

**2021 Fall Meeting of the  
Edgefield County Historical Society**

**Celebrating Macedonia Baptist Church,  
the Edgefield Academy and the Paris and  
Andrew Simkins Families**



**3:00 P.M., Saturday, October 16, 2021**

**Macedonia Church**  
**Macedonia Street**  
**Edgefield, 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.

For more information and for membership information and applications, visit our website: [www.historicedgefield.com](http://www.historicedgefield.com).

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The Society is indebted to Ethan Bates Stanley, II (April 23, 1932-September 18, 2021), grandson of Mamie Norris Tillman (1875-1962), longtime president of the Society, grandson of Lieutenant Governor James Hammond Tillman (1868-1911), and great grandson of Congressman George Dionysius Tillman (1827-1901), for his generous financial support of this event.

# Program

Invocation	Rev. J. R. Clark, Pastor, Macedonia Baptist Church
Welcome to Macedonia	Rev. Clark
Welcome from the Society	Bettis C. Rainsford, Historian, Edgefield County Historical Society
Pledge of Allegiance	Deacon Henry Smith, Macedonia Baptist Church
“The Star-Spangled Banner”	Miss Tamera Clark, vocalist
Introduction of the Speaker	Mr. Rainsford
Keynote Address:	Dr. Valinda Littlefield, Associate Professor of History, University of South Carolina
Reflections:	Mrs. Frances H. Morina Mr. Willie Bright Mr. Herbert Morgan Mr. Willie Bacon
Unveiling of the Marker	Mrs. Morina & the Church Deacons
Unveiling of Other Markers	Lawrence Cain, by Dr. Linda Cherry Paris Simkins, by Ms. Frederica Simkins Richardson Andrew Simkins, by Hon. Eric Washington & M. LaVonne Thompson, Esq. Rev. F. A. Weaver, by Ms. Regina Leonard & Rev. Clark Edgefield Academy Leadership, by Mrs. Frances H. Morina, Mr. Willie Bacon, Mr. Herbert Morgan, Hon. Willie Bright
Benediction	Deacon Elvis Bussey, Macedonia Baptist Church
Reception & Tour	



19

24

### **MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH**

**Organized in 1869 with the support of Edgefield Village Baptist Church, this first African American church in Edgefield was founded by former slaves, including Peter Johnson, George Simkins, Lawrence Cain, Henry Cane, Robert A. Green, Paris Simkins and Willis Frazier. The first church was built by pastor Rev. Joe Burkett in 1871. The current church dates to 1901 and was built by Sewell Smith.**

SPONSORED BY EDGEFIELD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 2003

# **The First Half-Century of Macedonia Baptist Church**

## **Edgefield, South Carolina**

**By Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr.**

### **Background**

Prior to the War Between the States, almost all churches in the Edgefield District had both white and black members. Among devoutly religious Southern whites, it was considered a moral imperative to provide religious instruction to the black slaves, and therefore almost all churches encouraged slave owners to bring their slaves to church. Thus, in August of 1867, even after the slaves were freed, the Edgefield Village Baptist Church still had 187 black members and 170 white members.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, discipline in the Baptist churches was a major part of church life. Members – white and black – were regularly brought up before the church for being absent without excuse, drinking intoxicating liquors, rioting, horseracing, or dancing. In most instances the discipline was administered by the church deacons.<sup>2</sup>

In her history of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, Miss Hortense Woodson described the procedures for discipline in the church:

In the early history of the church and even as late as 1900, there were many interesting cases of church discipline. The slave owners found this a good way of holding their servants in subjection, as many instances are noted of their owners reporting them to the church for lying, railing, swearing, disobedience, drinking, disorderly conduct, dancing and gambling. One Negro woman was carried before the church for refusing to live with her husband, and as far as the record goes, the church never succeeded in bringing about a reconciliation. Finally, Negroes were elected as deacons, and they cooperated with the white deacons in disciplining. In this

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, August 31, 1867.

<sup>2</sup> In one famous instance, the matriarch of the prominent Tillman family, Sophia Hancock Tillman (1809-1876) was expelled from Horn's Creek Baptist Church for sending her daughters to dancing school. See Swearingen, Mary Hough, *A Gallant Journey, Mr. Swearingen and his Family*, University of South Carolina Press, 1959, pp. 23-24. However, the minutes of Horn's Creek Baptist Church do not confirm that any action was taken against Mrs. Tillman.

way they were under rigorous espionage, as the Negroes were keen to report their fellows for every offense. They almost invariably begged for restoration, one man being excluded and restored a dozen times and finally becoming a dignified and honored sexton. He wore a beaver hat and carried a large silver watch and chain.<sup>3</sup>

After the slaves were emancipated at the end of the War Between the States, the entire social, political and economic system in the South had to be reorganized. In most instances, the former slaves, or “freedmen” as they were known, became sharecroppers on the plantations and farms where they had previously worked. Having been under the domination of whites for generations, the slaves were anxious to exercise their new-found freedom. In many instances the freedmen began to want to establish their own churches, separate from the churches which they had previously attended. At the same time, the white members of the churches realized that it was going to be increasingly difficult to maintain discipline over their former slaves. Thus, throughout the South, new churches began to be created by and for the freedmen. In two decades after the war, many new churches were founded by freedmen in Edgefield County, some forty of which were founded by the renowned minister, the Rev. Alexander Bettis (1836-1895).

In his very interesting book about the Rev. Alexander Bettis and Bettis Academy, Alfred W. Nicholson (1859-1945), President of Bettis Academy, provides an explanation for the development of black churches following the Civil War:

It is a fact, . . . that warm climates are highly conducive of emotionalism. The native African had for countless generations been resident in one of the warmest climates on earth. . . . His method of worship was to sing, chant, dance, cavort. . . . [W]hile he was encouraged to become a member of the church which his owners attended, still his religious nature was unsatisfied. There was not enough “spirit” or enough fervor and emotionalism. So when freedom came, that desire for emotional demonstrations in his worship was yet one of the negro’s dominant characteristics. . . . In consequence, while as a rule the white people did not require or even request the negro to sever his connection with the white church, yet, except in isolated cases, it was one among the first things he chose to do.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Woodson, *History of the Edgefield Baptist Association, 1807-1957*, Edgefield Advertiser Press, Edgefield, SC, 1957, page 220.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholson, Alfred W., *Brief Sketch of the Life and Labors of Rev. Alexander Bettis, Also an Account of the Founding and Development of The Bettis Academy*, Published by the Author, Trenton, SC, 1913, pp. 22-23.



