

The St. Stephen's Jockey Club and Pineville's Tournaments ~

The *Ravenel Records* provides an interesting recollection of the St. Stephen Club, and other "clubs". It states as follows:

"A very prominent feature of the social life of the planters was their Club meetings. Some of the liveliest anecdotes are told in connection with these club dinners, and it is said that tales of horses ridden into the club-house and made to leap over the dining-table are not imaginary. Nor is it fiction that on one occasion a horse was ridden up-stairs to the second story of a house, and special appliances had to be used in order to get him out through a window and over a shed."

The St. Stephen's Jockey Club was a purely social organization that met in October (initially) for the sole purpose of planning two days of horse races and dancing in Pineville. Henry William Ravenel was drafted as a member in 1834 and promptly elected a manager of the ball, which he continued for five or six years.

"The "Original Rules of the St. Stephen Club, dated November 1825" is no doubt a fair specimen of the rules of all such societies during that day in time:

1. This club shall be known by the title of the *St. Stephens Club*.
2. The meetings of the club shall be held at the Club House on the first Saturday in the months of November, December, January, February, March, April, May, and June.
3. Each member shall find a dinner in the order in which he shall become a member, consisting of a roasted Turkey, Two Ducks, Two Fowls or a dish equivalent to the two fowls, one-half of a shoat or sheep dressed according to the option of the finder, one ham or piece of salted beef, one peck of Rice, Two loaves of Bread, Mustard, Pepper, Salt and Vinegar, eight bottles of Madeira Wine, Two bottles of Brandy, one of Gin, one of Whiskey, Twenty-five Spanish and Twenty-five American Segars, Two dozen each Plates, Tumblers, Wine Glasses, knives and forks.
4. That dinner shall be on table at half past one o'clock.
5. That a majority of the members shall constitute a Quorum to transact all business before the club, except the Election of Members.
6. Any person desirous of becoming a member of this Club shall apply by letter, or be proposed by a member, and on the succeeding club day he shall be balloted for, and unless he shall have two-thirds of the votes of the whole club, he shall be declared not elected.
7. The member finding the dinner shall be President of the day, and the member next on the list shall be Vice-President.
8. That no sales or card-playing shall be permitted at the Club House on Club Days.

9. That a Secretary and Treasurer be appointed on each anniversary by the President of the Day, to perform all duties appertaining to that office.
10. Any member finding more or less than the above rules specified shall continue until he finds the proper quantity.
11. That none of the above rules shall be altered but on the Club Day in November in every year, which shall be considered as the anniversary.

Members:

William Cain	John Couturier	John S. Ravenel
Stephen G. Deveaux	Robert M. Palmer	Robert McKelvey
Edwin Gaillard	Samuel Porcher	Isaac Porcher
William DuBose	Isaac M. Dwight	Samuel Palmer
Philip S. Porcher	W. Washington Couturier	John G.K. Gourdin
Theodore L. Gourdin	Charles Stevens	Samuel DuBose”

Pineville Tournaments ~

The daughter of a prominent Philadelphia lawyer Thomas Wharton, Emily Wharton, 1842-1865, had married Charles Sinkler of St. John’s Berkeley Parish, and moved south to begin a new life. And a new life she did discover in this northern, present-day, Berkeley County.

Collected by her great-great-granddaughter, Anne Sinkler Whaley LeClercq, are many of Emily’s letters that ring with keen insights into Southern society, and offer a definitive account of a young woman transplanted to the South in 1842 through the Civil War. The book is titled *Between North and South, the Letters of Emily Wharton Sinkler, 1842-1865*.

Here’s a quip from a letter written to Emily’s father about a trip to Pineville’s famous tournaments:

“April 25, 1851

“Easter Sunday was the most splendid day I ever saw. Too cold for farmers with young crops just up, but not at all too much so for disinterested persons. We went to church having first made preparations to spend the night at Mrs. Converses, which is only a mile from the church, but eleven miles nearer to Eutaw. I do wish Mama could have seen the dressing of the church. It is a famous neighborhood for fine gardens and every person brought a large bouquet of roses and these were placed in vases, etc., so that the effect was beautiful. Then the Communion table, pulpit, etc. was dressed with a wreath going all around.

