

Communications from Capt. John Palmer ~

John Palmer was born in 1750, the eldest son of “Turpentine John” Pamor, that I told you about recently. He married Mary Anne Cahusac (pronounced ku-zak) from St. James Santee Parish, and they had five children. John Palmer was my 4th Great-Grandfather, on my grandmother’s side of the family. I also told you he was recognized as the “Patriarch of the Village” of Pineville.

The following data is taken from an old journal that Capt. John Palmer wrote about St. Stephen’s Parish, pertaining to the area and life’s inherited characteristics during the early 1800’s:

St. Stephens District, situate about fifty miles to the northwest of Charleston, is bounded by the river Santee on the north, and on its other sides by St. Johns and St. James Santee (Parishes). It was originally a part of St. James Santee, and was divided from it about the year 1740 (actually, 1754). The upper and lower part of the parish was distinguished by the names of French and English Santee. What is now St. Stephens was called English Santee. What is at present St. James, was formerly called French Santee, from the circumstance that the first settlers were French refugees who had fled from persecution after the revocation of the edict of Nantz. Among them was Phillip Gendron, who left one son, John Gendron, born in Carolina, who commanded a company of the Charlestown militia. This was the only military force ordered from the capital against the Indians in the Yamassee war of 1715. He was sent to the Indian land, now Prince Williams, and was in all the severe actions fought against the Indians, until a peace took place. At the time of his death, which was about the year 1754, he was the eldest Colonel of militia in the then province, and was generally called Brigadier Gendron. (*Note: Phillip Gendron was my 7th Great-Grandfather, John, my 6th Gr-Grandfather.*)

Indians – Their Antiquities and Wars – Persons now living, remember that there were about thirty Indians, a remnant of the Peedee and Cape Fair tribes, that lived in the parishes of St. Stephens and St. Johns. King Johnny was their chief. There was another man among them of the same tribe, who was called Prince. Governor Lyttleton gave him a commission of Captain general and Commander-in-Chief of the two tribes, which superseded Johnny. The latter took umbrage at the promotion of the former and attempted to kill him. There were some shots exchanged but no mischief done. The neighbors interfered and made peace; but there never was, afterwards, any cordial friendship between them. All this remnant of these ancient tribes are now extinct, except one woman of a half-breed. There are several traces

of Indian mounds in the neighborhood of Pine Ville. Some have been opened, and fragments of bone and beads found in them.

In the Indian war of 1715, St. Johns and St. Stephens parishes were the frontiers of the province. In or near them were three forts, the first on Cooper River, about three or four miles below Monck's Corner, on the plantation of Mr. Thomas Broughton, called Mulberry. One was on Mr. Daniel Ravenel's plantation, called Wantoot. Another on a plantation of Mr. Izard's, called Schinskins, on the Santee River. The garrison at Schinskins were all massacred in consequence of their own imprudence in permitting a number of Indians to enter the fort under the cloak of peace and friendship. They concealed their tomahawks with their blankets. When they got in, they butchered the whole of the garrison except one negro, who jumped over the fort. He ran to the garrison at Wantoot and gave the alarm. Col. Hyrne, who was in that fort, advanced with a party – surprised the same body of Indians at Schinskins fort and killed the whole of them. They were unguarded and engaged in feasting. In this situation, they were surprised and cut to pieces. Colonel Hyrne, who commanded on this occasion, was the grandfather of the late Major Hyrne. (*Note: "Schenckingh's" is the more accepted correct spelling.*)

A similar act of perfidy (untrustworthiness) on the part of the Indians was committed about the same time, a little above the Eutaw's, at a place called Barker's Savannah. The commanding officer, Colonel Barker, from whose defeat the scene of action acquired its name, was drawn into an ambushade by the treachery of an Indian named Wateree Jack, who, pretending friendship, allured the white people into a snare. In this action, David Palmer was killed; and Edward Thomas,* the great grandfather of the two present Dr. Thomas's, was wounded. The cruelties and perfidies of the Indians excited resentments in the minds of the settlers, which led to deeds unworthy of a civilized people.

A man of the name of Donovan lived in the upper part of St. Johns, who stood his ground all the time of this Indian war. He had a strong log house, and a number of large mastiff dogs that kept the Indians off, and occasionally killed them. Donovan kept his dogs at home in the day, and turned them out at night. When they killed an Indian, he gave them no provisions. They soon acquired a habit of feeding on the flesh of Indians, when dead, and of attacking them when alive.