Macedonia Baptist Church was not one of Bettis's churches, but instead grew out of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church (now known as "Edgefield First Baptist Church") in the years immediately following the War. However, this was not the first instance in the Edgefield Village Baptist Church of a new church being formed by its freedmen members. Lymus Simmons (1839-1932), a beloved former slave of the Pickens family who had obtained the permission of Governor Pickens and his wife Lucy to start a new church,<sup>5</sup> led a group of former Pickens slaves in establishing Simmons Ridge Baptist Church. This church was built on a one-acre site on the edge of the Pickens's Edgewood Plantation some three miles north of Edgefield Village. The first group of these former Pickens slaves, 21 in number, were dismissed from the Edgefield Village Baptist Church on December 30, 1866. An additional 27 members were dismissed to join the Simmons Ridge church on November 21, 1869.<sup>6</sup>

## The Founding

The first reference which we find to the beginnings of Macedonia Church appears in the September 15, 1867 minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church where a Committee was appointed consisting of the white and colored Deacons of the church to get a record book to keep the Records of the colored members separately.<sup>7</sup> On that day, a committee consisting of the Pastor and Deacons was also appointed to report on the matter of licensing two colored brethren to preach. On October 20, 1867, another committee, this one of ten white members, consisting of L. R. Gwaltney, W. W. Adams, A. J. Norris, G. L. Penn, J. B. Sullivan, R. T. Mims, Jno. Huiet, M. Frazier, J. Whitacre, and E. J. Youngblood, was appointed to report in two weeks on procuring a lot for a burial ground and church for the colored members.<sup>8</sup>

On June 20, 1869, the Edgefield Village Baptist Church recorded the following: "The request of the colored members to organize a separate church was also by vote laid on the table until the next meeting."<sup>9</sup>

On July 13, 1869, Mrs. E. R. Bland, Administrix of the Estate of Dr. Elbert Bland, executed and delivered a deed conveying to Peter Johnson, George Simkins, Lawrence Cain, Henry Cane [*sic.*], Robert A. Green, Paris

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<sup>5</sup> Historical notes compiled by Deacon Eugene J. Hamilton found in the Simmons Ridge Baptist Church file of the author.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, December 30, 1866 and November 21, 1869, pages 126 & 159-160.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, September 15, 1867, page 129.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, October 20, 1867, page 130.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, June 20, 1869, page 150.

Simkins, and Willis Frazier a lot in the Village of Edgefield containing four acres, one rood and twenty-six perches<sup>10</sup> “in trust nevertheless to have and to hold the aforesaid tract of land for the use and benefit of such of the free colored persons of the Baptist religious denomination as have contributed towards the purchase of the same; or may hereafter contribute towards the keeping up and improvement of the same as a burial ground and also for the erection of a church for the worship of God after the manner of the Baptist denomination.”<sup>11</sup> The purchase price of the land was \$99.27. The plat of the land for the church was surveyed by R. T. Mims, a prominent local surveyor. The site was a good one, being just two blocks east of the Village Baptist Church and two blocks north of Main Street. It was surrounded on three sides by Mrs. Bland’s property. On the east side of the property was a lane leading out to Main Street. It contained a prominent hill upon which the church was eventually built.

On July 18, 1869, the request made to the Edgefield Village Baptist Church by certain colored members to organize a separate church was granted.<sup>12</sup> Just over a year later, on November 20, 1870, two resolutions were introduced:

Resolved: That all matter of discipline among the colored people to be referred to the colored portion of the church, and that their decision in such matters be final.

Resolved: That we recommend to the colored members of the church to organize themselves into a separate Baptist church.<sup>13</sup>

Even after this last resolution was passed, the Edgefield Village Baptist Church continued to have black members and to accept new ones. On August 27, 1871, there were still 193 black members of the church; on August 25, 1872, there were 74; on August 24, 1873, there were 65; and on September 6, 1874, there were 61.<sup>14</sup> Malinda Simkins (Morris) (1795-1888) was the last black member of the Edgefield Village Church. A former slave of the Simkins family, she continued to be a member until her death in 1888. Writing in *The History of the Edgefield Baptist Association*, Miss Hortense Woodson described Mrs. Morris: “The gallery of the original church had a door entering from the outside east, and she

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<sup>10</sup> This archaic measurement of land equates to 4.4125 acres.

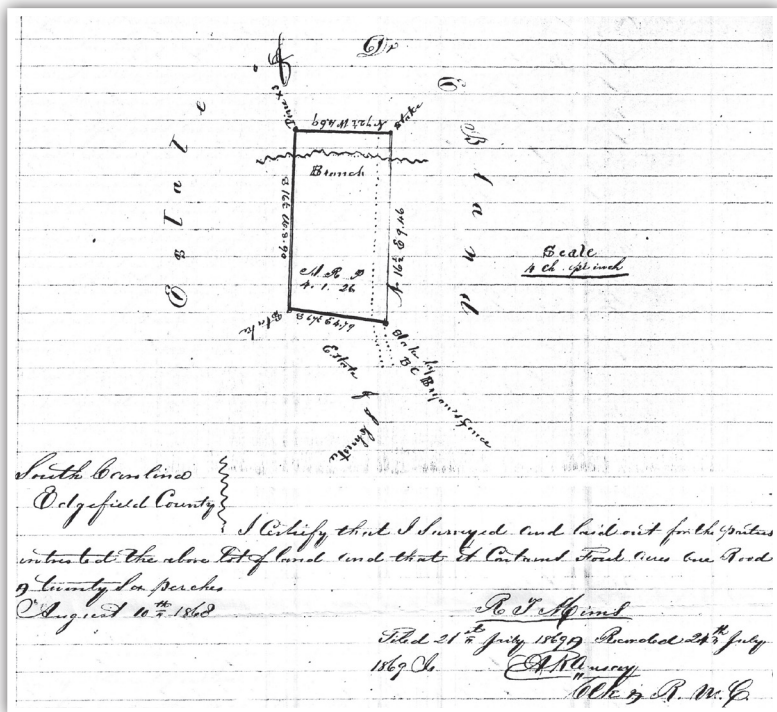
<sup>11</sup> Deed Book PPP, page 061, Edgefield County Archives, deed dated July 13, 1869 and recorded July 21, 1869.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, July 18, 1869, page 152.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, November 20, 1870, page 174.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, April 22, 1872, page 195, August 25, 1872, page 208, September 28, 1873, page 227, September 6, 1874, page 233.





1869 Plat of Macedonia property

would come in and occupy the gallery alone. She was said to have a mild and peaceable face, and always dressed with great precision and neatness, wearing a black dress, a small cape and a white handkerchief on her head, and carrying a turkey feat her fan, which was used in those days. She wore a black bonnet to the church but would take it off when coming inside. She was the mother of [George] Simkins and the grandmother of Paris and Andrew Simkins.”<sup>15</sup> At her death in 1888, Mrs. Morris’s obituary appeared in *The Edgefield Chronicle*:

The oldest and most honored colored person in our community was buried on Friday afternoon last, in the presence of a concourse of

<sup>15</sup> Woodson, page 221. Miss Woodson described her as the mother of Charlotte Simkins, but in *The Chronicle* article, undoubtedly written by Editor James T. Bacon who would have known her well, said she was the mother of Charlotte’s husband, George Simkins. Miss Woodson gives Malinda the last name of “Morris.” However, *The Edgefield Chronicle* used the name “Simkins.” The 1870 census showed her last name to be “Brooks” in the entry under George Simkins. The 1880 census does not have a last name for her, but the entry would suggest that her last name was Simkins since she is listed under George Simkins.

