

2024 Spring Meeting of the
The Edgefield County Historical Society
Celebrating Curryton Academy



Curryton's Female Academy, circa 1880.

3:00 P.M., Sunday, April 28, 2024

Curryton Academy Park

Annison Point Court

North Augusta, South Carolina

Edgefield County Historical Society

History and Mission

Founded in 1939, the Edgefield County Historical Society is one of the oldest historical societies in South Carolina. The Mission of the Society, as set forth in its original charter, is “to Preserve the History of Edgefield County.”

In this era when so little of our rich American heritage is being taught to our youth, when so many of our Founding Fathers and other historic leaders are being disparaged and demonized, when so many politicians and protesters are attempting to tear down the statues and monuments to our past and our past leaders, the mission of the Edgefield County Historical Society has never been more important. For our part, we are embarked in an effort to make certain that the total history of our people is told, particularly the history of those people and individuals who have sometimes been overlooked, but we are committed to the proposition that all of our forebears be interpreted fairly and within the context of their times. We urge all those who appreciate the sacrifices of our ancestors and who love our American heritage to join with us in supporting our mission.

During its more than eight decades, the Society has done much to accomplish its mission: It has published many scholarly pamphlets, booklets and books on a vast variety of subjects related to the history of Edgefield County. It has sponsored many major events, including tours of historical homes and history conferences. It has promoted the preservation and restoration of historic structures and sites. It has welcomed all those who are interested in Edgefield history and provided information and guidance to authors, scholars and countless others about the county and its people.

For more than twenty-five years, the Society has sponsored the Edgefield History Class which meets every Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. It also owns and operates three museums: the Joanne T. Rainsford Discovery Center, the Magnolia Dale House Museum, and the Horn’s Creek Church Museum. The Society also produces live theatrical performances in its William Miller Bouknight Theatre which is located in the Discovery Center.

The Society has always been and continues to be committed to using Edgefield’s history to make the County more interesting and attractive to tourists and prospective residents and businesses. Its goal is to enhance the future of Edgefield County by bringing recognition and economic vitality to the region.

For more information and for membership information and applications, visit our website: www.historicedgefield.com.

The Society is indebted to the following persons and entities for their assistance in completing this project: Ralph Robinson, Blue Sky Properties and Dave and Stuart Thompson, Delta Apparel, Inc., the South Carolina Conservation Bank, Tom Poland, Harry Miller, Ricky Miller, Jim Miller, Martin-Marietta Corporation, Don Ferguson, and Jackie Bass.

Spring Meeting

Program

Welcome	Mrs. Beth S. Francis, Society President
Invocation	Dr. Paul Noe, Pastor Sweetwater Baptist Church
Pledge of Allegiance	Mr. Odus Francis North Augusta American Legion
“America, the Beautiful”	Rev. Mark Abbott, Minister of Music Sweetwater Baptist Church
State of the Society	Mrs. Francis
Introduction of Speakers	Mr. Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr. Society Historian
The Story of Curryton	Hon. Greg Anderson Former Superintendent of Education and current Probate Judge of Edgefield County
The Meriwether Family	Robert Meriwether, Esq. Ggg nephew of Robert Meriwether, Founder and First Chair of Curryton Academy Board
The Curryton Magnolia	Mr. Tom Poland, Author, Columnist, and longtime Editor of SC Wildlife Magazine
Acknowledgements	Mrs. Francis
Benediction	Dr. Noe

Adjourn for Reception under the magnificent Curryton Magnolia



Curryton Academy, circa 1880. This is believed to be the “Curryton Hotel,” built by Robert Meriwether, extending down the hill below the Male Academy. The Curryton magnolia is visible in the distance between the buildings.



The Magnificent Curryton Magnolia

The Story of Curryton Academy

By Greg W. Anderson and Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr.¹

The Beginnings

The Story of Curryton Academy goes back to the year 1853. At that time, the Reverend Samuel Pace Getzen (1806-1891) was returning to Edgefield from Anderson where he had taken his daughter Sarah to study at the Anderson Female Seminary.² Getzen had been so impressed with the school that he obtained a copy of the plan upon which the school was “gotten up and conducted.” He began to wonder why the people of Edgefield could not have a school of as high an order as any other district. He then decided in his own mind that they could.³ In his autobiographical “diary,”

¹ The authors want to acknowledge those whose interest in, and work on, the history of Curryton Academy in decades past have enabled them to prepare this Story of Curryton Academy. These persons include Mr. John P. Mealing (1873-1944), Mrs. Susan Brunson Hill (1869-1943), Dr. Henry Getzen Mealing (1898-1981), Claude M. Hill (1920-2001), and Frances C. Miller (1906-1997).

² The Anderson Female Seminary, originally known as the Johnson Female Academy, was founded in 1848 by a progressive group of citizens in the Town of Anderson who honored the Reverend William Bullein Johnson (1782-1862), a longtime leader of the Baptist church in South Carolina, by naming their school for him. Johnson was one of the founders of the South Carolina Baptist Convention in 1821 and became the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention when it was founded in 1845. He had come to Edgefield in 1830 to become pastor of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church and the principal of the Edgefield Female Academy. He served here until he moved to Anderson in 1854. As a longtime minister in the Edgefield Baptist Association, the Rev. Samuel P. Getzen would have known Rev. Johnson well and probably chose to take his daughter to Johnson’s school because of his high regard for Johnson’s integrity and ability.

³ It is interesting that Rev. Getzen arrived at this conclusion a year after a rather lengthy column in the *Edgefield Advertiser*, signed “Sweet Home,” urged the establishment of new and better schools in the District. “I therefore beseech the fathers of Edgefield to rise above such contemptible aspirations and to practice forbearance, conciliation and concession towards each other, not only in the establishment but also in the maintenance of schools. . . . Let each one co-operate cordially with his neighborhood and my word for it, that our District will soon be dotted with far-famed Academies.” *Edgefield Advertiser*,

Rev. Getzen tells his own story about how Curryton was founded.

In the year 53 as I was returning from Anderson Female Seminary having carried my daughter Sarah to that school and obtained the plan upon which the school was gotten up and conducted, I began to wonder why the people of Edgefield could not have a school of as high an order as any other district. I soon decided in my own mind that they could. All that was wanting was union and the general effort made the thing accomplished. Accordingly, after my return home, the first brother I mentioned it to was Joel Curry at Mt. Zion Church. I also said that near his house ought to be the place of location. His reply was if such a thing could take place, he would be almost willing to give the institute half his land. I mentioned it to others who said it ought to be done. Accordingly, at our fifth Sabbath Union meeting at Big Stephens Creek Church Friday before the fifth Lord's Day in May 1853, I suggested the thing to Brother R. Merrywether [*sic.*] and said if he should think it best and at a proper time to move that the meeting recommend it to establishing a permanent school within its bounds. After weighing the matter in his own mind, he resolved to move that the meeting recommend to the citizens of the fourth division of the Edgefield Baptist Association the propriety of establishing a permanent school within its bounds. The motion received the sanction of the meeting and of the citizens generally. They took a deep interest in the matter. Accordingly, the day before the next meeting of the body was selected for all who felt an interest in the matter to meet at Mt. Lebanon Church⁴ where a large number citizens met and agreed to make an effort to carry out the desired project. Another meeting was appointed and all invited to come and help by their

May 20, 1852.

⁴ Mt. Lebanon was an alternative name applied to Sweetwater Church.

councils and means. Accordingly, we met and there was a general interest taken. A plan was adopted and about \$2,500 in stock taken that day – binding themselves to pay 14% on the stock the first year to start and 7% ever after when the want of [the] institution required it. The school went into operation the first of February, 1854.⁵

The meeting spoken of by Rev. Getzen was described in some detail in a letter to the editor of the *Edgefield Advertiser* published on August 17, 1853 from a person who signed the letter as “CUR-RYTON.” That letter follows:

Mr. Editor:

Edgefield District, at least, seems to be waking up to the importance of having good schools. Our village academies, though in their infancy, are in a very flattering condition. Bethany is still flourishing, Mr. George Galphin, teacher. So is Woodville, W. N. Moorer in charge, which was established only last year; and other Schools are growing up among us.

But without being invidious, it may safely be said, that the first movement in the right direction to form a large, permanent and really good Academy in Edgefield is now being made by the neighborhood of Sweet-Water Church, where a Pick Nick was given on the 10th inst., to promote the establishment of the Academy. It was estimated that between twelve and fifteen hundred persons were present.

Capt. A. J. Hammond was the orator of the day and he discharged his duty ably. He did not flatter his audience or the District of Edgefield, in regard to the present state of education among us,

⁵ “The Diary [or, more accurately, Memoir] of Samuel Pace Getzen,” transcribed by W.L. Getzen, a great grandson in 1959. The original was in the possession of Miss Katherine G. Mealing in North Augusta in 1959. A copy of the transcribed copy is in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr.

or the facilities of our Schools for acquiring knowledge. He paid tribute to Abbeville for her zeal and progress in the cause of education. He complimented Anderson also, and closed by exhorting his hearers to come up and subscribe in a becoming manner to the School's fund. Mr. Hammond was followed by Joseph Abney, Esq. in an impromptu address, which did him great credit. He spoke for perhaps half an hour in a truly eloquent manner.