**This gentleman, after living about fifty years in St. Stephens parish, for fifteen years of which period he never passed the limits of his plantation, went to England and*

died there since the Revolution, at the advanced age of ninety. He communicated the above particulars to Captain Palmer.

Agriculture – Freshets – The inhabitants of St. Stephens began to cultivate indigo about the year 1754; and cultivated it with success, particularly in Santee River swamp, until the year 1784. In the beginning of the latter year, St. Stephens was one of the most thriving parishes in the State, and in point of size, was the richest. The parish then had about five thousand negroes in it, but at present does not contain half that number. The white population has also diminished in a similar proportion. In 1776, '77, '78 the militia company mustered one hundred men under arms; but there are not now about forty, exclusive of alarm men. There are at present many waste old fields both on the high-lands along the edge of the river swamp and in the swamp, which thirty years ago were in the highest state of cultivation, and produced luxuriant crops of corn, indigo, and rice. This melancholy reverse is the effect of freshets. These lands are uncommonly fertile and were successfully cultivated till the year 1784. From that year till 1796, very little was made near the Santee. Many of the planters, discouraged by a rapid succession of freshets, abandoned the plantations subject to their baneful influence. Since the year 1796, these freshets have diminished in frequency and height; and the planters have successfully recommenced the culture of corn and rice and engaged in that of cotton. The ground is found to answer for the latter, and extraordinary crops have been lately made.

To account for the uncommon frequency of freshets through a period of twelve years is very difficult. No record of anything similar since the year 1701 has reached us. In that year, we are informed by John Lawson that a flood came down the river Santee, which raised it thirty-six feet. That none of equal magnitude has occurred in the eighty-three years which followed, is probable from the silence of records and tradition. Within that period the upper country had been settled and its lands cleared. From its being more generally cultivated, some inferred that the falling rain met with fewer obstructions in passing off from the high land to the nearest rivers; and that these, with their enlarged streams uniting in the Santee, precipitated over its banks a much larger body of water than it ever could have received from above while the upper country was covered with leaves, logs, trees, brush, and other impediments to the free passage of rain and melted snow. This doubtless may have had some influence, but is not equal to the effect, for in that case the progressive clearing of the upper country would have produced a correspondent and accumulating increase of water in the rivers below, and a greater frequency of freshets, which is the reverse of facts, especially since the year 1796. Others suppose that the freshets are the

consequences of extreme wet or warm seasons in the upper country, which, from the increase of rain and of melted snow, pour down torrents of the subjacent plains. The alternation of a service of wet and dry years is not without precedent. The cause is not precisely known, but the melancholy effects are obvious.

Religion – Literature – Pineville – St. Stephens has a large brick church built in 1769 and a wooden chapel. There is no clergyman at present, but the teacher of the Pineville academy performs divine service every Sunday. There have been four clergymen in the parish since the peace of 1783. First, the Rev. Mr. Joh Hurt – the second the Rev. Mr. Farrel – the third, the Rev. Mr. O’Farrel – the fourth, the Rev. Mr. Conner. The first was from Virginia, and the other three from Ireland. Pineville in St. Stephens is a retreat for health in the summer and autumn. It began to be settled in 1794 and is about fifty-two miles to the northwest of Charlestown. It is situated on a level piece of pine land about five miles to the south of the Santee, and two miles from the swamp, which is three miles deep to the river. Pineville contains twenty-two dwelling houses with an academy for teaching the Latin and English languages. The master has a salary of twelve hundred dollars per annum, and a house found. The school is confined to thirty scholars, rates of schooling \$50 per annum for subscribers’ children, and \$60 for non-subscribers; to be paid half yearly in advance. The Pineville Academy is incorporated and under the superintendence of five trustees. The tutor is permitted to take boarders, not to exceed sixteen, but is restrained from demanding more than \$100 per annum for boarding. There are also two private schools in the same place for the tuition of the smaller class of children. The white population of Pineville is 150; the greater part of them under the age of sixteen. The number of blacks is about 300. The water is all from wells from fourteen to eighteen feet deep. It is very excellent, cold, and soft, being filtered through white gravel sand.

There is a quarry of stone on a piece of high land about a mile from Pineville. It is a hard brown stone, very heavy, and has the appearance of iron ore. Colonel Senf used some of the same kind of stone, procured near this quarry, for part of the locks of the Santee Canal. Nothing like it has yet been found in the lowcountry of Carolina.