friends, white no less than black. This was Malinda Simkins, the mother of that well known and much-esteemed colored citizen, George Simkins. This good woman who belonged to the old-time Simkinses in the earliest days of Edgefield and who at all periods of her life maintained the highest respectability, was ninety-three years of age when she died on Thursday last. Up to her very death, her faculties of body and mind were most wonderfully preserved. In May 1823, just sixty-five years ago, at the first conference meeting ever held by the Edgefield Baptist Church, she joined the said church by experience and was baptized. And in this church lay her membership, ever a faithful and honored one, on the day of her death. A rare and noble example. At any hour, at any moment, "Aunt Malinda" was ever a welcome friend in any house in Edgefield. She rests from her labors, and God hath brought her to the haven where she would be.<sup>16</sup>

Although we have been unable to find any specific reference to the date of the completion of the first Macedonia Church building, we find that, on April 23, 1871, letters of dismission from the Edgefield Village Baptist Church were granted to the following members: S. P. Frazier, G. W. Forrest, Ned Simkins, Lawrence Cain, Robert Green, Paris Simkins, Abram Landrum, Jack Griffin, Fester Cooks, Andrew Perry, Harper Bostic, Henry Cain, Peter Johnson, Mary A. Simkins, Adelia Green, Jennie Cain, Percilla Landrum, Charlotte Bostic, Lucinda Scott, Sarah Wever, Sambo Pickens, Jacob Marsh, Wm. Bostic, David Mims, Harriett Mims, Fannie Mims, Lillie Bland, Lottie Vaughn & Joe Bean.<sup>17</sup> This "dismission" of many of the acknowledged founders of Macedonia Church is probably an indication that the construction of the church building was well underway. However, on June 20, 1872, *The Edgefield Advertiser* reported:

The colored women of the Baptist denomination gave a Hot Supper on the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> to assist in building their Church. Receipts from the same came to \$69. The women are to hold the money, and see it properly applied. We are glad the women have taken this matter in hand and hope they will rest not until their Church is completed. Nor must we forget to thank them very kindly for the nice cake from the supper tendered us by Annette Richardson.<sup>18</sup>

Several months later, on October 31, 1872, *The Advertiser* again reported:

The colored women have on several occasions had Hot Suppers

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<sup>16</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, May 30, 1888. Woodson, p. 221.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, April 23, 1871, page 179.

<sup>18</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, June 20, 1872.

for the purpose of finishing the Church which is intended for the worship of God by colored people. On Thursday night last, they gave another of these Hot Suppers and realized, we are informed, a respectable sum towards the completion of their Church. These women are in earnest in this matter, and deserve commendation. And yet they get but little money for religious purposes. And we would here remark that unless these men come square up and build or assist finishing the building of the house of God, we fear that the religious training of the colored people will be sadly neglected.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, it is likely that the original church building was completed sometime in late 1872 or in 1873.

## The Founders

Although others were doubtless involved in founding Macedonia Church, we are assigning the title of “founder” to those original seven trustees who were named in the deed from Mrs. Bland, as well as to the first pastor of the church, Rev. Joe C. Burckett who was also credited with actually constructing the first church building. These “founders” are as follows:

**Peter Johnson:** Of the original trustees, Peter Johnson (c.1820-18??), a former carriage driver for Matthew Mims (1779-1848), has been considered by many as “the founder” of Macedonia Church.<sup>20</sup> Following the death of Matthew Mims, Johnson became the farm overseer for Mrs. Susan Curry Roper (1812-1881) who lived south of Edgefield near Horn’s Creek Church.<sup>21</sup>

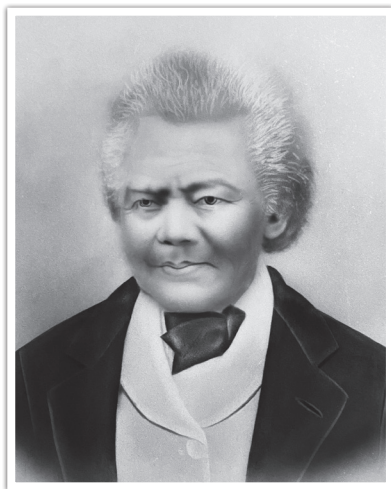
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<sup>19</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 31, 1872.

<sup>20</sup> His role as the carriage driver for Matthew Mims is described in Woodson, p. 221. A slave by the name of Peter is shown in the Estate of Matthew Mims on July 30, 1848. See Lucas, Gloria Ramsay, *Slave Records of Edgefield County*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2010, p. 278. For the original document see Estate of Matthew Mims, Edgefield County Archives, Box 60, package 2469.

<sup>21</sup> In a memoir of Mrs. Roper’s granddaughter, Miss Susan Roper (1873-1971), daughter of Samuel L. Roper (1839-1911), entitled “Farm Life 1873-1900” (copy in the possession of the author), Miss Roper described her father’s relationship with Peter Johnson as follows: “Most of the negroes had a genuine affection for Sam Roper because in the old days before the war he had been the young master of the house. Often Sam Roper would walk over to his Sister’s, a distance of several miles, by a short cut, which passed by the cottage of his Mother’s former over-seer, Peter Johnson. His one-horse farm had been given to him by the family and they provided him with the necessities that he needed after the war until he could get started in the new era. One day when Sam Roper was passing by, the

Peter Johnson's portrait has apparently hung in the church from the beginning with the following inscription written at the bottom: "Deacon Peter Johnson founder of Macedonia Church." His special status as "founder" is perhaps due to his devout commitment to Christianity and to the Baptist faith. He had come by his religious commitment naturally as his early owner, Matthew Mims, was deeply religious, having been a founder of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church in 1823 and having served as clerk of that church for twenty-five years. His more recent owner, Susan Curry Roper, was also a devout Baptist and an important member of Horn's Creek Baptist Church.



*Peter Johnson  
(c. 1820 - 18??)*

In the 1870 census Peter Johnson is shown as being 55 years old, a farm laborer, and born in South Carolina. His wife Sylvia is shown as being 40 years old, "keeping house," and also born in South Carolina. In this census, there are two children shown, Charlotte (18) and Milledge (10), as well as a Jacob Johnson (90), perhaps Peter's father, living in the household.<sup>22</sup> In the 1880 census he is shown as being 60 years old, born in South Carolina and living in the Pickens Township. His wife Sylvia is shown as being 45 years old and also born in South Carolina. In this census, there are no children or others living in the household.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, we have been able to find little else about Peter Johnson and his role at Macedonia Church.

**George Simkins:** George Simkins (c.1817-1890) was the son of Malinda Simkins (Morris or Brooks), the devout and last African American member of Edgefield Village Baptist Church who is discussed above. He was a brick mason. He became the husband of Charlotte Nance Simkins

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old negro hailed him with 'Come in here, young Master, and git your dinner. You just can't go to big Miss' and pass me by.' He called to his daughter, 'Charlotte, fry some eggs and bacon and make some biscuits and coffee for young Master's dinner.' Sam Roper sat on the porch and talked to the old man and Charlotte served him a deliciously cooked dinner."

<sup>22</sup> 1870 census.