This meeting on the 10th inst. was an adjourned one to which the Committee appointed at a previous meeting made a Report as to the most eligible site for an Academy and the best method of raising funds for establishing it. The Report was read by the Chairman of the Committee, Capt. Robert Merriwether [*sic.*], who, as the writer understands, deserves much praise for the active part he has taken to secure the success of the undertaking. The plan of the Report is to select a locality as Mr. Joel Curry's land, near Sweet Water Church, and to raise a fund of \$50,000 by subscription in shares. But the Report suggests that as soon as \$25,000 shall be subscribed, that the company of stockholders organize themselves, by election of a President, four Directors, Secretary, and Treasurer, to manage the financial affairs of the concern. It is also recommended that the company proceed at once to erect buildings and make other arrangements for opening the School. As the Report was adopted and as over \$30,000 of stock have been taken, the stockholders will meet on Friday next at Sweet Water Church to elect officers and organize. The condition of each stockholder's bond is that he shall annually pay the interest or assessment [line illegible] the whole stock if so much be necessary.

Mr. Joel Curry has headed the subscription list with \$2,000 and he has also made a free gift of one hundred acres of land to the company as a site for the Academy. Col. Lanham, Captains Hammond

and Merriwether, as well as Messrs. Samuel Gardner, Thomas Reese, Rev. Samuel Getzen and several others whose names I have not learned but which should be published for their liberality, each subscribed \$1,000. Subscriptions of \$500, \$100, and of \$50, were freely taken on the 10th, and many here since have added. So that the enterprise may be regarded as beyond the possibility of failure now.

The place selected is an admirable location for a School. It is high, healthy and near the line that separates the oak and pine regions. It is on the Plank Road, leading from Cherokee Ponds to Anderson's Mill, and is therefore very accessible, besides being convenient to Hamburg and Augusta. Perennial springs and a beautiful stream of water are close at hand, and bathing, fishing and boat riding, which are useful and delightful to School children, can readily be had in the mill ponds and Stevens Creek, which are near enough to afford these luxuries, without being dangerous to health.

It seems to me that "Sweet Water Academy" is too long and awkward a phrase to designate the future educational village which is to equal, if not rival, Greenwood and Cokesbury. In addition to being a mouthful, it is common place, and as the view of the country will soon be changed about there, I propose a change of name of the Academy also, as is customary elsewhere, where an Educational, Manufacturing or any other kind of village is established. The new name should designate something pertaining to or characteristic of the place, and I propose Curryton as a deserved compliment to Mr. Joel Curry for his munificent donation of 100 acres of land and \$2,000 contribution to the School fund. The termination is a contraction of "Town," as is the case in Charleston. None of the usual suffixes, "Ville," "Burg," "Ford," "Land," "Wood," etc., will suit the two harsh letters "R" in Mr. C's name, as well as "Ton." I therefore

propose Curryton as being upon the whole, the most appropriate and euphonious name that we can give our new Town, and I believe all of the stockholders as well as the public generally will concur with me. . . .

Signed.
CURRYTON⁶

In the same issue of the *Advertiser* where CURRYTON's letter was published there was a editorial column, doubtless written by the remarkable *Edgefield Advertiser* editor, Arthur Simkins,⁷ praising the effort of the citizens of the Sweetwater area. That column was as follows:

Sweet Water Academy

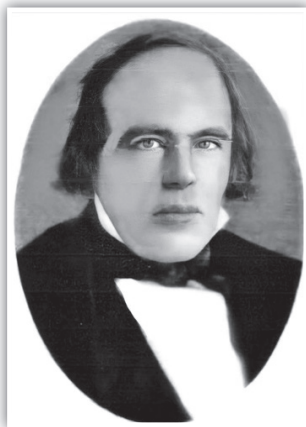
From a communication in our present number signed "Curryton," it will be seen that the citizens of our District, who live in the neighborhood of Sweet Water Springs, have recently held an enthusiastic meeting for the purpose of establishing a first class literary Institution in that locality. Nothing that has occurred in old Edgefield for a long time has filled our bosom with more heart-felt satisfaction than this event. We trust that undertaking will prove eminently prosperous; nor have we a doubt but that it will, knowing, as we do, the intelligence, high character and wealth of the many gentlemen who have its establishment and advancement at heart. Most cordially do we wish them a God speed in their enlightened and praise worthy effort. They are doing now the very thing, of all others, which our country's welfare most loud-

⁶ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 17, 1853.

⁷ Arthur Simkins (1819-1863), grandson of Edgefield founder Arthur Simkins (1742-1826) and son of Edgefield lawyer, South Carolina Lieutenant Governor and United States Congressman Eldred Simkins (1779-1831), is an often-overlooked Edgefield figure. He was brilliantly educated, naturally talented in music and the fine arts, and served for many years as the editor of the *Edgefield Advertiser*. He was also the state senator from Edgefield District at the time of his death. For a more complete biographical sketch of Simkins, see *Macedonia Baptist Church, the Edgefield Academy and the Paris and Andrew Simkins Families of Edgefield*, by Bettis C. Rainsford, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2021, pp. 55-72.

ly calls for. We wish the same good spirit would take hold of our fellow-citizens in other neighborhoods that we wot [*sic.*] of. Edgefield District, from her size, population, high tone and abundant agricultural resources, has long occupied a highly respectable rank among her sister Districts. If she could now become dotted over, as it were, with schools and academies based upon enlarged and improved principles, by means of which the advantages of superior mental and moral training could be placed within the reach of every farmer's son or daughter, there is no calculating how it would tell upon the elevation of her character. Will not others look to the example now set before them by our Sweet Water friends and prepare speedily to follow it? We hope and believe that they will.⁸

Building Curryton



Joel Curry (1808-1869)

Joel Curry was true to his pledge to provide the land for Curryton Academy. On the eighteenth of October, 1853, Joel Curry executed a deed to “Robert Meriweather [*sic.*], President and the Directors of the Currytown [*sic.*] Seminary” “one hundred acres of land situate and laying near the waters of Sweet water Creek in Edgefield District and State aforesaid, bounded on the north by a branch of the Edgefield and Hamburg Plank Road from Cherokee Ponds to the Martintown Road⁹ and on every other side by lands as owned by me.” The deed was witnessed by Thomas Kernighan and Robert McDonald and probated by W. J. Wrightman,

⁸ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 17, 1853.

⁹ This road was what is today known as Currytown Road. Apparently, the Hamburg and Edgefield Plank Road Company, which built a plank road from Hamburg to Edgefield via the Pine House, also built “feeder” plank road extensions to capture more of the cotton trade. This feeder road connected the Martintown Road to the main Plank Road at Cherokee Ponds, the area just east of Sweetwater Church.

Magistrate on October 24, 1853. The relinquishment of dower by Mrs. Curry was witnessed and proved by Wrightman on October 24, 1853 and the deed was recorded in the office of the Edgefield County Clerk of Court & Register of Menge Conveyances by Thomas G. Bacon, on December 1, 1853.¹⁰

As noted in the letter from CURRYTON which appeared in the *Edgefield Advertiser* in 1853:

The place elected is admirable for a school. It is high and healthy and near the line that separates the oak and pine regions. It is on the Plank Road leading from Cherokee Ponds to Anderson Mill.¹¹ Perennial springs and a beautiful stream of water near at hand and fishing and boating can be easily had in the mill pond and Stevens Creek.

That letter also proposed that the Academy be named Curryton as a compliment to Mr. Joel Curry for his gift of the land and \$2,000 toward the construction of the buildings. That proposal was universally embraced. Almost all of the principal families of the region,, including the Lanham, Hammond, Meriwether, Gardner, Reese, and Getzen families, subscribed to the school fund. Everyone in the community, it is said, gave something for the academy of learning. Fairly quickly, more than \$30,000 was subscribed to and the project moved forward.

In the October 19, 1853 edition of the *Advertiser*, the Trustees advertised for teachers, as follows:

¹⁰ Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book HHH at Page 227. Over the years, in a number of articles about Curryton, it has been misreported that Curry gave 1,000 acres of land for this school. The deed clearly shows that the gift was 100 acres – not 1,000.

¹¹ Anderson Mill was a mill on Stevens Creek just off of Martintown Road that is believed to have been built by Allen and George Anderson possibly even prior to the Revolution (See Chapman, p. 112). It is shown as “A. & G. Anderson Mill” on Thomas Anderson’s 1816 and Robert Mills’ 1825 maps and as “Shaw and Meriwether Mill” on Isaac Bowles 1871 map. The mill had been bought and restored by Robert Meriwether and Dr. H. A. Shaw circa 1850 (Chapman, p. 106).

Teachers Wanted

To take charge of an INSTITUTION OF LEARNING about to be established in Edgefield District, South Carolina, on Sweet Water Creek, and about eight miles from Hamburg.¹²

The School is located in one of the most healthy portions of Edgefield and in an enlightened, moral community.

Every facility, such as board and other comforts will be extended to the Pupils, and every means of support in abundance, will be afforded to the general advancement of the Institution.

