railroad station has taken the name and the business of Monck's Corner, leaving only a little shop of a store and a couple of unpretending residences.

Crossing the old Santee Canal, which the Northeastern Railroad has rendered useless, our way led by old Biggin Church, a relic of colonial times. The church was built of bricks brought from England, and its massive walls are witnesses of the honesty of the builder. The roof has fallen in, and the graveyard grown up in woods. I learned that a large legacy was left years ago for the use of the church here, but that the income is not used to maintain worship at another place.

A few years ago, the Baptists proposed to buy or lease for a term of years the house, that they might repair it and use it for public worship. But it seems that a graveyard serves the Episcopalians as good a turn as it sometimes does the Baptists as an excuse for not doing what they don't wish to do. They could not think of disposing of the graveyard. The sight of the premises shows very clearly their great concern for their graveyard. It would have been more creditable to them if they had refused on the grounds that they were unwilling that the property should go into the hands of Baptists, whom they regarded as holding and teaching error, and then used

some of the income of the property left to the church there for keeping the graveyard in repair.

We crossed on a bridge one of the streams that form Cooper River, at the head of navigation. Here was a store into which the tide often rises. Soon after crossing the stream, we left the public road and the Swamp and took a by-way. We passed through Cordesville, a settlement in the pines. It is a village of some twenty or more residences built about in the woods without any regularity, only that every house faces the South. These houses are occupied in summer by rice planters. Some of them own the land, and others pay annual ground rent.

The rice plantations on the Cooper River are not very far from here, and a few of the planters live altogether in the pine woods and go to the plantations every day. At this season of the year, they prepare their embankments and water ways. A number of Irishmen come down every winter and work on these and then return North to the brick-yards in the summer. They get good wages from the rice planters, who say they can do a great deal more work in a day than the freedmen.

Leaving Cordesville, we travelled over three miles through pine barrens, without sight of a clearing. We spent the night with a good sister, a widow with six children with her, whose nearest neighbor lives two miles distant. The nearest school is three and a half miles off. She remarked that her children did not know how to play with other children. There is a small field around the house, which alone breaks the monotony of the pine forest, of which the land, if cleared, would not be fit for cultivation. End

A Gala Night at Cordesville, A Recherche Gathering and the Historic Characters they Discussed---Middleburg Coffee in Prospectus, Sept. 1896 ~

Cordesville, Berkeley County, Special: Seldom in the history of this classic village has the refinement and grace of our English and Huguenot ancestors shown so elegantly as when the immediate descendants of the Prioleaus, Guerins, Mottes, Palmers, Whites, Stephens, Heywards, Ravenels, Lucases, Cains, Gaillards, Ferguesens, Porchers, Harlestons, Humes, Mazycks, Hugers, Barkers, and others recently assembled at Mrs. A.W. Baker's. Animated by "the tide swing of historic consciousness" and the strains of faultless music, the prevailing sentiment was "no sleep 'till morn."

One dignified but bewitching matron, "mellow and mature, but still untouched by time," was heard recounting the deeds of the intrepid Conde, who, although his leg was fractured, charged his enemies, crying "for my country and for Christ," and

thus met the death of a hero; and how St. Cry in his silver plated armor, at four score and five years, almost alone, retarded the advance of Henry III and died covered with glory. How the venerable La Vergne fought amidst twenty-five of his grandchildren and fell among sixteen, “all in one heap.” How Coligni, with his jaw broken, was forced from the bloody field.

Under the direction of their charming hostess, these very lovely young ladies and gay cavaliers enjoyed themselves intensely, and will, it is said, reassemble soon again, perhaps at Middleburgh, where they will enjoy delightful coffee, now the chief crop of this time-honored plantation.

Tobacco in Berkeley – Wednesday, Nov. 11, 1885 ~

In a letter to the News and Courier, Mr. Elias Ball, of Cordesville, Berkeley County, gives some interesting information on the subject of the cultivation of tobacco, and, among other things, says, “I have seen it grown here in this little village this season. The plants grew nicely and matured early, and to all appearances, seemed as though they would turn out a good grade of tobacco.”

Cordesville’s Charms – A Pineland Village and its Historic Surroundings ~

Its birds, its people and their Summer Homes far from the madding crowd--- Old Plantations and Churches on the Eastern Branch of the Cooper River---Some Facts about the Early French and English Settlers which will be new to many of their descendants.

The habitual readers of the news of the Great State and of the valuable and equally interesting matters which appear under similar patriotic headlines in the News and Courier must have been often impressed with the fragrant and unjust discrimination against this quiet and peaceful village of the pines, for which no adequate excuse has ever been offered. “No correspondent” would perhaps be the unsatisfactory reply, and there is good reason for an occasional French phrase, provided it contain no accent to suppress.