<sup>23</sup> 1880 census.

who had already given birth to two sons, Paris Simkins and Andrew Simkins. He adopted the two boys and made a home for them. We do not have any specific information about what role he played in the founding of the church. He was greatly esteemed in Edgefield. Upon his death in 1890, The Edgefield Chronicle editorialized:

Since emancipation day, perhaps no colored man in our county has enjoyed so much of the respect, nay love, of our people of both races as George Simkins. This honored colored citizen died at his home in our town on Friday last, aged seventy-one years. George Simkins was a man whose heart was so brave, so honest, so kind, that he was enabled, even in the midst of the most trying and embarrassing circumstances, social, political and religious, to do his duty all around. He was also industrious and public spirited. On Saturday afternoon, we all followed him to his grave, white and black, high and low, rich and poor. The white and the black, alike, uttered tender words above his coffin. The white and the black, alike, sang his requiem. The white and the black, alike, mingled their tears at the spot where God gives him sleep.”<sup>24</sup>

**Paris Simkins:** Paris Simkins (1849-1930) was the son of Arthur Augustus Simkins (1819-1863), scion of the prominent Simkins family of Edgefield and later editor of The Edgefield Advertiser, and Charlotte Nance (1830-1915), his slave woman. Charlotte also had a younger son, Andrew Simkins (1851-1935) who was thought to be the son of a cousin of the newspaper editor.<sup>25</sup> Sometime after Andrew’s birth, Charlotte was married to George Simkins (c.1817-1890), another slave of the Simkins family, who adopted both of Charlotte’s half-brother sons and raised them as a family, as discussed above. At her death, The Edgefield Chronicle published this obituary of Paris’s mother:

Death of honored Colored Woman. On Wednesday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, Charlotte Simkins, the aged mother of Paris and Andrew Simkins, died at the home of the latter in her 81<sup>st</sup> year. She was a life-long Baptist – having been a member of Macedonia church ever since its erection during or soon after the War Between the States. With only two sons she died leaving the remarkably large number of eighteen grandchildren and twenty-one great grandchildren. Of late years she had been a considerable sufferer, and the end came as a great relief. Charlotte Simkins’s passing removes from

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<sup>24</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, February 19, 1890.

<sup>25</sup> For more detail on Charlotte Simkins, see Rainsford, Bettis C., “The Paris and Andrew Simkins Families of Edgefield,” published as a supplement to this history, 2021.

Edgefield one of the last links that binds the old ante-bellum times with the new, modern South – a realization that make the older heads sad and genuinely regretful.<sup>26</sup>

When the War broke out, at the age of only twelve or thirteen, Paris Simkins went to Virginia with the Confederate soldiers of Edgefield to serve as a barber. He was with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Kershaw's Brigade, and served through nearly all of the War. He witnessed a number of battles, including Gettysburg. After each battle he would go to the infirmary where he ministered to the wounded soldiers. In the aftermath of the Battle of Brandy Station, he heard of the wounding of Edgefield's General M. C. Butler whom he had known and went to the house where Butler had been taken and offered to minister to him. Butler treated him very kindly.<sup>27</sup>

After the War, Simkins returned to Edgefield and opened a barber shop. He also had a shoe shop.<sup>28</sup> He had begun to learn to read as a child when taught by his father's coachman. Later, he was assisted by the pastor of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, the Reverend Luther R. Gwaltney, who took great interest in him, baptized him, married him, and became his devoted friend.<sup>29</sup>

Beginning in 1866, Paris Simkins became active in the Republican Party and participated in many events during the period of Reconstruction. He was the head of the local militia, served on the jury commission and was a trial justice. In 1872 he was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives from Edgefield County and served in that position until 1876. As a legislator, he was described by even the Democratic press as a "colored man of more than average intelligence."<sup>30</sup> He was elected chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee where his legislative proposals attracted national attention. As chairman of that committee, he helped bring embezzlement charges against Niles Parker.<sup>31</sup> He was severely criticized by the white community for a bill which he introduced in 1875 to add a special tax of two mills on all property in Edgefield County to be

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<sup>26</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, July 8, 1915.

<sup>27</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, November 2, 1898, Paris Simkins's letter to the editor.

<sup>28</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 29, 1868.

<sup>29</sup> Simkins, Edwin Booth and other children, "A Brief Narrative of the Life of Paris Simkins, Esq. of Edgefield, S. C., Who Died September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1930." A copy of the Manuscript is in the possession of the author.

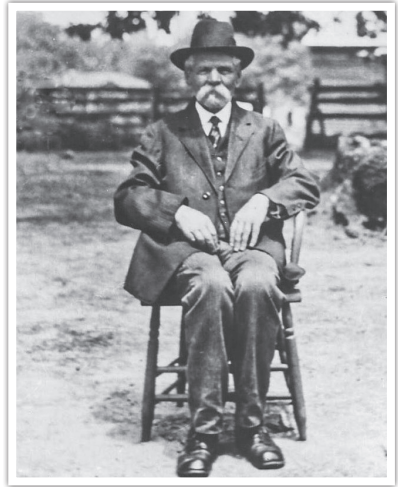
<sup>30</sup> *Columbia Daily Union Herald*, Feb. 26, 1875, quoting the *Charleston News and Courier*, as shown in Underwood, James Lowell and W. Lewis Burke, Jr., *At Freedom's Door: African American Founding Fathers and Lawyers in Reconstruction South Carolina*, University of South Carolina Press, 2005, p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> Underwood and Burke, p. 109.



paid to the unemployed laborers of the county who had been dismissed from their jobs because of their political activism.<sup>32</sup>

While in Columbia attending to his legislative duties, he enrolled in the School of Law at the South Carolina College, graduating with a Bachelor of Laws degree on December 13, 1876.<sup>33</sup> He was defeated in his campaign for reelection to the House of Representatives in 1876, losing by a vote of two to one, largely as a result of the intimidation and fraud in that election. He subsequently testified before a congressional committee about the election.<sup>34</sup>



*Paris Simkins*  
(1849 - 1930)

After Reconstruction Simkins continued his career as a barber, but in 1885 he was admitted to the South Carolina Bar with the support of Governor John C. Sheppard of Edgefield. However, he never had a substantial law practice and never tried cases in the courthouse.<sup>35</sup> It has been said that he was a secretary to Governor Sheppard of Edgefield for a period.<sup>36</sup> He served as postmaster in Edgefield at various times

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<sup>32</sup> *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, January 22, 1875; letter of A. J. Norris to R. Cantelou, February 5, 1875 in the possession of the author.

<sup>33</sup> Simkins, Edwin Booth and other children.

<sup>34</sup> Underwood and Burke, p. 110; *Papers in the case of Tillman vs. Smalls, Fifth District South Carolina*, November 9, 1877, House of Representatives, 45<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Mis. Doc. No. 11, Congressional Record.