The Seminary has already a permanent Capital Stock of Thirty Thousand Dollars, with a prospect of constant increase until its endowment shall equal that of any seminary in the State.

Whilst Teachers will be fully sustained in causing order, and in causing the best discipline, and the best system of learning to be observed in their School; they will be required to come qualified to teach the very highest branches that are taught in the State, and to come recommended by the very best and most reliable authority.

Two Teachers – one for Males, and the other for Females, are wanted; and they are expected to be ready to undertake their charge on the first Monday in February next.

Robt. Meriwether,
Geo. Boswell,
Saml. Getzen,
Joel Curry,
A. P. Butler,
Andrew J. Hammond, Trustees

¹² It is interesting to note that, during this period, Hamburg was the most important commercial center in the Edgefield District. All references to the location of Curryton begin by stating its distance from Hamburg – and no references are made to the distance from Edgefield Courthouse Village.

Early Administration and Faculty

In March of 1853, the Curryton Academy trustees placed an advertisement in the newspapers which provided information about the administration, faculty, course offerings and cost of the Academies. That advertisement was as follows:

Curryton Academies, **MALE AND FEMALE**

Rev. W. H. CHRISTY, Principal
Mr. PICKENS BUTLER, Mrs. CHRISTIE and
Miss SARAH GETZEN, Assistants.
Prof. F. SOFGE, Instructor in Music

THESE Institutions are now in successful operation. The exercises opened on the 1st February with the most flattering prospects. Over one hundred Pupils are now in attendance, and several others are expected to enter the present month. Parents and guardians desirous of educating their children or wards, would do well to consider the advantages afforded by these Institutions. In their location particular reference was had to health, and in this respect the situation is surpassed by none in the South.

The Academies comprise two large and commodious Buildings, furnished with special reference to the personal comfort and intellectual advancement of the Pupils.

With so experienced and highly recommended a corps of Teachers, with facilities for instruction, they have spared neither pains or expense in providing, the Trustees feel themselves warranted in assuring a thorough and finished education.

Expenses pr Session of Five Months

Primary Department, First Class.....	\$6.00
" " Second "	9.00
Second "	12.00
Third "	15.00
With Ancient Languages and higher Mathe- matics.....	18.00

Extra Branches.

French, Drawing and Painting, each,.....	\$10.00
Music.....	20.00
Board may be had at \$8.00 per month	

The Institutions are located directly on the Plank Road, eleven miles from Hamburg.

ROBT. MERRIWETHER,
Chair'n Board of Trustees

Mar 8¹³

Curryton Academies,
MALE AND FEMALE.

REV. W. H. CHRISTY, PRINCIPAL.
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With so experienced and highly recommended a corps of Teachers, with facilities for instruction, they have spared neither pains or expense in providing, the Trustees feel themselves warranted in assuring a thorough and finished education.

Expenses pr Session of Five Months
Primary Department, First Class.....\$6 00

The first principal of the school, the Rev. William H. Christy, was a Presbyterian minister, educator and professor of ancient languages and mathematics who had previously been at the Edgefield Collegiate Institute for Young Ladies in the Town of Edgefield.¹⁴ Rev. Christy had recommendations from Alabama where he had formerly taught, as well as from other places in South Carolina. He was assisted by his wife, Mrs. Christie, and by a Miss Helen Montgomery.¹⁵ Andrew Pickens "Pickens"

¹³ *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 22, 1854.
¹⁴ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 19, 1853. The Edgefield Female Institute in the Town of Edgefield was located on the hill behind the Edgefield Village Baptist Church and was a well-respected and popular school throughout the 1850s.
¹⁵ *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 1, 1936.

Butler (1826-1902)¹⁶ headed the Male Department with the assistance of Miss Sarah Getzen, daughter of Curryton Trustee Samuel P. Getzen.

By September of 1855, Mr. James L. Lesley of Abbeville took over the Male Department in which he was assisted by a Mr. Bass. Leslie was described as “a gentleman and a scholar, whose character as a teacher is too well known to need the brightening of commendation.” Butler was then transferred to the Female Department where he was described as “a gentleman of high character, of great literary attainments, and possesses in an eminent degree the extraordinary powers of imparting instruction to the mind and virtue to the heart.”¹⁷

In his new role in the Female Department, Butler had the assistance of Miss Ann E. Arthur (1828-1915), “a lady in every way capable and worthy to instruct the daughters of Old Edgefield in all the arts, sciences and accomplishments of their highest aspirations.” Prior to coming to Curryton, Miss Arthur had been the private tutor at the Tillman home some five miles north of Curryton where she taught Ben Tillman (1847-1918) to read. Tillman later described her as this “sweet, mild, gentle-faced woman.”¹⁸

Miss Arthur was born in Vermont and grew up in upstate New York. Her father, William Arthur, a “Free Will” Baptist minister, was an outspoken abolitionist. Miss Arthur, a graduate of Miss Emma Williard’s Seminary at Troy, New York, came to South Carolina in her early 20s, and taught here both before and after the War. One might wonder how, as the daughter of an outspoken abolitionist, she reacted to the system of slavery which she found here in 1850. Her older brother, Chester A. Arthur (1829-1886), also staunchly anti-slavery, became the 21st President of the United States in 1881.¹⁹

In February of 1858, James H. Morris was appointed principal of the female school. He had taught at Cross Hill, South

¹⁶ Butler was also a Founding Trustee of the Academy. See his biographical sketch in the Appendix.

¹⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 12, 1855.

¹⁸ Simkins, Francis Butler, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, Louisiana University Press (1944), p. 41.

¹⁹ *Wikipedia* article, “Chester A. Arthur,” as extracted April 18, 2024.

Carolina and came with high recommendations from the trustees of that school. At this time Pickens Butler was shifted to the male academy. Professor Barkley taught piano and French.²⁰ Curryton students in this antebellum period included Benjamin E. Nicholson (1841-1885), afterwards General in the state militia, and Mrs. Seth (Kate Devore) Butler (1849-1940), prominent society figure in Edgefield for many decades.

A letter which appeared in the May 25, 1854 edition of the *Advertiser*, penned by "A Dark Corner Farmer," provided a good overview of the faculty of the Academies which was selected:

Mr. Editor:

As a friend of education generally, and more particularly having at heart the advancement of School facilities in my own and neighboring communities, allow me an expression through your columns of the satisfaction that I enjoyed on two or three occasions recently, by attending the exercises of the pupils in the Curryton Academies.

These institutions, the plan of which was suggested to the intelligent and enterprising citizens of that community but a twelve month since, seemed only to require such to be executed. By the activity of directors and friends they have been placed even thus early upon a permanent basis. Under the control of Mr. Christy, a thorough and finished Scholar, and a gentleman qualified in every way for the position he has been called to occupy, the Institutions are flourishing almost without parallel. The success of the enterprise has already extended beyond the expectations of the most sanguine. The system introduced by Mr. Christy for the internal government and imparting of instruction, so far as I have observed, is particularly adapted to the propose ends, the thorough an systematic education of the young placed under his care.

²⁰ *Edgefield Advertiser*, February 10, 1858, November 6, 1856.

Mr. C. is assisted in the Female Department by his lady, for both of whom the pupils are all as one in expressing the warmest attachment. Mrs. C. is a lady, unusually intelligent and accomplished, to esteem whom needs but acquaintance with he qualities and merits.

In the Male Department the Assistant, Mr. Butler, is a gentleman eminently qualified as a Scholar and strict disciplinarian. And since his services have been secured, he has given the most unqualified satisfaction.

The Musical Department is under the care of Mr. Theodore Sofge, who is not only a brilliant performer, but possesses in a high degree, the faculty of imparting to his Scholars a knowledge of the theory and a correct execution.

The pupils in attendance number considerably over one hundred, some of whom are from Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and Florida. I learned that a number of applications have been refused from a want of convenient board. This difficulty is now obviated, and for the next Session and after, accommodation may be had quite convenient to the buildings.

A Dark Corner Farmer

The statement in the letter by the “Dark Corner Farmer” that “This difficulty [of the lack of boarding facilities] is now obviated, and for the next Session and after, accommodation may be had quite convenient to the buildings,” suggests that the Trustees and others were moving rapidly to build other boarding facilities. This was confirmed by an article in the *Valley Pioneer* in September of 1855 which stated that “A beautiful little villa is springing up at Curryton and several boarding houses of first class are now open there for the reception of young ladies and students.”²¹

The *Edgefield Advertiser* also noted the growth of the Curryton “village”:

A pleasant little village has sprung up around these academies, the inhabitants of which are deeply

²¹ Reprinted in the *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 12, 1855.

impressed with the importance of educating their children. Provided with beautiful and commodious edifices, possessing the advantages of a favorable location, remote from all causes of disease, and from the still more fatal influences of dissipation and vice, they are destined, if properly managed, to become an honor to their founders, an ornament to the district, and a nursery to foster and develop the intellectual and moral faculties of youth from the whole country.²²

These references to the “village” and to boarding houses are particularly interesting because we know that such boarding houses were being built by several people, including Robert Meriwether, Joel Curry, Susan Curry Roper, Cornelia Glover, and the Nixon family. Indeed, the building erected by Robert Meriwether was known as the “Curryton Hotel.”²³ We suspect that the buildings shown on the photograph which we have labeled “Curryton Academy from the rear was Meriwether’s Curryton Hotel. We have found no deeds on record to these individuals for properties at Curryton, and suspect that the Academy just permitted these individuals to build the needed boarding houses on designated lots within the 100-acre tract given by Joel Curry. Later these houses and the lots on which they were built were sold by those who built them, or by their creditors.