I am not going to rave over the “ancestral pines,” or the “partridge piping in the corn,” although pines are practically the only trees in evidence and the Bob Whites are whistling their mellow calls within a stone’s throw of the piazza; they have been known to perch on the rail. But the pines are not ancestral and are fast becoming lumber anyway; and then I don’t want to be taken for “one of them city fellows,” for if there should happen to be an “ancestral” left, I am sure he would nod his leafy head to me in pleasant recognition and set his rusty old leaves to whispering senile maunderings about the squirrels that use to scuttle up his scaly trunk and bark

gleefully at the harmless poppings of that old single-barrel, or about the old buck who always sneaked past that stand just before I got to it on the first sweet-mouthed “open” of the hounds trailing at the other end of the run.

And the Bob Whites, their notes always very sweet and cheery, but they always set my thoughts to a reversed motor that carries them back from staunch old Daisy and the 12-bore Parker, over Die and Reb, over Stonewall and Belle, far back to the muzzle-loader and lame old Garnet, who always went home in disgust if the proportion of dead birds to shots in the first covey failed to reach his standard of sport.

I know that I am wandering like Jim Blaine in his famous ram story, but everybody wanders in Cordesville except the gentlemen who breakfast at six, drive ten miles to the river plantations, ride over rice fields all day and drive back at night to a 9 o'clock supper, a pipe, and bed. Their wanderings are confirmed to dreamland.

Where Cotton is Not King ~

And this naturally suggests crops. Well, the report about them, as usual at this time of year, is “a fair and average prospect if we don't have a storm.” Of course, crops means rice, for this is not the realm of King Cotton. In fact, there is not a man in this neighborhood who thinks enough about cotton in disparagement of wool to “walk two miles to kick a sheep.” Indeed, sheep are sufficiently in evidence to make spring lamb a familiar delicacy through a very extended spring, and many pounds of wool go yearly to Leaksville for a change and come back blankets “and such.” This, too, be it remembered, when every man keeps a dog or two, and if he does not, is apt to entertain several of those of his neighbors with hurtling missiles that come easiest to band at odd hours of the day or night.

Cordesville, however, is sadly changed and changing. Old family names and residences are passing with the pines. Many houses connected with historic names have gone, with only a few blackened bricks to mark their sites. Others, like those of many surrounding plantations, are still standing, though few are “holding their own.” “A stranger fills the Stuart's throne” – and finds it a much narrower and harder seat than did its former occupants. But, although old times have changed, old manners have not gone, and Cordesville still maintains its well-deserved fame for genial hospitality and refined literary culture.

Pineland Bird Lore ~

But Cordesville has many charming inhabitants who do not live in cottages. First, visitors from city surroundings are apt to wonder how there can be so much

country and so few birds. But a little observation, if he knows anything about bird life, will convince him that he has been deceived by the conspicuous and delightful absence of the only two ornithological specimens with which he is familiar: that ruffianly little vagrant, the English sparrow, and that disgustingly useful scavenger, the Charleston eagle. The latter is almost altogether replaced in the country by his big brown cousin, the “king buzzard,” or red-headed turkey vulture, who always sails about majestically high up in the air and never comes near enough to be offensive. The former has never put in an appearance principally because the lazy little rowdy would have to work for his living, but possibly, also, because of the blue uniform and club-like beak of that bird land policeman, the blue-jay, and that truculent and blood-loving brigand, the logger-head shrike or butcher bird. Somehow, I can’t be too hard on this fellow, because he always reminds me of the Confederate surgeon, wearing the familiar old grey coat, with black trimmings and the black kept, while every little bird and old grasshopper knows that he never moves without his surgical instruments, and keeps them sharp and ready.

And yet there are plenty of birds for those who have eyes to see. The blue-jay and the loggerhead are always watching the scuppernong vine, but so are the mockingbird and the red-headed woodpecker, who annually bet each other on getting the first ripe grape. Whichever takes the first trick, they sit on the vine together and take their wine after the old Noachian method, squeezing the fresh fruit, and finding it good. That big black and white fellow with the dirty red cap, who swoops like a flying squirrel from one pine to another, is the “Old Kate,” or pileated woodpecker of the books. The flicker, or golden-winged woodpecker, the red-breasted, or “dominicker” ditto, with their pretty little relatives, the hairy and downy sapsuckers, eat very few grapes, but you seldom hear them tapping now, because all the insects are on the outside of the bark. The flicker spends so much of his time on the ground and dresses so nearly like the meadow lark (starling) that scientists think he is evolving out of the woodpecker family, but then who knows that he is not a disinherited lark that is trying to be a woodpecker for spite? But there is not time for so much attention to attractive individuals. The red bird, brown thrush, the yell-billed cuckoo, or rain crow, the Carolina wren, the black-headed nuthatch, the wood pewee, the blue-gray flycatcher and the crow are all in the village now, either visiting friends or just back from their summer outings.