<sup>35</sup> In a 1940 article about Rev. Alexander Bettis and Bettis Academy, local historian Miss Hortense Woodson stated that Paris Simkins represented a group of members of the Mount Canaan Baptist Association who filed suit against Rev. Bettis for his use of their funds to support the fledgling Bettis Academy. The article stated that after Paris argued his clients' position in court and Rev. Bettis represented himself, Bettis prevailed and was able to use the funds for Bettis Academy. However, a diligent search could find no such case in the court records for Edgefield or Aiken County. A copy of Miss Woodson's article is in the Bettis Academy file of the author. See also Nicholson, p. 28, which mentions the case but does not mention the involvement of Paris Simkins.

<sup>36</sup> According to an interview with Simkins' grandson, C. B. Bailey. See Underwood & Burke, p. 110.

during Republican Presidential administrations.<sup>37</sup> In 1884 he drew up the Constitution and By-Laws of the Mutual Aid and Burial Society and was its first president. He was also actively involved in the Knights of Pythias chapter in Edgefield.<sup>38</sup> Both of these organizations met in the two-story building erected adjacent to Macedonia Church.

According to a family memoir, from early manhood to ripe old age he was a great Sunday school and church worker, teaching the Bible class for the church.<sup>39</sup> He is also said to have been a licensed preacher.<sup>40</sup> However, it is interesting to note that when the church celebrated its Centennial in 1969, he was not listed as “Deceased Deacon.”<sup>41</sup>

Paris Simkins was married in 1868 to Mary Ann Nobles (1850-1916). To this union were born sixteen children. Upon her death in 1916, the *Edgefield Chronicle* noted that “she was a good woman, a good mother and a good wife. She was the faithful mother of sixteen well reared, honest and capable sons and daughters. She was also a faithful member and one of the organizers of the Macedonia Baptist church. . . .”<sup>42</sup>

Paris Simkins died on September 26, 1930 at the age of 81. *The Edgefield Advertiser* published his obituary as follows:

Death of Paris Simkins: Sunday, September 27, Paris Simkins, one of the oldest persons in Edgefield, especially among the colored people, died at his home here. He was born in Edgefield 81 years ago. During the reconstruction period he was a conspicuous figure in Edgefield and in the state, being a member of the legislature in 1876. But for fifty years or more he has given no attention to politics, going in and out among our people an humble and respected citizen. He was a lawyer but never practiced in the Edgefield court. Paris Simkins loved Edgefield and was loyal to the place of his birth. He had children residing in Columbia and in the North who urged him in his old age to live with them, but he

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<sup>37</sup> Records of the Post Office showing Paris Simkins to have been appointed Postmaster at Edgefield on October 31, 1887.

<sup>38</sup> Simkins, Edwin Booth and other children.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> This assertion appeared in a manuscript page by Francis Frederick, a copy of which is in the files of the author, and was repeated in Burton, p. 256, and in Underwood & Burke, p. 109. However, we have found no other evidence of Paris Simkins being licensed as a preacher. The fact that his son and other family failed to mention it in their “A Brief Narrative of the Life of Paris Simkins, Esq. of Edgefield,” written at the time of his death, suggests that it was not true.

<sup>41</sup> *Macedonia Baptist Church Centennial Program*, Sunday, December 7, 1969, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, November 23, 1916.

preferred to live, die and be buried in Edgefield.<sup>43</sup>

**Lawrence Cain:** One of the more important of the Macedonia founders was a twenty-four-year-old named Lawrence Cain. Born in 1844, Cain is believed to have been the son of a slave woman named Jane and her well-to-do owner, Dr. Sampson V. Cain who owned a large plantation in the vicinity of Ninety-Six and who had built a substantial mansion in 1850 just south of the Village of Greenwood. The house still stands there. Dr. Cain was a major proponent of education and, in all probability, was the one who taught young Lawrence to read and write, and master the many other subjects constituting a basic education. Following the death of Sampson Cain in 1858, Lawrence was apparently sold to Major Zachariah W. Carwile (1818-1887) of Edgefield.<sup>44</sup> Carwile lived in the Village of Edgefield on the Road to Cambridge, now Buncombe Street, at the site of the house now known as the Adams-Mims House.<sup>45</sup> Lawrence was said to be the “favored pet” of Major Carwile.<sup>46</sup>



Lawrence Cain  
(1844 -1884)

When the War broke out in 1861, Major Carwile’s son, Thomas M.

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<sup>43</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 3, 1930. Another interesting perspective on Paris Simkins has been passed down to us in the autobiography of the eminent Southern historian, Francis Butler Simkins (1897-1966), who grew up in Edgefield. See Simkins, Francis Butler, *Memoirs of Litchwood, “I Have Things to Tell,” Francis Butler Simkins Remembers the Edgefield of His Youth*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2016, pp. 141-142.

<sup>44</sup> Cherry, Kevin M., Sr., *Virtue of Cain – From Slave to Senator*, Rocky Pond Press, Tokoma Park, MD, 2019, pp. 13-21.

<sup>45</sup> Bonham, Milledge Lipscomb, “Has the Advertiser Come,” *The Edgefield Advertiser*, February 12, 1936. The original house where Major Carwile lived burned in 1902 and the present house was rebuilt by Mr. Thomas J. Adams, owner and editor of *The Edgefield Advertiser*.

<sup>46</sup> The source of the “favored pet” description is unclear. Cherry, in his *Virtue of Cain* (p. 12) indicates that his source was Foner, Eric, *Freedom’s Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders during Reconstruction*, Revised edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), p. 35. However, none of the sources indicated by Foner document the use of this term.

Carwile (1844-1908) volunteered as a private with the Edgefield Rifles, Company D of the 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment Infantry, part of General Samuel McGowan's brigade. Lawrence went along with Thomas as his body servant and they both served throughout the War. As a result of his heroism at the Seven Days Battles, Carwile was promoted to the rank of Sergeant Major. At the end of the War, Carwile and Cain were with General Lee at Appomattox and surrendered. Cain had been wounded in the right leg with a gunshot and was transferred to the hospital where he was initially listed as a "Rebel" soldier and a Confederate Sergeant. Later that was corrected to show him as a "CSA Servant." Doubtless his extremely light skin had been the cause of his misidentification. Eventually both Carwile and Cain made their way back to Edgefield.<sup>47</sup>

Following Cain's return from Virginia, he began teaching the young freedmen in a school believed to be in the Buncombe neighborhood. The editor of *The Edgefield Advertiser*, James T. Bacon, was invited to watch the young students taking their examinations and then partake in a picnic at Mrs. Sheppard's spring. The editor wrote a glowing account of the day,<sup>48</sup> excerpts of which can be read in the accompanying "Story of the Edgefield Academy" which is published herewith. Cain's school also came to the attention of William Stone, who headed the Freedmen's Bureau in this part of South Carolina, whose comments can also be read in "The Story of the Edgefield Academy."<sup>49</sup>

In 1869 Cain began to acquire a farm southeast of the Town of Edgefield along what is now known as Gary Hill Road where his neighbors included another prominent black man, Henry Cohen.<sup>50</sup> This same year he also acquired the house and lot of the late Edmund Penn in the Town of Edgefield just one block north of the Court House Square where the Heath Building now stands on the north side of Simkins Street.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cherry, pp. 22-29.

<sup>48</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 11, 1866.