The War and Reconstruction

As could be expected, the War Between the States had a major impact on Curryton, and the Academy would never be quite the same as it had been during the seven years after its founding. At the end of 1860, and immediately after South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20th, Chairman of the Board Robert Meriwether and Trustee and teacher, A. P. Butler formed the Cherokee Ponds Guards and went directly to Charleston to assist the State in the reduction of Fort Sumter. Later, they and almost all other fighting-age men joined the Confederate army and were

²² *Edgefield Advertiser*, November 5, 1856.

²³ *Edgefield Advertiser*, “Years Gone By, Old Curryton High School,” undated clipping in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr. based upon facts supplied by Mr. John P. Mealing (1873-1944). This building is likely the one shown in the photograph as the rear view of Curryton Academy, circa 1880.

gone from the local scene for extensive periods. One third of all of the fighting age white men from Edgefield died during the War. We have little specific information about the plight of Curryton Academy during the War years, but undoubtedly the school suffered greatly and, in all probability, was closed from time to time.

At the end of the War, Edgefield County's and the South's economy was completely devastated. Of the trustees, both Robert Meriwether and Joel Curry appeared to have been completely bankrupt. Curry had moved to South Georgia to escape his troubles and Meriwether was making preparations to emigrate to Brazil. Two other trustees, A. P. Butler and Dr. H. A. Shaw, were also considering emigrating to Brazil.

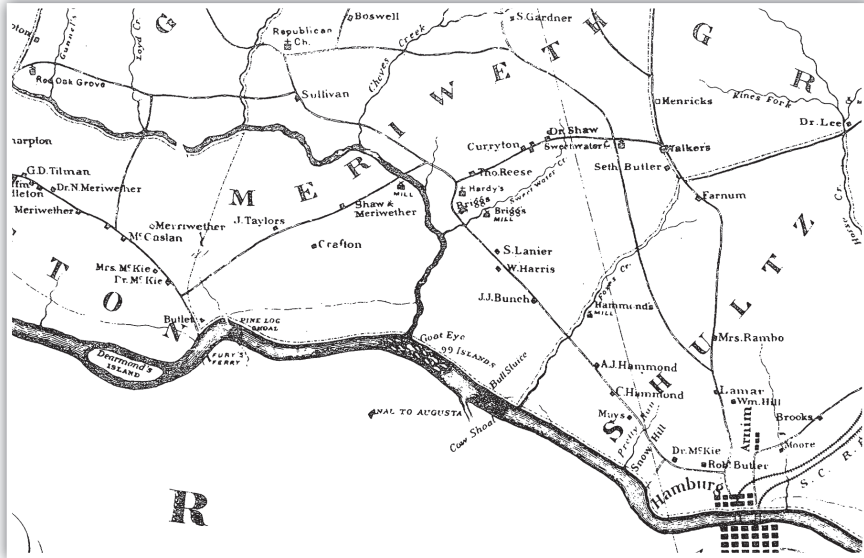
South Carolina and the South were then subjected to the extended period of Reconstruction in which every family and every institution had to fight to reorganize its economy and its society in order to survive. During this period, in early 1868, advertisements began to appear for the "Sweet Water Academy" in which Col. A. P. Butler and Dr. H. A. Shaw are listed as trustees and Mr. Geo. Galphin, the widely-respected educator who had taught Col. A. P. Butler, General M. C. Butler, General Mart Gary and Governor and United States Senator Ben Tillman, was listed as Principal.²⁴ Had foreclosure suits against Joel Curry and Robert Meriwether clouded the title to the Academy property making it necessary to find another location to carry on the education of the young people of the area?

In a "Report of Schools in South Carolina" in the records of the General Assembly of 1868, "Sweet Water School" is described as being "for white male and female pupils, supported by tuition fees. School house a frame building, in good condition, and owned by Trustees." Curryton Academy is shown as "School house a large frame building, rather out of repair, and not occupied at present; was once the seat of very flourishing male and female academies for white pupils, and is owned by Trustees."²⁵ Thus, Isaac Bowles' 1871 map of Edgefield District shows three buildings at Curryton plus Dr. Shaw's house across the Currytown Road, indicating that the buildings were still there.

Curryton Academy was revived and began operating again in 1873. In May of that year, we find the following notice in the

²⁴ *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 8 & 22, 1868.

²⁵ *The Carolina Herald and Newsletter*; Vol. 42, Winter, 2014, the Official Publication of the South Carolina Genealogical Society, pp. 142-143.



1871 Map of Edgefield District

Edgefield Advertiser:

School Notice!

The Trustees of the Curryton School, having secured the services of Prof. C. Dabney, would announce that the School will be opened on the 16th day of June 1873. They are satisfied that the best advantages will be enjoyed by those who patronize the School, and therefore invite the attention of parents and others interested in the education of boys and girls.

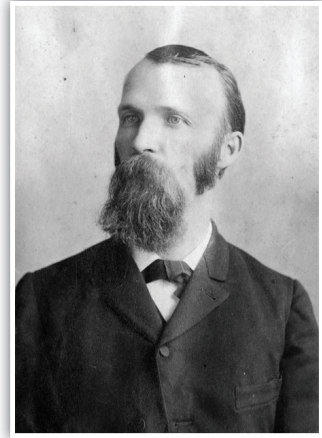
J. P. Mealing
 H. A. Shaw,
 H. D. Hudson,²⁶ Trustees.
 Curryton, May 19²⁷

²⁶ Dr. Hillery D. Hudson had married Joel Curry's daughter, Sarah "Sadie" Curry (1840-1902). He was a grocery merchant in Augusta. Hudson had acquired most of Joel Curry's remaining property in a foreclosure sale in 1868. There is no Sheriff's deed on record in the Edgefield County Archives which is not unusual for Sheriff's sales in the period of Reconstruction. However, the sale by the Sheriff to Dr. H. D. Hudson is noted in his Execution book for 1867-1868, p, 16, case numbers 61, 62 & 63.

²⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 22, 29, and June 5, 1873.

Several years later, in 1876, the *Edgefield Advertiser* contained the following advertisement for the “Curryton Baptist High School.” “Board may be had in excellent private families from \$10 to \$12 per month.” Dr. H. A. Shaw is listed as the Chair and A. S. Townes, the Principal.²⁸

A native of Greenville, South Carolina, Professor Alexander Sloan Townes (1842-1909) had been in the Confederate Army before becoming an educator. During his career, he served as president of the Baptist Female College in Rome, Georgia (later Shorter College), Curryton Academy and Greenville Female College which later merged into Furman University.²⁹ He served at Curryton until sometimes in 1878. He was assisted by Miss Julia White, his step-daughter,³⁰ and by Miss Fannie Chiles. He, his two half-sisters, Misses Kate and Annie Townes, and Miss Julia Townes, all boarded in the house on the southeast corner of Currytown and Mealing Roads, later owned by Mr. E. J. Barker.³¹



*Professor Alexander S
Townes (1842-1909)*

Professor Townes was succeeded as superintendent of the Curryton High School by the Rev. Hugh F. Oliver, assisted by Mr. Jack Carr. John William Thurmond (1862-1934), father of Senator Strom Thurmond, attended Curryton in this period under both Professor Townes and Rev. Oliver.³² The

²⁸ *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 7, 1876.

²⁹ Gourley, Bruce, “Baptists and the American Civil War: June 13, 1861,” <http://civilwarbaptists.com/thisdayinhistory/1861-june-13/>

³⁰ Julia White (1860-1937) was the daughter of Professor Townes first wife, Lavinia Brooks (1838-1875) by her first husband. Julia White married G. Franklin Townes (1849-1915) and remained in Edgefield County. Her daughter Gladys Townes (1890-1964) married James B. McClain (1885-1972) and has a number of descendants in Edgefield County.

³¹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, “Years Gone By, Old Curryton High School,” undated clipping in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr. based upon facts supplied by Mr. John P. Mealing (1873-1944).

³² *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 23, 1902.

Rev. Oliver was succeeded by the Rev. H. A. Whitman who later became the pastor of the Edgefield First Baptist Church. Lieutenant Governor James H. “Jim” Tillman (1868-1911) and Mr. H. C. Middleton went to school at Curryton under the Rev. Mr. Whitman.

After the Rev. Mr. Whitman left, the school was closed for a period until Mr. S. Luther Getzen, son of the Rev. Samuel P. Getzen, began teaching a public school in the building. The Union meeting of the 4th Division of the Baptist Association had the building covered and repaired at some time while it was not being used.