Cordesville occupies historic ground and within easy reach in various directions lie many spots of deep interests to the student of Colonial South Carolina and its first struggling bloody years as a sovereign State.

Monck's Corner, the capital of Berkeley County, seven miles from Cordesville, is not the old historic Corner which lies several miles nearer, close by the ruins of Biggin Church and Milton (now Mitten), where Thomas Monck lived when he married Governor Broughton's daughter, in January 1731. When the eighteenth century opened, the wealthier Huguenots (the Le Nobles, St. Juliens, Ravenels, Mazycks, Porchers and others), owned most of the country from Wadboo, near the sources of the Cooper, and its contiguous country was held by English settlers, chiefly the Balls, the Harlestons, the Broughtons, the Johnsons and later the Moultries and the Reads, while the Hugers, the DuPres, the Simons, the de Longuemares, and St. Juliens carried the Huguenot line from the source of the Cooper to the mouth of the Wando.

What Fort Was This?

Recently, there was discovered near old Monck's Corner the remains of a brick fort not yet explored. But whether an early defense against the Indians or a relic of the darker days of Tarleton's bloody troops has not yet been decided. Southward, we reach by a nine-mile drive, old Coming-Tee plantation, the country home of Capt. John Coming and Affra Harleston, his wife (and a sister of John Harleston), a substantial brick house, unknown as to who or when it was built – whether Capt. John or Elias (Red Cap) Ball. It's still being occupied by descendants, the property having never been out of the (Ball) family, and the relics of those earlier days of the province are / were rich and many in its rooms. Comingtee marks the union of the eastern and western branches of the Cooper, and the former promises the earlier and deeper historic interest.

(Note: Tradition has it that the bricks for this structure were brought from England, and it is thought that the brick house was built by Elias Ball, while the Commings dwelt in a wooden cottage which stood on the neighboring slope, opposite the large sycamores in the avenue, and which was standing as late as the year 1865.)

Exciting News for the Lowcountry Girl Scouts, January 5, 1963 ~

The Council of the Carolina Lowcountry Girl Scouts has acquired a riverfront plantation near Cordesville in Berkeley County.

Cookie sale profits, raised over a period of eleven years will help pay for the 152.4 acres on the Cooper River. Formerly known as Richmond Plantation, the property offers a spacious brick English manor house, a gate house, guest house, log cabin, cottages, infirmary, stables, riding paddock, boat house, and dock.

The contract was signed yesterday, transferring the title from West Virginia Pulp and Paper Co. to the Carolina Lowcountry Council. The sale price was not disclosed.

Year-round use will be made of the grounds and the twelve buildings for troop camping, training and meetings. All buildings are ready for immediate occupancy.

One of the most important ways in which the plantation will be used is as an established camp for the Girl Scouts. Girls from Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Clarendon, Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown, and Orangeburg counties are expected to attend camp there this summer.

If the council can sell other of its properties it hopes to be able to build a swimming pool before the summer camp season begins.

The West Virginia Company has made a gift to the Girl Scouts of as much equipment as necessary for upkeep of the area. Among the equipment given are a farm truck, a pickup truck, sprayers, all mowers currently being used for maintenance, a 14-foot boat, and a set of hand tools.

Girl Scout cookie sales through the years have not only made the purchase of the plantation possible, but will continue to retire the debt incurred through the aid of a loan from a local financial institution. No public fund drive will take place in order to meet payment, council officials say.

The annual Girl Scout Cookie Sale will be held Feb. 21 to March 9. For the first time, advance orders will be taken. More about this story is sure to come.

Near CordesVille ~

A bill was submitted in February of 1873 to authorize and require the County Commissioners of Charleston County (before it was changed back to Berkeley) to erect a *poorhouse* near CordesVille, in the Parish of St. John's Berkeley. The bill failed . . . so the *poorhouse* didn't get built.

Various Stories Told ~

There are various stories concerning the feud between the rival sides of moonshiners involving shootings. The operation of moonshine stills figures into too many accounts that could be told to even get started. Mind you, we're now talking the late 1920's and 1930's. It's also said that the basis of much of the bad feeling exists due to the successful raids of state and federal agents in the Hell Hole Swamp area (actually, throughout much of Berkeley County). One such raid reports federal

agents stating one of their most successful days of the year was seizing ten large stills, two motor cars, a Chevrolet and truck, and destroying approximately 10,000 gallons of beer and 1,600 gallons of corn whiskey.

Okay, I promised I wouldn't get off my Cordesville history subject . . . some would say that IS part of Cordesville history . . . OK, another day.

References/resources from collections & newspapers from library of Keith Gourdin

2025

