

The McCants Family of Berkeley County, SC

Joseph Edgar McCants, Author

The Reverend Andrew Cant is the earliest Cant on which we have significant information. He was grandson of Robert Douglas, Earl of Buchan. Though a staunch Covenanter Presbyterian, he was a zealous Royalist, preaching before Charles I in Edinburgh, and stoutly advocating the restoration of the monarchy in the time of the Commonwealth. In 1640, he was chaplain to the Scottish army and then settled as minister at Aberdeen.

Andrew Cant (c.1590 to 1663) was an ecclesiastical leader and preacher, called by Principal Ballie “ane super-excellent preacher,” comes into notice in 1620 or 1623. Some of the people of Edinburgh desired to have him for their minister, but as he was known to be obnoxious to the king, he did not on either occasion obtain the appointment. In 1633, he became minister of Pitsligo in Aberdeenshire, and unlike most of the ministers in that quarter, was a strong champion of the covenants and opponent of the episcopizing (Church of England) endeavours of the king.” (Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Volume 08, edited by William Garden Blaikie, exported from wikisource.)

Andrew Cant was educated at King's College, Aberdeen, and he and his wife, Margaret Irvine, are buried at the Kirk (church) of St. Nicholas in Aberdeen.

David Cant, son of Andrew, and his wife, left Scotland for County Down, Ireland, where the “Mc” was probably added. Later, David and sons, James (age 19) and William, immigrated to the Americas, landing near Charleston. (No wife is mentioned as immigrating with him and it is thought probable that David’s first wife died in Ireland. He married Elizabeth after coming to the Americas.) They settled in the Williamsburg area of the Carolina colony near Indian Town between 1720 and 1730. David became a planter and a tanner. His land was located on Black Mingo Creek, of Williamsburg Township, in Craven County. This area was inhabited by other families of Scottish descent. Other than James and William, additional children mentioned were David McCants Jr., John, Samuel, Joseph, and Thomas.

James McCants, son of David, immigrated with his father and brother and was around 19 years of age when he settled with his family in Craven County, now Williamsburg. James was also a planter. There were three marriages recorded for James: (1) Agnes McNeely in 1740, (2) Martha Jean Scott Jackson in 1761, and (3)

Agnes Donald in 1770. Martha Jean Scott Jackson was the mother of Nathaniel, and Agnes McNeely was the mother of Thomas.

James served as Justice of the Peace for Craven County in 1768. James' children were: sons, Thomas, William, James, Nathaniel, David, and Alexander, and daughters Jean, wife of James Lindsay and Mary Elizabeth, wife of Robert Winter. James was of the Presbyterian faith, as were his ancestors in Scotland. He died in 1772 (as recorded in Williamsburg township Will Book 1771-1774, page 133).

William McCants, James' son, married Hannah Andres Murphy and settled in the St. Bartholomew district near Parker's Ferry (Jacksonboro area). One of his descendants settled in Mt. Pleasant, where the name became prominent.

Brother Nathaniel McCants (1747 to June 1816) moved to Charleston district about 1770, and years later he purchased "Bannister Down Plantation", in St. Johns' Parish, Berkeley County, consisting of 1500-acres, in the year 1813. Later, he bought North Somerset and Woodboo Plantations. Bannister Down was located near Cross near Mt. Olivet Church. The other two plantations are now completely covered by Lake Moultrie. Records show that in 1801, he erected a building for the *St. Johns Hunting Club* near the Santee Canal and Black Oak Church, for the sum of twenty-five pounds.

Nathaniel was a patriot, fighting for independence. He held the rank of lieutenant and was at the siege of Charleston. In 1788, Nathaniel McCants was one of seven representatives from St. James Goose Creek area to a special South Carolina Convention to vote on ratification of the 1787 Federal Constitution.

He and his wife, Elizabeth, had five children: David, Jean, John James, Elizabeth, and James Scott. In his will he names his children and leaves all of them land and personal items. While he did own slaves, he requested that two slave children be educated and freed upon reaching the age of twenty-one.

John James McCants (1784 to August 15, 1819) was the elder son of Nathaniel and inherited much of the Berkeley County land. John was a planter and lived on Bannister Down Plantation. He married Mary Eleanor Owen and they had six children: John James II (b.1807), Martha (b.1808), David Whitfield (b.1812), Thomas W. (b.1814), Robert (b.1816), and Jane E. (b.Oct 1, 1819)

John James McCants II (Feb 22, 1807 to May 12, 1887) is thought to have inherited land from his father, but no will has been located. In any case, it was during his lifetime that much of the family property was sold. He married Martha Cannon in August 1823. Martha was born May 9, 1805, and died Nov. 25, 1882. John James II and Martha are buried at Wassamassaw Baptist Church Cemetery. They had one son, John McCants (no middle name).

On September 9, 1835, a meeting was held at Cypress Campground to discuss how to counteract the effect of “Northern Fanatics” who were against slavery. John James II was one of several men appointed to a “Committee of Vigilance” to form a plan of action.

John McCants (May 1, 1831 to April 7, 1908) was married twice. First, to Pauline Cummins, born in 1833 and died prior to 1863. They had one son Nathaniel Evans McCants. His second marriage was to Mary Shuler Owens (September 9, 1843 to September 23, 1921). They had one son, Josiah Owens McCants.