In 1888, a high school was started there, supported by subscriptions from some of the patrons. This school was taught by the Rev. E. W. Sammons assisted by Mrs. Luther S. Getzen. The *Edgefield Chronicle* announced:

Curryton High School

Curryton, so famous in the past as an educational centre, again has a fine school. The Curryton Academy was opened about the first of the present month, by the Rev. Mr. Sammons, who as a Baptist clergyman, has long been popular in the community.”³³

Students at this time included Messrs. George A. McKie, R. L. McKie, W. G. Townes, Dr. D. H. Townes, Jr., J. G. Hoard, J. P. Nixon, Warren T. Miller, Arthur Medlock. Mr. D. J. and J. P. Mealing, Sr., S. L. Medlock, J. B. Shaw, W. H. Ryan, Georgia Harrison, Mrs. J. C. (Lizzie Shaw) McKie, Miss Mary Mealing, Mrs. Hallie Greneker, Miss Sallie Mae Nicholson, and Mr. R. H. Nicholson.

After Mr. Sammons left, the building was used as a public school until 1892 when it was destroyed by fire. Miss Hortense Wise, later Mrs. Ed Foshee, was teaching at the school when the building was burned.³⁴

³³ *Edgefield Chronicle*, February 15, 1888.

³⁴ *Edgefield Advertiser*, “Years Gone By, Old Curryton High School,” undated clipping in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr. based upon facts supplied by Mr. John P. Mealing (1873-1944). Mr. Mealing’s remembrance was that the school burned in January of 1993.

Curryton students who went on to become prominent leaders included General Benjamin E. Nicholson (1841-1885), eminent attorney and political leader, John William Thurmond (1862-1934) (father of Strom Thurmond), Judge J. W. Devore (1870-1947), State Senator Benjamin E. Nicholson, Jr. (1875-1919), and South Carolina Lieutenant Governor James H. Tillman (1868-1911).

The Academy Property and Buildings

What were the exact location and bounds of the 100-acre tract which Joel Curry conveyed to the Curryton Seminary? Where specifically on this tract were the buildings located? Unfortunately, the tract was apparently not surveyed at the time of conveyance and no plat or drawing of the Curryton school property showing the location of the buildings has been found. In the absence of such plat or drawings, a fairly complete title search of all of the properties in this area had to be done with the hope that such a search would reveal exactly which current parcels were in the original Curryton tract. We had assumed that the 100-hundred acre tract probably included all of what is now the Annison Point subdivision, together with several adjacent tracts on the south side of this subdivision which had been sold off over the last fifty years (66.8 acres), plus two tracts (6.15 acres and 6.38 acres) owned by the Estate of Jerry Bass, one tract (5.02 acres) owned by Katherine Dangerfield, and the final tract (14.11 acres) owned by Old McDonald's Fish Camp.

However, what we have come to believe is that much of the 100-acre tract had been acquired by individual trustees and parents of children who were educated there under some kind of informal arrangement which permitted them to meet the substantial need for boarding houses for students of the Academy. As noted above, we know that several persons obtained small tracts upon which they constructed houses. These include Susan Curry Roper who had a "Handsome Residence with eight or ten acres [of] land attached,"³⁵ Cornelia F. Glover who had five acres,³⁶ Robert Meriwether who

³⁵ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 15, 1866. Deed of Susan Roper to Susan L. Getzen, dated January ?, 1871, Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book SSS, at page 371.

³⁶ Deed of Cornelia F. Glover to Luther Getzen, dated November 10, 1883, Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book 7 at page 526.

had sixteen acres,³⁷ and John Nixon who had eight acres.³⁸ Joel Curry likely erected a boarding house as well. Yet, we can find no deeds into Susan Roper, Cornelia Glover, Robert Meriwether and John Nixon for their Curryton properties. We do know that Mrs. Roper, Mrs. Glover and the Nixon family were able to sell their properties during the Reconstruction period.

We also know that, pursuant to lawsuits brought by Eliza Lanham and William Weeks against Joel Curry and Robert Meriwether,³⁹ Isaac Boles, Sheriff of the Edgefield District, sold to Hillary D. Hudson and Sarah H. Hudson on December 8, 1868, two hundred and seventy-three acres, which, we believe, included much of the 100-acre Curryton Academy tract. From the Sheriff's Execution Book, we know that W. Horn was paid for surveys and plats in these cases (61, 62 & 63).⁴⁰ However, if the surveys were done and plats completed, they were apparently not recorded and have been lost. So we are not able to find exactly the boundaries of the foreclosed property.

It is well to keep in mind that this all happened during the turmoil of Reconstruction when so many people were having extreme financial difficulties. It was also a time when the principal defendants in the foreclosure actions, Joel Curry and Robert Meriwether, were not in Edgefield County: Joel Curry had moved to South Georgia and was probably in bad health as he died during the following year; Robert Meriwether had emigrated to Brazil, and, by all accounts, had concluded that nothing in the South was worth trying to preserve in the aftermath of the defeat of the Confederacy. Thus, apparently no one disputed the bounds of the foreclosed property.

In the foreclosure sales of both Joel Curry and Robert Meriwether, the purchasers of the properties were the daughter of Joel Curry who was also the sister of Mrs. Robert Meriwether, Sarah H. Hudson, and her husband, Dr. Hillary D. Hudson.⁴¹ This cou-

³⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, November 18, 1868.

³⁸ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 31, 1871.

³⁹ Edgefield County Archives, Judgment files 7580 & 7582.

⁴⁰ There is no Sheriff's deed on record in the Edgefield County Archives which is not unusual for Sheriff's sales in the period of Reconstruction. However, the sale by the Sheriff to Dr. H. D. Hudson is noted in his Execution book for 1867-1868, p. 16, case numbers 61, 62 & 63.

⁴¹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, "Years Gone By, Old Curryton High School," undated clipping in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr. based upon facts supplied by Mr.

ple were generous and well-liked in the community and, once the foreclosure sale was completed, permitted the Curryton facilities to continue to be used for school purposes. However, by 1873, they had begun to try to sell their property⁴² and in 1878 succeeded in selling it to Mrs. Laura Morgan.⁴³ The description of the property in that 1878 deed to Mrs. Morgan is the only description which we have of the property which was acquired by the Hudsons in the 1868 foreclosure since there had been no Sheriff's deed. The description is as follows:

All that tract or parcel of land with buildings & mill on the premises lying and being in said state & county in the place known as Curryton, lying on the cross road leading from Martintown to Columbia Road on Sweet Water Creek ten miles above Augusta, Ga, known as my Curryton place consisting of two hundred and seventy-three acres more or less consisting of four several tracts or lots of land . . . as the property of Joel Curry and Robt. Meriwether formerly of said state and county, viz. one tract of Curry land containing one hundred and thirty-four acres, one tract of Curry land containing one hundred and five acres, one mill tract containing twenty acres with the mill & gin & press, excepting the place of Dr. H. A. Shaw in gin head and press, one lot & house of Merrywether [*sic.*] land containing sixteen acres, adjoining land of H. A. Shaw, B. Matthews, John Mealing, S. P. Getzen and Elizabeth Bunch.⁴⁴

Mrs. Morgan sold the property soon afterwards to Mr. Luther Getzen who then sold it to Mr. E. J. Barker.⁴⁵ Barker ultimately acquired most of the properties that had been owned by others who had built boarding houses.

John P. Mealing (1873-1944).

⁴² Edgefield Advertiser, December 11, 1873.

⁴³ Edgefield County Archives, Deed of Mr. & Mrs. Hudson to Laura J. Morgan, dated October 12, 1878, Deed Book 4, Page 531.

⁴⁴ Edgefield County Archives, Deed of Mr. & Mrs. Hudson to Laura J. Morgan, dated October 12, 1878, Deed Book 4, Page 531.

⁴⁵ Edgefield County Archives, Deed of Mr. S. Luther Getzen to Mr. Evan J. Barker, dated October 27, 1890, Deed Book 15, Page 84.

In 1905, the last surviving early trustee and President of the “Curryton Seminary,” Dr. H. A. Shaw, deeded the remaining Curryton property to Mr. E. J. Barker which was described as “seven acres, more or less, bounded as follows: north by the Currytown Plank Road, East, South and West by lands of E. J. Barker.”⁴⁶ This was indeed the end of the Curryton era.

As far as the precise locations of the Curryton buildings are concerned, the notes of Mr. J. P. Mealing state that the location of the Male Academy was where the Curryton Magnolia now stands.⁴⁷ This location is, we believe, confirmed by the photograph, circa 1880, from the rear of the school, upon which one can see the magnolia in the background. We suspect that the principal buildings seen in that photograph were the “Curryton Hotel,” built by Robert Meriwether for boarders. These “hotel” buildings were probably immediately behind the male academy building which was probably at the crest of the hill in front of the Curryton magnolia. The topography also seems to confirm this, showing that the buildings extended onto the site of the home of the late Jerry Bass and his wife, Jackie Bass. This location was also confirmed by the statement of Henry G. Mealing, MD to Mrs. Bass in 1979 at the time the Basses built their house. According to those same sources, the site of the Female Academy is now occupied by Old McDonald’s Fish Camp.

The Story of Curryton Academy is an inspiring one, showing how a strong and united community effort can succeed in building an institution which obtained wide fame across the region. It is also a tragic story, showing how the devastation of the War and Reconstruction, the resulting economic and social turmoil and the extended agricultural decline⁴⁸ can result in the loss of the inspiring successes of an earlier time.