“We left the Ruins (the Ruins, in Stateburg, was owned by the Converses) on Monday morning and arrived at Eutaw in very good time the same day. We

found the house quite full of company who had come down from Columbia, en route for the Tournament. (*A lancing Tournament, joust, or tilt, evoked images of a chivalrous past when knights and ladies partook in this feudalistic custom. This interest in preserving a pageant from medieval times may show an interest in justifying slavery, emphasizing a feudal, even paternalistic society. The joust was a western European mock battle between two horsemen charging each other with leveled lances, each attempting to unhorse the other. Jousting was replaced by tilting, or riding at the rings, so that the horseman rode a full gallop and inserted his lance through small metal rings.*) The next day, after dinner, Anna and William, Charles and I with our respective children, set off, as Pineville is 18 miles from Eutaw, and the tilt was to begin at 10:30. We determined to go to a place three miles from the ground that evening, and take our time the next morning. Accordingly, we went to Bluford, the residence of Mr. William DuBose, who has been a widower for 25 years, and his large house is taking care of itself without a lady ever since. You never saw such an antiquated air as everything wore, old servants, old furniture, old everything! Mr. DuBose is but 62, or 3, perfectly awake to the present day and decidedly the most reading man of the neighborhood.

“Wednesday was as bright and beautiful a day as could be desired. Anna and I accompanied by Charles and the *beau-pere*, Lizzie, Wharton, and Henry repaired to the ground and took our places in the ladies stand. As we arrived early, we got excellent places and had time to inspect the premises before the show began. There were about two-hundred ladies present. Some were in carriages, but mostly in the stand and from various parts of the country from Charleston and Columbia. There were also strangers. The Judges stands were decorated with flags, etc., and directly in front of the ladies’ stand was the Ring suspended from something looking, it must be confessed, very much like a Gallows. At last along the winding road “The Knights” were seen at full speed approaching, the trumpets sounding and as they drew near the Band struck up Yankee Doodle, of all things for this anti-Yankee state. At last they came before the stage, 30 in all, lances glittering and flags flying and after some maneuvering the steeds were drawn up, lances lowered and the ladies saluted. Mr. Mazyck Porcher*, who is now quite well, was the King at Arms, very handsomely dressed in the Sir Walter Raleigh style. He directed the whole affair and deserves great credit. He had copies printed from all the old books that could be found, of the passages on Tilts, Tournaments, feats of arms, etc. He was attended by a Moor in full costume whose business it was to pick up the ring when it dropped, which he did with great solemnity. (*Mazyck Porcher lived at his plantation, Mexico. Anna Linton Sinkler tells this story of him: “Uncle Mazyck was quite a character; if he was dining with anyone and they had a dish he liked, he would calmly take it all. The Yankees

burned Mexico and made him walk from Mexico to Eutaw and told him they would hang him at daylight. He said, "You would not dare do it." Every year for the rest of his life, he came up to Eutaw on the anniversary and asked to be allowed to go in the wing room where he was a prisoner. We children were dying to know what he did in there.")

“William Sinkler was Herald; his dress was very handsome, blue velvet trimmed with silver, hat and plumes, gauntlets, etc, his horse was beautifully caparisoned. After the saluting was over the Tilting began. The object was to carry off the Ring on the lance, a very difficult matter, and each Knight came full speed pointing his lance directly at the Ring, many throwing it off on the ground and many failing entirely. At each attempt the trumpet would sound and the Herald and the Master of the Horse would announce the title of the Knight. When each of the 27 had a trial, they defiled past to the place of starting. There were six trials and when it was all concluded the Judges pronounced that the Knight of Carolina, a young man of the name of Morton Waring, had carried off the Ring the greatest number of times. He was therefore directed to choose a Queen which the poor youth did with much trepidation. He chose Miss Elizabeth Porcher. After this the judges selected the Knight whose costume was the handsomest and he who had ridden the most gracefully. Our friend Julius Porcher, “The Knight of Walworth” was selected for the former and Keating Palmer, “Knight of the Grove” for the latter. And then came the ceremony of crowning. The victorious Knight crowned the Queen with a wreath of white roses and she in return crowned him with a wreath of laurel. The other two Knights then kneeling received from the hands of their maids of honor, the one a scarf for the best costume, and the other a pair of spurs for the best riding.

“This over, the Herald in the name of the King of Arms, the Master of Horse and himself invited the Knights and the company to a collation, to which of course all repaired. It was by this time 3 o’clock and the collation being very much like a supper at a ball was very acceptable. In the evening there was a regular Ball given by the Knights to which Charles, Anna, and I did not go. When the collation was over, it was too late to go back to Eutaw, so Anna and I paid two visits and then went back to Bluford, where we passed the night and the next morning returned to Eutaw. Charles went to an old friends’ in the neighborhood and joined us the next morning.”

Keith Gourdin