<sup>49</sup> Stone, William, *Letters and Endorsements*, October 1, 1868, Freedmen's Bureau File, Record of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, National Archives, Washington, DC. Stone's writings have now been published in a book edited by Suzanne Stone Johnson and Robert Allison Johnson, *Bitter Freedom, William Stone's Record of Service in the Freedman's Bureau*, University of South Carolina Press, 2008, page 37.

<sup>50</sup> Deed of Thomas W. Carwile to Lawrence Cain for 46.5 acres, dated March 27, 1869, recorded in the Edgefield County Archives in Book TTT at Page 291. By the time of his death Cain had expanded his farm to more than 200 acres.

<sup>51</sup> Deed of H. W. Addison to Lawrence Cain, dated November 1, 1869, recorded in the Edgefield County Archives in Book TTT at Page 295.

In 1868 Cain became increasingly involved in the Republican party in Edgefield. He joined with another freedman in a letter to Governor Robert K. Scott about Democratic violence in the county.<sup>52</sup> In the fall of 1868, he was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives and served in that role until 1872 when he was elected to the South Carolina State Senate.<sup>53</sup> After a four-year term, he was defeated in the 1876 election due to intimidation and fraud.<sup>54</sup> He subsequently testified before a congressional committee about the election and served as counsel for the newly-elected Congressman, Robert Smalls in the contest before the United States House of Representatives.<sup>55</sup>

Cain also held numerous other offices, including registrar (1867), delegate to the South Carolina labor convention of 1869, warden for the Town of Edgefield (1870), census enumerator (1870), assistant marshal, assistant county assessor (1872), commissioner of elections (1872-1874), incorporator and a director of the Anderson, Aiken, Port Royal and Charleston Railroad (1873-1874), alternate delegate to Republican National Convention in 1872, delegate in 1876, member of the board of regents of the state lunatic asylum in 1876. Additionally, Cain was active in the state militia from 1873-1876, serving as quartermaster of the Third Brigade (1873) and colonel of the Ninth Regiment, Second Brigade (1873-1876).<sup>56</sup>

Beginning in 1873, Cain, like Paris Simkins, studied law for several years at the School of Law at the South Carolina College and received his degree in 1876.<sup>57</sup>

Following Reconstruction, in 1882, Cain served as Chairman of the Edgefield County Republican Party. Also, in that year he was appointed Deputy Collector of the Internal Revenue for the state which necessitated his move to Columbia.<sup>58</sup> There he contracted tuberculosis and died on February 22, 1884, at the age of forty. He was buried at Macedonia Church,

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<sup>52</sup> Lawrence Cain and David Harris to Gov. R. K. Scott, 1868, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, quoted in Cherry, pp. 62-63.

<sup>53</sup> Bailey, N. Louise, Mary L. Morgan & Carolyn R. Taylor, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate, 1776-1985*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1986, p. 245.

<sup>54</sup> Underwood and Burke, p. 110.

<sup>55</sup> *Papers in the case of Tillman vs. Smalls, Fifth District South Carolina*, November 9, 1877, House of Representatives, 45<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Mis. Doc. No. 11, Congressional Record.

<sup>56</sup> Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate*, p. 246.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

but, regrettably, his grave was not marked. Consequently, we do not know where in the cemetery he lies. *The Edgefield Advertiser* published the following obituary:

### Burial of Lawrence Cain

The remains of Lawrence Cain, so prominent in our county as a colored political leader previous to 1876 were buried at Macedonia Church in our town on Sunday afternoon last. He had died of consumption in Columbia the Friday before. He had lived in Columbia and filled the position of Deputy Collector of the Internal Revenue for a year or two preceding his death. He was about 40 years of age and leaves a wife and six children. In the day of his power, Cain was not malignant. Circumstances threw him upon the top of a wave in an evil day but he was, nevertheless, ever an amiable and well-disposed man.<sup>59</sup>

In all of his dealings Cain was absolutely honest. The enormous corruption in the state government during Reconstruction disgusted him. When the carpetbagger governor, Robert K. Scott, was impeached after enormous and undeniable corruption, Cain was alone among the Republican Edgefield legislative delegation members in voting to remove Scott from office.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, here in Edgefield County he recognized the dishonest and self-serving acts of the scalawag Phillip Eichelberger and fought to keep our county government honest.<sup>61</sup>

**Henry Cain:** (c. 1810-18??) In the 1870 census, Henry Cain(s) is shown as being 60 years old, a mulatto, a farm laborer in Edgefield County. He is shown as living with June (?) Cain(s) (60), a midwife, and Jane Hatcher (60), a domestic servant. Both June and Jane are listed as black – not mulatto. We have not been able to determine what, if any, family relationship he may have had with Lawrence Cain. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find anything else about Henry Cain.

**Robert A. Green:** Robert A. Green (1839-1915) was an honored teacher among the Edgefield black community for more than forty years. The son of Austin Green, he was born in Edgefield County on July 28, 1839.<sup>62</sup> The first reference we find to Green is in *The Edgefield Advertiser* for August 14, 1867, where he was appointed registrar of elections for

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<sup>59</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, February 28, 1884.

<sup>60</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, December 28, 1871.

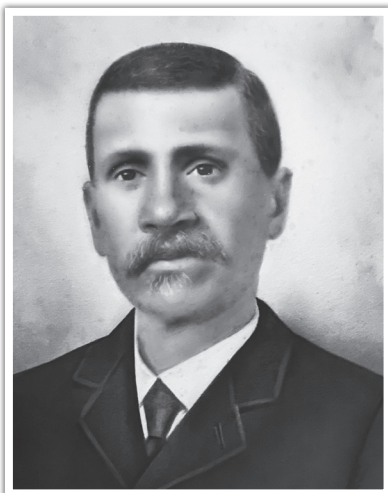
<sup>61</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 4, 1872.

<sup>62</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, August 27, 1915; State of South Carolina death certificate. August 30, 1915.



the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment east of Johnston and up to Richardson's (Saluda) under General Sickles' decree.<sup>63</sup> The next year he was mentioned in an 1868 report of Major William Stone to the Freedmen's Bureau: "A Mr. Green also taught a private school for some time, but last year [Lawrence Cain and Robert Green] united and kept one school."<sup>64</sup> In 1869, *The Edgefield Advertiser* commented favorably on Cain's and Green's school.<sup>65</sup> In 1872 Green was listed as a poll manager for the Shaw's Mill district in the fall election.<sup>66</sup> In 1873 he was appointed a member of the financial investigation committee to look into the County expenditures, debt and budget.<sup>67</sup>

For some reason, Robert Green was not listed in the 1870 census although we know from numerous sources that he was then living in Edgefield County. In the 1880 census he is shown as being 40 years old, a farmer, born in South Carolina and living in the Wise Township. His wife Mary is shown as being 25 years old, "keeping house," and also born in South Carolina. In this census, there are four children shown, Eldred (6), Walter (4), Lillie (3) and Mary (1), as well as a brother, Walker Green (29), who was a laborer.<sup>68</sup> By the 1900 census he had grown his family considerably, with a total of 10 children. This census shows his children to be Elbert [sic] (should it be Eldred?) (26), Walter (25), Lilla (22), Mary (21), Roberta (19), Samuel (17), Nina (15), Eva (12), Francis (10) and William (7). He is shown in this census as being a "teacher of school."<sup>69</sup>



*Robert Green*  
(1839-1915)

In 1895 he owned property on the southeast side of Edgefield, about two miles from the Court House, bounded on the north by Augusta Road, on the east by lands of Butler Gray, and just across from where the Ford

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<sup>63</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, August 14, 1867.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson and Johnson, p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 7, 1869.