⁴⁶ Edgefield County Archives, Deed of H. A. Shaw, et. al., to E. J. Barker dated August 31, 1905, Deed Book 18 at Page 763.

⁴⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, “Years Gone By, Old Curryton High School,” undated clipping in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr. based upon facts supplied by Mr. John P. Mealing (1873-1944).

⁴⁸ See “The Economic Causes of Tillmanism,” by Bettis C. Rainsford, a paper submitted for a class at Harvard College, 1971, copy in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr.

Appendix

The Founding Trustees

The following persons were elected to the Board of Trustees in August of 1853: Robert Meriwether, Chairman, George Boswell, Samuel Getzen, Joel Curry, A. P. Butler, and Andrew J. Hammond.⁴⁹ Although not listed in October, 1853, another person who certainly deserves to be included among the founding Trustees is Dr. H. A. Shaw. He was formally listed as a Trustee as early as 1856⁵⁰ and was devoted to the school over many decades. He lived just across the road from the school. These Curryton trustees were all prominent men in the Sweetwater, Horn's Creek and Martintown Road sections of the Edgefield District. *The Story of Curryton Academy* therefore calls for a bit of biographical information about each of them.

Captain Robert Meriwether (1815-1888),⁵¹ was born in the Edgefield District, the son of Thomas Meriwether (1781-1831) and Margaret (Mary/Peggy) Barksdale (1787-1823). He had eight siblings and four half-siblings, including Dr. Snowden Griffin Meriwether (1827-1915), grandfather of Robert L. Meriwether (1890-1958), historian, author and founder of the South Caroliniana Library. In 1836, at the age of 21, Robert Meriwether volunteered for the Seminole War, serving as a private in the Ninth Regiment.⁵² After returning from Florida, he settled on the Fox or Bacon or Collier place on the Martintown Road where he became a successful planter. In 1845, he sold this place and moved to the Ware place in "the Fork," between Stephens Creek and the Savan-

⁴⁹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 19, 1853.

⁵⁰ *Edgefield Advertiser*, November 12, 1856.

⁵¹ Robert Meriwether's death record in Brazil shows him to have been born in 1815. This death record does not show a date or year of death. This "Memorial ID # 213055874" found on Ancestry.com states that he was buried in Campo Cemetery, Santa Barbara d'Oeste, Sao Paulo, Brazil. The death date of 1888 is based upon the *Hawkins Family Tree* in Ancestry.com which appears to be extraordinarily well done.

⁵² Chapman, John A., *History of Edgefield County*, Aull Press, Newberry, 1897, p. 508.

nah River.⁵³ In 1847 he was married to Mary Ann Collier (1823-1854) by whom he had four children.⁵⁴ Around 1850 he acquired Anderson Mills on Stephens Creek from the Anderson family, and, in company with Dr. Hugh A. Shaw, remodeled and rebuilt the mill.⁵⁵ In the federal census of 1860 he is shown to have real estate valued at \$22,000 and personal property valued at \$47,000.⁵⁶ Following the death of his first wife, Mary Ann Collier Meriwether, he married Mary Cathrine Curry (1838-1921),⁵⁷ daughter of Joel Curry and Elizabeth Ann Thomas in 1858, by whom he had another son, Robert Underwood Meriwether (1859-1937).⁵⁸

Immediately after Secession, Robert Meriwether was one of the first two Edgefieldians who raised companies to fight in the coming war with the North.⁵⁹ He took his company, the Cherokee Ponds Guards, to Charleston to support the reduction of Fort Sumter.⁶⁰ He afterwards went to Virginia with Gregg's regiment, and returned home after the expiration of the term of enlistment (six months) to form another company. Later on, he re-entered the service and surrendered as Major of the Reserves.⁶¹

At the end of the War, Meriwether returned to Edgefield where he immediately became involved in the Southern Colonization Society, an organization promoting the idea of Southerners moving to another country to avoid domination by their former enemies.⁶² In August of 1865, he and Dr. H. A. Shaw were named

⁵³ Ibid., p. 105-106.

⁵⁴ The *Hawkins Family Tree*.

⁵⁵ Chapman, pp. 105-106.

⁵⁶ Federal Census for 1860.

⁵⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 14, 1858, cited in McClendon, Carlee T., *Edgefield Marriage Records*, R.L. Bryan Company, 1970, p. 107.

⁵⁸ *The Hawkins Family Tree*.

⁵⁹ The other Edgefieldian who raised a company at the same time as Meriwether was Captain Cicero Adams. See Chapman, p. 217.

⁶⁰ Chapman, p. 106, 217, 419.

⁶¹ Chapman, p 106.

⁶² The idea of moving to Brazil was not unique: Many Edgefieldians and many others from throughout the South considered this option. In August of 1865, the Southern Colonization Society was organized in Edgefield with Major Joseph Abney as President and many leading men serving on its board and committees. It was at that meeting that Robert Meriwether and Dr. Hugh A. Shaw were named as the agents of the Society with instructions to explore Bra-

as agents of the Society to explore the possibilities of emigrating to Brazil and recommending a site for settlement. On October 15, 1865, they left Augusta and arrived in Rio de Janeiro on November 26, 1865, to begin the process of finding the most suitable location for settlement. They spent nearly six months in Brazil before returning to South Carolina with their full report. That report, published in the May 2, 1866 edition of the *Edgefield Advertiser*, comprehensively described their investigations and recommended the area around Botucatu in the Sao Paulo Province for the settlement.⁶³ On June 6, 1866, the *Edgefield Advertiser* reported:

We hear that Major Meriwether and Dr. Shaw are going to prove their faith by emigrating with their families to Brazil; and that they will depart very soon. 'Tis certain that Edgefield could lose no two citizens more honored and more useful.

Meriwether and his family did in fact go back to Brazil in late 1866.⁶⁴ As John A. Chapman put it in his *History of Edgefield*, "Mortified at defeat, he resolved never to pay tribute to the victors; he sold out his possessions and with his family sailed to Brazil, where he . . . engaged with his sons in coffee growing."⁶⁵ Although he remained in Brazil until his death in 1888, his widow and son came back to Edgefield for a visit in 1913.⁶⁶ Captain Rob-

zil for a suitable location. John Thomas Adams (1846-1902), who purchased the *Edgefield Advertiser* in 1873, and his brother, Quincy, accompanied the two agents. *Edgefield Advertiser*, September 13, 1865, October 11, 1865, June 6, 1866, November 28, 1866, cited in *Annals of Edgefield District*, Number 9, July 1989. See also Mims, Eleanor Elizabeth, "The Editors of the Edgefield Advertiser," M.A. Thesis, Winthrop College, 1926, p. 91.

⁶³ *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 2, 1866.

⁶⁴ Dawsey, Cyrus B. & James M. Dawsey, Editors, *The Confederados*, University of Alabama Press (1995), p. 72. We have found no evidence that Dr. Shaw went back to Brazil. (See the biography of Dr. Shaw *infra*.)

⁶⁵ Chapman, p. 106. See also p. 219. The Meriwether family and many others from across the South remained there, and have, for more than one hundred and fifty years, preserved their Confederate heritage in that country.

⁶⁶ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 22, 1913 & December 10, 1913. Mrs. Meriwether moved to Bainbridge, Georgia where her father, Joel Curry, had lived in his last days. She died in 1921 and is buried in the Oak City Cemetery in

ert Meriwether, who died in 1888, is buried in Campo Cemetery, Santa Barbara d'Oeste, Sao Paulo, Brazil.⁶⁷

As this biographical sketch indicates, Robert Meriwether was an able, energetic and proactive leader who was appropriately made chairman of the Curryton Academy board of trustees when it was formed in 1853.

Major George M. Boswell (1795-1869) was the oldest of the Curryton founders, having been born in 1795. A well-to-do farmer, he owned lands on Horn's and Chavous Creeks.⁶⁸ He was married to Mary Ann Quarles (1801-1862)⁶⁹ and then, following her death, was remarried to Martha Glover (1835-18??).⁷⁰ He served as a Lieutenant in the Edgefield Hussars in 1839⁷¹ and was a candidate for the legislature in 1840, 1842 & 1856.⁷² He served as a commissioner of the poor in 1844 & 1846.⁷³ He was on the county executive committee of the Democratic party in 1843,⁷⁴ and was a member of the committee to nominate delegates for the state convention of the Southern Rights Association in 1851.⁷⁵ In 1861 he assisted with raising money for regiments for the Confederate army.⁷⁶ After the War, in 1868, he was on the committee to settle debts and also signed the resolution against employing radicals.⁷⁷

Bainbridge.

⁶⁷ *The Hawkins Family Tree*. Meriwether's sons remained in Brazil where they continued to be a part of the settlement of "Confederados" in Sao Paulo, Brazil. For more information about Confederate emigrants to Brazil, see Dawsey supra, Weaver, Blanche Henry Clark, "Confederate Emigration to Brazil," the *Journal of Southern History*, February, 1961, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 33-53; Ryan, Michael, "A Continent Away, Confederates Flourish," *Parade Magazine*, September 6, 1992, p. 14; and Hoover, Robert L. & David N. Hoover, "Os Confederados," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, January/February, 1993, p. 26.