Amusements – Health – Dances commence in September, and there are generally from two to three in a week in the season of residence in Pineville. They are given by the inhabitants nearly in rotation, with little ceremony and expense, but with great decorum and propriety; and never continue later than eleven o’clock.

Pineville has been generally healthy. There are in it but few cases of fevers, and these are chiefly in the month of July. Seldom any regular intermittents originate there. Those who expose themselves to visiting their plantations occasionally suffer in consequence of their imprudence. There was a fever in the summer of 1803, which proved fatal to six negroes in Pineville, and eleven on the adjoining plantation; but scarcely affected white people. The symptoms of this fever were a violent headache and pain in the back – the pulse was low. The tongue was of a brown or deep red color, and when put out trembled much. A great weakness and delirium generally attended. The most successful mode of treatment was to give in the first instance one or two emetics and afterwards camphor, nitre (variant of niter) and small snake-root. When the patient was very low, wine freely given seemed to be of the greatest service. Bark was injurious. Few old negroes took the disease.

Longevity and Fecundity – Two of the natives and resident inhabitants are between sixty and seventy. Of the ninety years which Edward Thomas lived, more than one-half were spent in St. Stephens. The district is not remarkable for the longevity of its inhabitants, but there have been of late a few prolific marriages. Five, six, seven and eight children have been raised in some families within the last thirty years.

Manure – Fish – Stock – Wild Beasts – Trees – Manufactures – The planters begin to be careful of their manure and to be sensible of the utility of improving their lands. The best and the most durable manure is derived from herding cattle in pens. This increases the fertility of the land fourfold. Cotton seed is also much used. A pint of it put around or in a corn hole adds greatly to the crop. Santee river is well stored with fish, particularly the trout and the bream. There are also cat-fish, mud-fish, rock-fish and sturgeon. The inland creeks and ponds produce trout, perch, and bream. The stocks of cattle belonging to individuals rarely exceed 150. They decrease in cold winters, but increase in such as are mild. Few own more than fifty head of sheep. These are often destroyed by wolves. Hogs are also often killed by bears. The swamps of Santee afford favorable retreats to these and other wild beasts. There are, on an average, from 100 to 150 pine trees on an acre of ground. Their ages vary, but in general, they live about 200 years. If we may judge by their surrounding rings, a few approach their 400th year. Domestic manufactures begin to increase. Some of the planters clothe their negroes with homespun, and also manufacture coarse cloth from inferior cotton for the development of that commodity.

Storms – The parish of St. Stephens, in proportion to its distance from the sea, has its full share of the calamities resulting from the hurricane of 1804. From minor storms it has frequently suffered. One of the most remarkable and injurious was on the 6th of June, 1801. A cloud appeared to the northwest with thunder. Shortly after a storm came up with great violence, but without rain. The cloud had a redness like fire, and the dry dust thrown up was dreadful. The wind prostrated the fences. The growing cotton was materially injured. Its color was changed to brown. The tops were withered and blackened. In St. Matthews, the storm was equally violent and blasted the corn and peas. The peach and plumb leaves had an adjust black appearance. The weeds and grass were also very much injured. During the storm the wind appeared to have a heat like the blast of fire at a distance. The mercury from being up at 96 degrees at one o'clock, fell in less than five hours to 76.

Eminent Men – Colonel Maham, a native of St. Stephens parish descended from Swiss ancestors who had settled there early in the 18th century, made a distinguished figure in the Revolutionary War. He was possessed of considerable natural talents as a military man. At the taking of Fort Watson, on Scott's Lake, General Marion gave him the sole direction in carrying on the approaches and erection of a battery for over-shooting the British fort. At the taking of the fort a Motte's above Belleville, General Marion gave him the sole direction in carrying on the approaches. Both these enterprises were crowned with complete success. Major Pinckney, who examined the works after the surrender of the fort, declared that they had been erected with as much correctness as if they had been planned by the most experienced engineer. The British thought so well of him that they made him an offer of a regiment if he would join them. Colonel Maham also behaved very gallantly in sundry skirmishes, and particularly at Watboo (Wadboo) and Quinby bridges.