<sup>66</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 10, 1872.

<sup>67</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 10, 1873.

<sup>68</sup> 1880 census.

<sup>69</sup> 1900 census.

dealership is currently located.<sup>70</sup>

Green was apparently in declining health by 1910 and died on August 27, 1915.<sup>71</sup> His obituary in *The Edgefield Chronicle* was as follows:

This week Robert A. Green, a highly respectable negro, and a leader of his people, died at the advanced age of 77 years. Robert was a son of old Austin Green, remembered well by our older inhabitants. He was a leading educator, having taught at Macedonia for many years. And he was a good religious man – always on the right side. His people will all do well to pattern after Robert Green’s life record.<sup>72</sup>

Robert Green was indeed an honored schoolteacher, having begun his teaching career at least as early as 1867 and continuing until his retirement circa 1913. His dedication to the schoolhouse at Macedonia was indeed remarkable. A photograph of him hangs on the rear wall in Macedonia Church, but sadly we have been unable to find his grave. Perhaps no marker was ever erected for him.<sup>73</sup>

**Willis Frazier:** In the 1870 census Willis Frazier (c. 1824-18??) is shown as 46 years old (making his birth year circa 1824), a blacksmith, born in South Carolina and living with Jane (28), a domestic servant, and children as follows: Washington (18), a blacksmith, Sophia (16), Moriah (14), a nurse, Martha (9), Eliza (7), Julia (4) and John (1). Willis Frazier and all of his household are listed as mulatto. Living near the prominent planter, Marshall Frazier (1806-1870), who is listed on the same page of the census, Willis was likely a former slave of Frazier’s and a resident of Frazier’s Oakley Park plantation.<sup>74</sup> In the estate papers of Benjamin Frazier (1779-1844), there is a notation that “Little Willis” was transferred to Marshall Frazier upon the death of his father.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Deed Book SSS, page 216, Book 4, page 125, Book 7, page 68, Edgefield County Archives.

<sup>71</sup> South Carolina Death Certificate.

<sup>72</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, August 27, 1915.

<sup>73</sup> Sameera Thurmond of Augusta, Georgia wrote a very credible history and genealogy “Robert A. Green and Family,” a copy of which is in the files of the author. She postulates that Robert Green was the son of Harper and Charlotte Pickens. However, her evidence of this is tenuous and is contradicted by the obituary of Green in *The Edgefield Chronicle* noted above which clearly states that he was the son of “old Austin Green.”

<sup>74</sup> 1880 Census.

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin Frazier estate file, Box 41, package 176, Edgefield County Archives, quoted in Lucas, Gloria Ramsey, *Slave Records of Edgefield County*, Edgefield County Historical Society, Edgefield, SC, 2010, page 130.

Shortly after the 1870 census was done, the family had apparently moved from South Carolina to northwest Louisiana where the 1880 census shows them living near the town of Webster. The family is shown in the 1880 census as follows: Willis Frazier, 55 years old, a blacksmith, born in South Carolina and living with Jennie (39), house keeper, Julia (14), a nurse, John (11), Emily (9), Marshall (6), Harmon G. (4) and Lizzie (9 months). Emily, Marshall, Harmon and Lizzie were born in Louisiana.<sup>76</sup> Willis's son Marshall was presumably named for his former master. Willis' moving to Louisiana ended his connection with Macedonia Church. We have been unsuccessful in finding any other information related to Willis Frazier.

**Rev. Joseph C. Burckett:** Although he was not one of the Trustees named in the 1869 deed, Joe Burckett was clearly a founder of Macedonia Church. On October 16, 1870, the minutes of the Village Baptist Church recorded: "The request of colored members to have Bro Joe Burket [*sic.*] ordained as a minister of the Gospel was on motion granted."<sup>77</sup> Presumably Rev. Burckett was then positioned to become the pastor of the new church. According to the church history in its 1969 Centennial Program, he served as pastor from its founding until 1887.<sup>78</sup> In the 1880 agricultural census, he is shown as farming six acres in the Pine Grove community of Edgefield County.<sup>79</sup> In 1887, according to the Church's Centennial Booklet, he was living in the Meeting Street community.<sup>80</sup>

Rev. Burckett's role at Macedonia Church was clarified in a 1905 issue of *The Edgefield Advertiser* where we find the following announcement: "Uncle Joe Burckett, the old colored minister who was as guileless as any colored man whom we ever knew and who was honored, respected and highly esteemed by all who knew him died last week. He was not only the founder of Macedonia Church but erected with his own hands the old church building that was torn down a few years ago."<sup>81</sup> Thus, any history of Macedonia Church must acknowledge the founding role played by Rev. Burckett.

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<sup>76</sup> 1880 census.

<sup>77</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, October 16, 1870, page 172.

<sup>78</sup> Waldo, Mrs. H. R., "History of the Church," *Macedonia Baptist Church Centennial Program*, Sunday, December 7, 1969.

<sup>79</sup> 1880 Agricultural census.

<sup>80</sup> Waldo. The 1900 census shows a Joseph Burckett living in the Gilbert Hollow section of Lexington County who was born in December of 1841 and had been married to a woman named Georgiana. This Joseph Burckett could neither read nor write. We suspect that this was not Edgefield's Joseph C. Burckett.

<sup>81</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, June 21, 1905.

## The 1880s & 1890s

As noted above, Rev. Joe C. Burckett served as pastor of Macedonia Church from its founding until 1887. At that time, as he was making his home at Meeting Street which necessitated a long trip into town, the church called for his resignation. The Reverend J. L. Mott then served as pastor for four years until a session was held at Mt. Moriah Church in 1891. The church minutes recorded that the church “regretted to give Reverend Mott up, but it was expected that it was about time he made his escape to the mountain.”<sup>82</sup> Next the Reverend S. W. Blythwood pastored Macedonia for several years until a session of the Association convened at Liberty Springs in 1896. The Reverend George A. Morgan (1838-1916) came next, serving from 1896 to 1901.<sup>83</sup> Rev. Morgan had been a slave of the Pickens family at Edgewood and was a pallbearer of the funeral of Mrs. Lucy Holcomb Pickens.<sup>84</sup> He had served as the founding pastor of Simmons Ridge Baptist Church in 1867 and had returned twice to their pulpit from 1880 to 1882 and from 1891 to 1896. After his service at Macedonia, he would return to Simmons Ridge from 1901 to 1907.<sup>85</sup> The 1969 “History of the Church” in Macedonia Church’s Centennial Booklet notes that Reverend George Morgan “was called as Barnabas and Paul – Jupiter and Mercury – because he was an eloquent speaker Macedonia tried to hold him as long as possible.”<sup>86</sup> We suspect that

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<sup>82</sup> Waldo. This reference to the “church minutes,” which were apparently used by Mrs. Waldo for the 1969 Centennial history of the church, indicates that such minutes did exist, but unfortunately no such minutes or other 19<sup>th</sup> century records have been found for this history, despite a diligent search. It is hoped that these minutes might one day be found among the possessions of some of the families of the leaders of the church, perhaps the family of Mrs. George (Hattie) Waldo, who apparently had access to them in 1969.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Lewis, Elizabeth Wittenmyer, *Queen of the Confederacy, The Innocent Deceits of Lucy Holcombe Pickens*, University of North Texas Press, Denton, Texas, 20??, p. 197.