⁶⁸ *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 2, 1857.

⁶⁹ McClendon, Carlee T., *Edgefield Death Notices and Cemetery Records*, The Hive Press, Edgefield, SC (1977), p. 248.

⁷⁰ *Edgefield Advertiser*, June 22, 1864.

⁷¹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 10, 1839.

⁷² *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 10, 1842,

⁷³ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 21, 1846.

⁷⁴ *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 3, 1843,

⁷⁵ *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 10, 1851.

⁷⁶ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 1, 1861.

⁷⁷ *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 2, 1868.

George Boswell died on November 19, 1869 in the 74th year of his age and was buried at Republican Church.⁷⁸

Rev. Samuel Pace Getzen (1806-1891) was both a Baptist preacher and a substantial farmer. The son of George Getzen (1777-1855) and Frances Pace Getzen (1774-18??), he was born near Republican Church, but lived in the Curryton neighborhood for much of his life. Descended from some of the earliest settlers in Edgefield County, including the Getzen, Pace and Bussey families, he served as pastor of many of the churches in Edgefield County, including Big Stephens Creek (or Hardy's) Church, Republican Church, Red Oak Grove Church, and Mt. Zion Church.⁷⁹ He also preached at many "protracted meetings," including those at Sweetwater (or Mt. Lebanon) Church. According to his diary, he was the one who originally had the inspiration to establish Curryton Academy.⁸⁰ In the 1860 federal census he is shown to be a substantial farmer with real estate valued at \$10,000 and personal property valued at \$20,000.⁸¹ After a long and productive life, he died in 1891 and was buried at Republican church.⁸²

Joel Curry (1808-1869) was the son of Lewis Curry (1781-1863) and Sarah Phenix Curry (1783-1836) who had come to Edgefield County in the late 18th century from Virginia and settled on Sweet Water Creek. Joel Curry had two siblings: Susan, who married Joel Roper, became a large planter in her own right and lived across the Old Stage Road from Horn's Creek Church, and William who apparently moved to Alabama.⁸³

⁷⁸ Find a Grave Memorial; McClendon, Carlee T., *Edgefield Death Notices and Cemetery Records*, The Hive Press, Edgefield, SC (1977), p. 248.

⁷⁹ Woodson, Hortense and Church Historians, *Edgefield Baptist Association 1807-1857*, Edgefield Advertiser Press, Edgefield, SC (1957), pp. 190, 296, 324, 266.

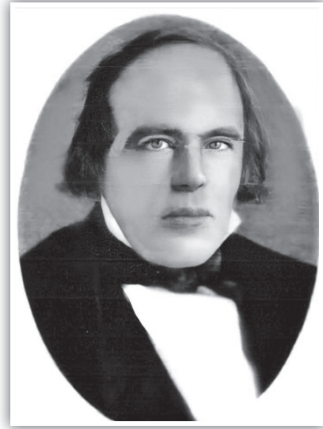
⁸⁰ "The Diary [or, more accurately, Memoir] of Samuel Pace Getzen," transcribed by W.L. Getzen, a great grandson in 1959. The original was in the possession of Miss Katherine G. Mealing in North Augusta in 1959. A copy of the transcribed copy is in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr.

⁸¹ Federal Census of 1860.

⁸² Find-a-Grave Memorial. "Obituary of the Rev. Samuel P. Getzen," *Edgefield Chronicle*, February 10, 1891; "Rev. S. P. Getzen, a Eulogy by G. W. Bussey," *Edgefield Chronicle*, February 25, 1891.

⁸³ See Gresham, Thomas H., *A Brief History of the Curry Family of Edgefield District, South Carolina*, Prepared for Currytowne Associates, Inc., by South-

Joel Curry had begun to accumulate land in the Curryton neighborhood as early as 1830 and accelerated his purchases after 1835. Probably about 1846 he built the house on what is now called Currytown Road, just south and west of the intersection with Mealing Road. He lived in that house until about 1863. The house is still standing, as of 2024, in a very advanced state of deterioration. By 1860, he was apparently one of the wealthiest planters in the lower end of Edgefield County, owning approximately \$25,000 in real estate and \$60,000 in personal property.⁸⁴ He was an investor in other ventures as well. In 1863, he and Julius Day owned the Hamburg to Edgefield Plank Road.⁸⁵ Curry also purchased, in partnership with George Bell, a warehouse, residence and 8-acre parcel in the town of Hamburg.⁸⁶



Joel Curry (1808-1869)

In 1860, perhaps because of substantial business reverses, Curry began selling his property in the Edgefield District. In that year, he sold 1,277 acres on the west side of Stephen Creek to Thomas B. Reese.⁸⁷ Then, in 1863, he sold his home near the Curryton Academy property, together with 1,348 acres to Daniel Heyward.⁸⁸ Apparently, he was in the process of moving to South Georgia, where, by 1867, he lived in Decatur County, Georgia on the Florida state line.⁸⁹ On December 11, 1869 he died in the county seat of Bainbridge, and was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Bainbridge.⁹⁰

eastern Archeological Services, Inc., Athens, Georgia 30606, January 6, 1988, for a fairly comprehensive overview of the Curry family, the Curry-Roper Cemetery, together with appendices containing a genealogical chart and land records.

⁸⁴ 1860 Federal Census.

⁸⁵ *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 22, 1863.

⁸⁶ Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book HHH, page 120.

⁸⁷ Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book 12, page 175.

⁸⁸ Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book LLL, page 274.

⁸⁹ Newspapers.com.

⁹⁰ Find A Grave Index.

Joel Curry's gift in 1853 of the 100 acres and \$2,000 towards the building fund of Curryton Academy was, by far, the largest contribution for the establishment of Curryton. At this point in his life, he was one of the wealthiest citizens in the Sweetwater region and therefore was able to comfortably make these contributions. Although the business reverses which he encountered in the 1860s were very damaging to him, it did not affect his impulse to help his fellowman. A revealing glimpse into Joel Curry's character is preserved for us in a brief story about him after he had moved to Bainbridge, Georgia. In a testimonial in a Baptist newspaper, Mr. Chaudoin, Agent for the Baptist Domestic Missions Board, wrote:

Lights and Shadows

After making an appeal for Domestic Missions last Fall . . . brother Joel Curry, in tears, approached me with ten dollars in his hand and remarked, "Here is my mite; I used to be able to give a hundred dollars at a time, and did so, and now what I give to the Lord is all I have left." One such occurrence, in an Agent or Pastor's experience, dissipates so many *shadows* that chill our poor hearts! Brother Curry *believed* that what he had *given* to the Lord's poor, was "lent to the Lord," and was *safe*; it was deposited in a bank that would never break; was an investment that he could not *lose*. And ere this, the dear, aged man of God has realized that "inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," for, in a few days after, he made me a second contribution of ten dollars and in a few days more, fell down dead in his yard. And how much the sombre *shade* of such a sudden bereavement is alleviated by the *light* of such a benevolent, consistent Christian life. The shadows of death cannot darken his light that yet shines in his family, his community, his little struggling church at Bainbridge, Ga. "The liberal soul shall be mad fat."⁹¹

⁹¹ Christian Index and South-Western Baptist, 1866-1871, (Atlanta, Ga.), March 3, 1870, Page 34, Image 2.

This very graphic story reveals the character of Joel Curry and his generosity and makes it clear that the decision to name the Academy “Curryton” was an appropriate one.

Andrew Pickens Butler (1826-1902) was the son of Seth and Catherine (Day) Butler.⁹² “Pickens,” as he was known, was born at “Pebble Hill,” a plantation in the vicinity of Sweetwater Church and was educated at the academy of the renowned educator, George Galphin (1808-1882).⁹³ Following his education he became a successful planter in his home community. In 1847, he was married to Phoebe Amanda Anderson of Atlanta and they subsequently became the parents of nine children.

When Curryton was being organized in 1853 Butler immediately became involved, serving as a member of the board of trustees⁹⁴ and a member of the faculty.⁹⁵ When the school began in

⁹² Butler was presumably named for “Judge Butler,” Andrew Pickens Butler (1796-1857), the lawyer and judge who subsequently became a United States Senator and who was a grandson of Revolutionary era Captain James Butler. Although various accounts suggest that Judge Butler was a “kinsman” of the United States Senator, considerable effort has been expended to show a family relationship between these two early settlers of Edgefield. However, to date, no relationship has been proven between the descendants of Captain James Butler, who settled some thirty miles north of the Town of Edgefield in 1772 and the descendants of James Butler who settled on Chavous Creek some twelve miles south of the Town of Edgefield in 1769. The late W. Clanton Moseley (1938-1907), a descendant of James Butler of Chavous Creek and a very competent genealogist, discussed this issue in his very comprehensive genealogical work on the James Butler and Winifred Brooks Butler family, copy in the files of Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr.