John enlisted in the confederate military in 1861 at Camp Gist near Wassamassaw. He served until the end of the war, rising in rank to Brevet Lieutenant. His unit was 2nd SC Calvary Company D and known as the Wassamassaw Calvary, commanded by Captain McKewn. The unit saw action in Northern Virginia and was involved in several of the major battles. While his unit was under the command of General Butler at the beginning of the war, his unit was assigned to General Wade Hampton by the war’s end.

A family story holds that as the war ended, Mary Shuler, John’s wife, was living in the family home with stepson Nathaniel (ten years old) and an infant child Josiah Owens. John had yet to return from the war. Northern troops were moving through the area burning and stealing anything of value. When the troops rode up to her home, Mary Shuler took refuge in an upstairs bedroom. She sat in a rocker holding her infant with Nathaniel by her side and a shotgun in her lap. The Northern troops entered the home prying open all locked draws and cabinets, taking all they could find, but they chose to leave Mary Shuler alone and not burn the home. The family still has, and cherishes, Mary Shuler’s chest, that the troops pried open with their swords, breaking the locks. After the war, John McCants became the telegraph operator and station master for the Coastline Railroad depot in Oakley.

John's son, Nathaniel Evans McCants (Sept. 26, 1853 to Dec. 24, 1924), married Arabella C. (Nov. 11, 1860 to Jun. 15, 1888) on Nov. 15, 1877, and they had five children: John Thomas (b.1878), Eva Pauline (b.1880), Ella Hess (b.1882), Mary Shuler (b.1884), and Jessie Prioleau (b.1887).

Nathaniel's second marriage was to Aurelia Jane Russell (Dec. 18, 1864 to Jan. 22, 1936), and their two children were Louise Jane (1893-1947) and Jennie Lee (b.1901). This family made their home in the McBeth community.

John's son with Mary Shuler Owens, Josiah Owens McCants (Nov. 21, 1864 to March 10, 1952), grew up in Oakley, SC and helped his father operate the Oakley Train Depot. He married Annie Davis Hare on April 26, 1893. Annie was the daughter of Adam Davis Hare, a large landowner and planter living in Pinopolis on a 2500-acre plantation known as "My Pineland Place". After their marriage, Josiah took over the farming operation due to the age and health of his father-in-law, Adam Davis Hare. Josiah and Annie had eight children: Annie Lucille (b.1894), Irene Spires (b.1896), Wilma (b.1898), Josiah, Jr. (b.1901), Margaret May (b.1902), Clyde Hare (b.1903), Arthur Wilbert (b.1906), and Gladys Iola (b.1910).

Josiah was primarily a planter and railroad depot agent but was also elected as Berkeley County Coroner in 1895. He was also a county game warden and kept court records for the county. He was known to be the only man to remain in Moncks Corner at night, during a malaria siege, to keep the telegraph in operation.

Josiah's wife, Annie, graduated from Limestone College and was asked, in 1913, to become the first public school teacher in Moncks Corner. She began teaching in a one room building near California Branch in Moncks Corner. Her first class consisted of thirteen pupils. Among her first class were: Jenny and Lucille Gibson, Jasper Murray, Ophelia Jolly, Ivey Jones, her son Arthur McCants, Inez and Mildred Droze, Lucille Dennis, and Annie Bell Kirk. The classroom was heated with a pot belly stove that soon split when an eager student lit it without first putting sand in the bottom. Annie went on to teach many of her grandchildren, and many local citizens recall her as a wonderful teacher, and also for her stern discipline.

Arthur Wilbert McCants (Feb 26, 1906 to April 06, 1989) was the youngest of John's sons, and the only son to remain a Berkeley County resident. His oldest brother died while a student at Clemson, and his next older brother became a doctor, settling in Winston Salem, N.C. Arthur grew up during hard times. Much of the

family land had been lost due to the boll weevil and bad economic times. The family struggled to pay property taxes and provide for other family needs. Arthur turning eighteen, enrolled at Clemson College. He was later employed at the Berhman General Store, which was located near the railroad tracks in Moncks Corner. He worked there from 1924 to 1928, when he opened his own grocery and general merchandise store on Main Street. He operated this business until 1965 when he retired. In addition to the store, Arthur farmed and was an investor in other businesses in the area.

Arthur's first marriage was to Lucile Speer on June 4, 1929. They had two children: Henrietta Lucile (b.1932) and Arthur, Jr. (b.1935). Lucile married William F. Watson and lives in Columbia SC, and Arthur, Jr. retired as an Air Force Lt. Col and died in 1997. Lucile died in 1942.

Arthur, Sr. married secondly, Imel Joyce West on September 9, 1945. She was the daughter of Rev. William Edgar West and Lou Imel Joyce. They had two sons: Joseph Edgar (b.1946) and Clyde Hare (b.1952, d.2018). Arthur made his home at Pineland Place, the family home near Pinopolis, until his death in 1989. He was born and also died in the same home.

Joseph Edgar (Ed) McCants (b.8/12/46) and his wife, Annegell Burton McCants (b.8/8/1945), now live at Pineland Place with their daughter Sara and her husband, Jason Southard, and grandchildren Cameron and Laurel. Ed's grandchildren are the seventh generation to call Pineland Place home. Ed and Annegell have three daughters, Margaret (Meg) born in 1980, and Sara, and Christina (Chrissie) born in 1985.

Ed graduated from the University of Maryland and Central Michigan University, obtaining a BS and MS degree in business management. He joined the Army Security Agency in 1968 and was assigned to bases in Turkey until December 1971. Upon returning from service, Ed entered the insurance industry, where he spent thirty plus years. He also farmed for many years and enjoyed developing real estate. He and his wife now spend time at their lake home in Santee and traveling.