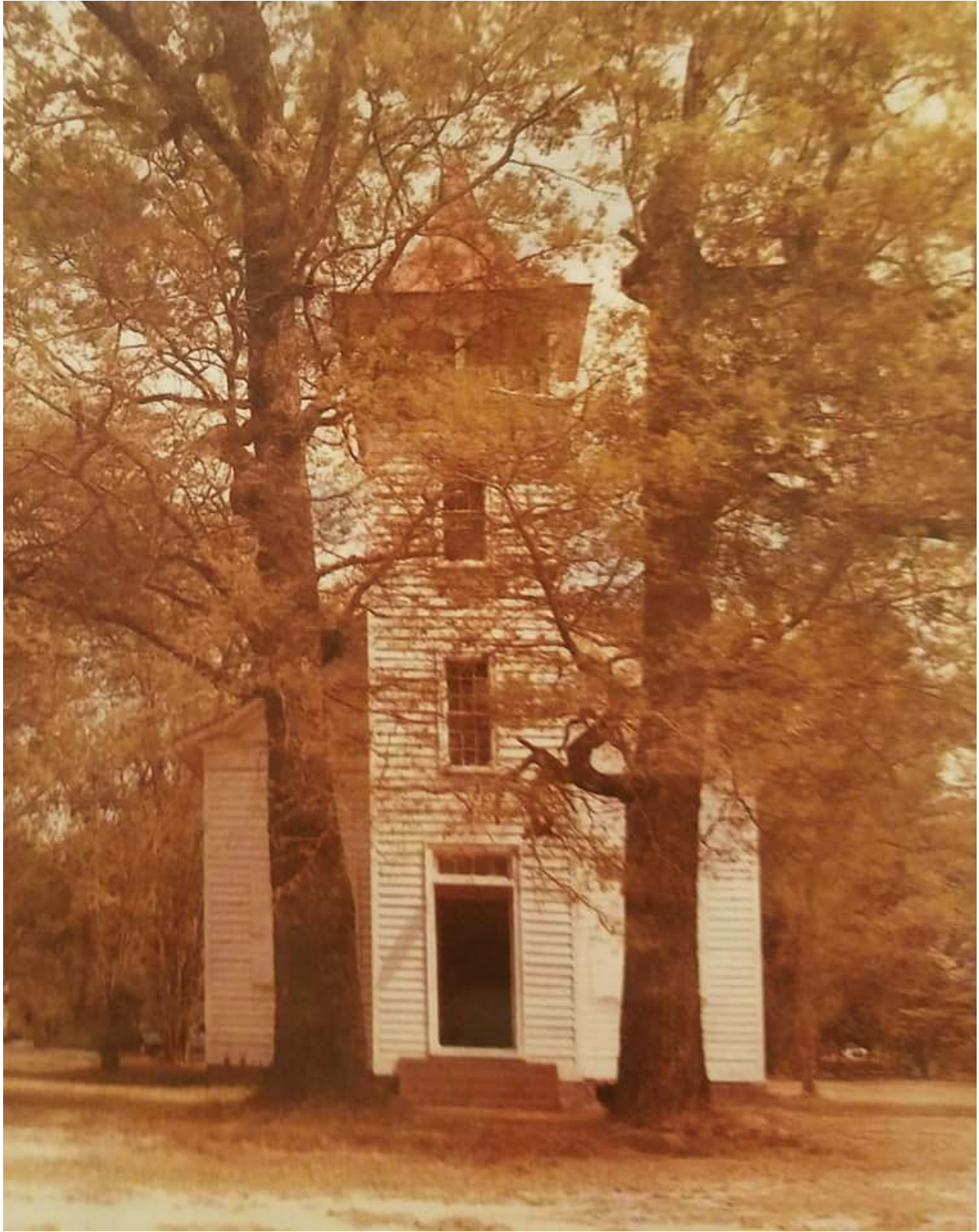
St. Stephens has given birth to John Gaillard, Senator, and Rober Marion, Representative of Charlestown district in the Congress of the United States, and also to Theodore Gaillard, late Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State, and at present one of the Judges of the Court of Equity.

Sufferings From The Revolutionary War – St. Stephens was not the scene of any important action. John Palmer, Sen., and Joseph Palmer, the first sixty-six and the last fifty years old, were taken prisoners in May 1781, out of the house of the former by a party of Tories – carried to the British post at Biggin Church, and both confined for three days in the family vault of the Colleton's. The reason assigned by the

captors was that John Palmer, Sen., had two sons performing military duty with General Marion.

by Keith Gourdin

Note: This journal, written by Capt. John Palmer, is copied here with only minimal editing to create easier reading.



PINEVILLE CHAPEL 1968

Courtesy Keith Gourdin