⁹³ Galphin, the grandson of the famous Colonial and Revolutionary Indian trader, George Galphin (1709-1780), was a widely-regarded teacher whose school was located at Liberty Hill or Bethany (between the present day towns of Edgefield and McCormick). Among Galphin’s students were M. C. Butler (1836-1909), Martin W. Gary (1831-1881), Ben Tillman (1847-1918) and John C. Sheppard (1850-1931). Various accounts of Butler’s life have stated that Butler was also educated at Curryton Academy. Obviously, this was not the case as Butler was 28 years old when Curryton was founded and became a faculty member upon the school’s opening.

⁹⁴ *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 19, 1853.

⁹⁵ *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 25, 1854.

the Spring of 1854, he became an assistant to the Rev. W. H. Christy, principal, over the male department. In this role he was described as “a gentleman eminently qualified as a scholar and strict disciplinarian.” The following year, in the Spring of 1855, he became the supervisor of the female department.⁹⁶ Butler continued to be on the faculty until the end of 1860, when he joined Trustee Chairman Robert Meriwether’s company, Cherokee Ponds Guards, as a first lieutenant. This company and a company organized by Cicero Adams were the first from Edgefield to head to Charleston to assist with the reduction of Fort Sumter.⁹⁷

Soon afterwards (19 August 1861), Butler was commissioned a Captain in Company G of the First South Carolina Infantry in the Confederate army. He was later promoted to Major (12 May, 1864) and to Lieutenant Colonel (19 June 1864), serving with the Army of Northern Virginia. He surrendered at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.⁹⁸

When he returned to South Carolina in the summer of 1865, he immediately became involved in the Southern Colonialization Society which was exploring the idea for many Southerners to move to Brazil. He served as secretary of that organization.⁹⁹ Although his fellow trustee and close friend, Robert Meriwether, emigrated with his family to Brazil, Butler apparently decided to remain in Edgefield County.

In 1868, he became a candidate for the South Carolina House of Representatives but was unsuccessful. In 1871 he represented Edgefield County in the taxpayers’ convention which was created to oppose the major corruption by the Republican Government of South Carolina. After the newly-formed county of Aiken was created in late 1871, he represented Aiken County in the taxpayers’ convention of 1874. He was a delegate to the state Democratic conventions in 1874, 1876 and 1878.¹⁰⁰

Prior to the election of 1876, he became captain of the

⁹⁶ Valley Pioneer, September 12, 1855.

⁹⁷ Chapman, p. 419, 217.

⁹⁸ Bailey, Louise N., Mary L. Morgan, and Carolyn R. Taylor, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate, 1776-1985, Volume I*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC (1986), p. 238-239.

⁹⁹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 30, 1865, September 15, 1865.

¹⁰⁰ Bailey, p. 238.

Sweetwater Sabre Club, a paramilitary organization composed primarily of former Confederate soldiers and was the unofficial leader of all of the local rifle clubs. He was a strong supporter of Wade Hampton's campaign for governor, playing a prominent role in the Hamburg and Ellenton riots in July and September of 1876. Although he and many of his men were charged with murder in the Hamburg case, which they denied, they were released on bail and never brought to trial. Arrested again on October 20, 1876 on charges of intimidating black voters, he was released after a week. When Butler's men had appeared in preliminary court proceedings in Aiken on the Hamburg charges, they had smeared red paint on their white shirts to look like blood in order to intimidate potential jurors. Later, others in the Hampton campaign picked up on this idea and started wearing red shirts. Thus, the sobriquet, "Red Shirts," was applied to the Hampton supporters of 1876.¹⁰¹

In the 1876 election, Butler was elected to the state senate representing Aiken County and served there until 1879 when he was elected to the newly-created position of Commissioner of Agriculture. As early as 1885, his new Department of Agriculture began to be attacked unrelentingly by Ben Tillman who claimed that Butler had done nothing to help the state's small farmers. When Tillman became governor in December of 1890, one of his first acts was to abolish the position of Commissioner of Agriculture, thus relieving Butler of his job.¹⁰²

Butler then returned to his home, but remained active in many agricultural, community and political organizations. He died on May 14, 1902 and was buried at Sweetwater Church.¹⁰³ His duel

¹⁰¹ Bailey, p. 238. See also Tillman, Benjamin R., "The Struggles of 1876," a speech given in Anderson, South Carolina on August 25, 1909.

¹⁰² Bailey, p. 238. It is hard to understand how the relationship between Butler and Tillman became so hostile. Butler had been Tillman's commanding officer in the Sweetwater Sabre Club and their families had been neighbors for decades. But Tillman attacked the department of the Commissioner of Agriculture relentlessly during the years between 1885 and 1890. Butler argued that Tillman's charges were unfair and untruthful, but Tillman continued his attack. See Simkins, Francis Butler, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, Louisiana State Press, Baton Rouge, 1944, pp. 97, 108-111, 128 for a more complete account of the Butler/Tillman controversy.

¹⁰³ *Edgefield County Cemeteries, Vol. III*, Old Edgefield District Genealogical

roles as a trustee and a member of the faculty make him a very significant figure in the history of Curryton Academy.

Andrew J. Hammond (1814-1882) was the son of Captain LeRoy Hammond (1765-1816) and the grandson of Col. LeRoy Hammond (1729-1790). His father died when he was but two years old, so he was raised by his mother, Sarah Quarles Hammond (1783-1870). He was educated at the then-notable schools of Pendleton, SC.¹⁰⁴ He lived for much of his life at New Richmond, the house his grandfather, Colonel LeRoy Hammond, built on the Savannah River about three miles above Augusta in 1771. Later in life, circa 1842, moved up to the Martintown Road where he built Elm Grove.¹⁰⁵ Subsequently, he sold Elm Grove and returned to New Richmond where he lived until nearly the end of his life.¹⁰⁶ He was a large planter, a member of the legislature, Captain of the Edgefield Hussars, a member of the South Carolina Secession Convention and a Major of the Twenty-Fourth Volunteers during the Civil War.¹⁰⁷ He died in 1882 and was buried at New Richmond.¹⁰⁸ It is significant that he was chosen to be the orator at the initial meeting to organize the Curryton Academy in 1853 and that he delivered such an effective speech.¹⁰⁹

Another very important person in the founding and development of Curryton was **Dr. Hughes “Hugh” Anderson Shaw (1826-1911)** who lived for much of his life just across the road from Curryton. The son of Thomas Lewis Shaw (1795-1869) and Mary Hughes Moss (1803-1835), Dr. H. A. Shaw, as he was generally known, was a highly-respected physician who practiced medicine in the lower end of Edgefield County for more than sixty years. He had become a close friend and partner of Robert Meriwether early in his life when they purchased and restored the Anderson mill on Stephens Creek. Throughout his life he was very active in public affairs. He was a board member of Curryton Acad-

Society, (2000), page 94.

¹⁰⁴ Chapman, p. 141.

¹⁰⁵ *Edgefield Advertiser*; July 29, 1953.

¹⁰⁶ *Edgefield Advertiser*; August 17, 1882.

¹⁰⁷ Chapman, p. 141.

¹⁰⁸ *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 4, 1883.

¹⁰⁹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 17, 1853.

emy (1856) and served in the Confederate army (1861-1865).¹¹⁰ After the War, he was a member of the Southern Colonialization Society (1865), for which he and Robert Meriwether were appointed agents to investigate potential resettlement sites in Brazil. The pair left in the Fall of 1865 and returned with their report in the Spring of 1866. Although the *Edgefield Advertiser* reported that “Major Meriwether and Dr. Shaw are going to prove their faith by emigrating with their families to Brazil; and that they will depart very soon,” we have found no evidence that Dr. Shaw actually went back to Brazil.¹¹¹ We do have evidence that Dr. Shaw was actively involved in community affairs in Edgefield in January of 1868,¹¹² which suggests that he probably did not go back.

Dr. Shaw went on to become a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, being elected in the highly-contested election of 1876 and serving until 1880. He also served as a member of the Gary Memorial Commission in 1881 and late in life became a member of the executive committee of the Anti-Tuberculosis League (1909). Dr. Shaw died on July 30, 1911 at the age of eighty-five and was buried at Sweetwater Church. He had practiced medicine for more than sixty years and was still remarkably active up until shortly before his death.

Of all of the Trustees of Curryton, Dr. H. A. Shaw lived the longest and executed the deed in 1905 for the transfer away of the last remaining piece of the Curryton property.¹¹³ He clearly deserves to be remembered as an important figure in the history of Curryton.

¹¹⁰ *Confederates States Roster South Carolina, Volume I*, Broadfoot Publishing, (19??), p. 436. Dr. Shaw enlisted on Nov. 1, 1862, in Company C, 5th South Carolina Reserves Infantry.

¹¹¹ We did find a letter to Dr. Shaw from Garrison & Allen, of New York, Agents of the Brazilian Government, announcing details for transportation to Brazil, which was published in the *Edgefield Advertiser* on December 19, 1866. At this point, he was apparently still in South Carolina. The *Lanham Family Tree* on Ancestry.com does state that in April of 1866 “Dr. Hugh A. Shaw and his family with some 100 others sailed from Savannah to New York and on to Rio de Janeiro, arriving May 20,” but it cites no sources for this information.

¹¹² *Edgefield Advertiser*, January 8 & 22, 1868.

¹¹³ Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book 18 at Page 763.

