

Cooper River Plantations and Their Ghosts ~

We'll start this with a bit of history on names and places. John Ashby, and his son, were issued several grants, more especially a 2,000-acre grant at Yadhaw, 9 September 1696. The Indian name of Yadhaw was not retained, nor can the exact lines of this 2,000-acre tract be ascertained. It didn't bound directly on the Cooper River, but somewhat inland about where the plantation known as "Walnut Grove" was situated. There were two adjacent grants that were situated on the river and the creek, later known as Quenby, and these two together formed a plantation of 740-acres on which Ashby conferred the name of "Quenby" after the ancestral home in England. This name has been retained, though corrupted with "Quinby," and other spellings. In the deed from Thomas Shubrick to Roger Pinckney in 1792, it is spelled "Queenbie," and in other deeds it is spelled "Queen Bee". Dr. Irving, in his *Day on Cooper River*, gives an odd way in which it happened to be called "Queen Bee," through the same ludicrous distortion by which it has been stated that the name "Pee Dee" was taken from the initials P. D. carved by an early explorer on a tree on the river bank, or by which the Indian name "Accabee" near Charleston has been traced to the letters A. K. B. on some mythical map.

From the above history on Quinby, I digress thusly: Like so many of these old plantations, Quinby has its own particular "ghost" or "sperrit." Kensington has its "Keeson Pa'at Sumptin"; Limerick has its "Weeges ghost-foot;" Middleburg, "Old Fanny with her light;" Camp Vere on the "Old Creaking Coach;" Brabant its "Crying child in the Wagon-wheel." There are several "ghosts" or "sperrits" who inhabit the roads and the woods at Quinby. First, there are two men who appear at the foot of the hill just above the bridge, where the old nut-tree used to stand. This is the same spot where the two brave comrades and soldiers, Buckley and Newman of Revolutionary fame, fell. Here they stand, it is said, and with hands clasped together, seem to guard the road.

British Trooper's Ghost ~ But more thrilling than this is the famous "British Trooper," who frequents this road. On some dark night, if you should happen that way, you will hear his horse's hoofs as he gallops along. Not long ago, one evening at dusk, it is told, he came dashing up the hill from the bridge, the hoofs of his steed were thundering along the road, the animal was panting and snorting as though some enemy was in hot pursuit. Just as he came into view and reigned in his horse, both rider and steed vanished from sight.

Then, there are the “Jingoes Horses,” who live in the swamp near the wood spring, or “Miss’ Spring,” as it was called. How these horses appear, or what they look like, can never be explained, but beware of being caught by them after dark in these woods.

Most folks will say they don’t believe in ghosts, but even so, some will acknowledge their existence. One doesn’t have to believe in the devil in order to give him his due.

In the Lowcountry, drive down any road, and if you know what to look for, you’ll see evidence that ghosts operate freely in the area (for instance, Pinopolis). And some of you may know, ghosts are supposed to be ‘deathly’ afraid of the color purple. (Oh!, you didn’t know that?) Therefore, houses trimmed in purple are ghost-free. I’m told a lot of purple paint has been sold in years past in the Lowcountry (especially).

Researching this ghost issue further, I’m told Lowcountry ghosts are genteel, cultured, and well-read. (That doesn’t really surprise me.) They have an aesthetic sense that runs to old houses, palm trees, horse-drawn buggies, philosophical inquiry, and the distinct, but fast disappearing, way of talking. Many local natives have ghost stories they are not reluctant to tell.

The original writer of some of this, Robert Hawkins, an older editor of the Post and Courier, had this to say, “Ghosts remain in the Lowcountry because there are many tastefully little inns and restaurants and, of course, plenty of she-crab soup, although many are howling (mad) because of the gravy-like swill made with pollock masquerading in some places as she-crab. It’s an abomination and ought to be banned, or at least represented in the menu as sawmill gravy containing hunks of cold-water fish.”

Ghosts that run out from behind tombstones or trees, shrieking like banshees, or that show up in the starlight, blood oozing from slit throats or bullet wounds are more the kind you find, say, up in the mountains, where they used to fight duels at the drop of an insult . . . but not here in the Lowcountry.

Each county has a favorite ghost that serves as a kind of out-of-this-world mascot. In Berkeley, it’s the little girl who was chained by the cruel schoolmaster to a tombstone for punishment.

Some Lowcountry ghosts seem to be fulfilling a noble calling, as if they were separated from life before they finished their work. Actually, they may be many.

I've read quite a bit about the *Gray Man* who always comes to the beach on Pawleys Island before a hurricane (you've probably heard of him too). If you by chance see him there, or anywhere along the beach shore nearby, I'd recommend you head for a safe place. He walks the beach until someone spies him, then he's gone! (I'm told) A hurricane strikes shortly after the *Gray Man* puts in an appearance.

Beware! I've recently heard talk on TV of a very strong hurricane out in the Atlantic.

Edited by Keith Gourdin; articles from the Charleston News and Courier, Sunday, April 07, 1929, and Thursday, August 06, 1992; Historic Ramblin's in Berkeley, by J. Russell Cross; Rivers and Regions of Early South Carolina, by Henry A.M. Smith.



Quenby Plantation – Circa 1921 Photo Courtesy Harriette Kershaw Leiding