<sup>85</sup> Historical notes compiled by Deacon Eugene J. Hamilton which can be found in the Simmons Ridge Baptist Church file of the author.

<sup>86</sup> Waldo. Upon his death in 1916, the *Edgefield Chronicle* had a rather lengthy obituary of the Rev. George A. Morgan in which it was stated: “After emancipation, when he had learned to read – a feat he somehow accomplished – he directed nearly all of his reading and study to an acquirement of a knowledge of the Bible. This fact, together with his native ability, easily enabled him to become in the early 70’s a preacher for his people, in which capacity he did great and lasting service for the uplift and betterment of his race, not only in Edgefield County and contiguous territory, but among the negro Baptists of the state he came to be a recognized leader,

he left in 1901 when he resumed the pulpit at Simmons Ridge.

From its founding, Macedonia played an important part in managing the Sunday Schools of the county. The Macedonia Baptist Sunday School Convention, composed of about 30 schools, assembled in July of 1882 in its seventh annual meeting and continued for three days.<sup>87</sup> Several years later, in February of 1884, the Macedonia Cemetery was the site of the burial of one of the Church's most important founders, Lawrence Cain. Cain had moved to Columbia where he filled the position of Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue but died there of consumption at the early age of forty. His death was a great loss to the church and to the Edgefield community.<sup>88</sup> At the end of July, 1885 there was another meeting of the Macedonia Sunday School Convention which was well attended.<sup>89</sup> Later in September, 1885, a lecture was delivered at Macedonia by the Rev. M. W. Gilbert, "a young and intelligent colored man of Sumter, . . . a student of Madison College, New York" on "The Negro in Ancient History."<sup>90</sup>

The Church also continued its religious mission of bringing new souls to the Lord: In October, 1892, *The Edgefield Advertiser* noted "A Large Harvest, Forty-eight colored persons were recently baptized into the fellowship of the Macedonia church of our town."<sup>91</sup> The following year, in September, 1893, "Twenty-two converts united with the Macedonia (colored) Baptist Church during the recent revival, and were baptized last Sunday afternoon by Rev. G. A. Morgan, pastor in charge."<sup>92</sup>

A frequent visitor to Macedonia Church beginning in the 1890s was Rev. Richard Carroll, agent for the American Baptist Publication Society and later president of the Colored Reformatory and Industrial school at Columbia. He was the invited speaker in September of 1895 and would return many times in the next several decades. *The Edgefield Advertiser*

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and an acknowledged power for good." *Edgefield Chronicle*, July 6, 1916.

<sup>87</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, August 3, 1882.

<sup>88</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, February 28, 1884.

<sup>89</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, August 6, 1885.

<sup>90</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, September 3, 1885.

<sup>91</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 13, 1892.

<sup>92</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 5, 1893. It should be noted that during this period many pastors served at multiple churches at the same time. Thus, although the record provided to us in the Centennial Booklet would suggest that Rev. G. A. Morgan did not commence his term at Macedonia until 1896, he may well have been filling in at Macedonia in this 1893 revival when, according to the records at Simmons Ridge Baptist Church, he was still serving as pastor of that church.

gave an extensive account of his inspiring speech on Thursday and Friday nights, September 12 & 13 of 1895.<sup>93</sup>

## The New Church

With the new millennium came a desire to replace the original church with a new and larger building. The Town of Edgefield had undergone somewhat of a boom following the completion of the spur rail line into town in 1888. New businesses were established, and new commercial buildings were built in the ruins of the 1881 and 1884 fires which had decimated much of the business district on Main Street and on the north and east sides of the Courthouse Square. The population of the town had exploded from about 500 persons in 1865 to 850 in 1880 to 1,650 in 1891 and to 2,500 by 1900, as people moved from the outlying farms and plantations into town.<sup>94</sup> The neighborhood



*Macedonia Church in 1912*

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<sup>93</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, September 18, 1895.

<sup>94</sup> Taylor, Tonya Browder and Glenn, Tricia Price, *Remembering Edgefield, 1891* in two volumes, Old Edgefield Publishing Company, Johnston, SC, 2003, Volume 2, page 129. This two volume *Remembering Edgefield, 1891* by Ms. Taylor and



around Macedonia Church was not left out, as many new houses were built on Simkins and Macedonia Streets by and for new African American residents moving into town. The devastating fire of 1892 destroyed most of the southern and western sides of the Square except for the Courthouse and the Jail, but the people of Edgefield, imbued with the economic boom mentality, soon built new buildings to replace those lost in the fire.<sup>95</sup>

It was in this environment that the original Macedonia Church building was torn down and the present building was erected in 1901. On March 20<sup>th</sup> of that year *The Edgefield Advertiser* reported: “Macedonia, the colored Baptist Church, has been torn down and a new church will be erected on the same spot at an early date.”<sup>96</sup> Several months later, on July 3, 1901, *The Advertiser* noted:

The old Macedonia church bell has been placed in the steeple of the new church, and under Sewell Smith’s skilful hands the church will soon be completed and the bell peal forth to invite the members and congregation to meet in their own house of worship again. The zeal of the colored sisters is to be commended. They have undertaken to raise enough money to place all the windows in the new church, and by all honest means, are succeeding admirably in their undertaking.<sup>97</sup>

On July 31, 1901, the same newspaper had the following follow-up article: “Macedonia Baptist Church (colored) has been so completed, that services are being held in the building. They observed Children’s Day services last Sunday evening. This church is a monument to their industry and zeal in a good cause.”<sup>98</sup> On August 28, 1901, *The Advertiser* noted: “The laying of the cornerstone of Macedonia church will be celebrated next Saturday, 31<sup>st</sup> instant. On Sunday, the dedication of the church will take place.” The other Edgefield newspaper, *The Edgefield Chronicle*, contained the following letter on September 5, 1901:

Thanks from Macedonia. The subjoined preamble and resolutions, passed at a late called meeting of Macedonia church, have been brought to us with a request that they be published in the *Chronicle*:

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Ms. Glenn contains an excellent description of Edgefield’s economic “boom.” See also Rainsford, Bettis C., *Central Business Study for Edgefield, South Carolina*, privately published, 1978, pp. 15-16; Rainsford, Bettis C., *The First Century of the Edgefield Mill*, Concurrent Technologies Corporation, privately published, 1999, pp. 6-15; and Rainsford, Bettis C., *The History of the Piedmont Technical School Edgefield Campus*, Piedmont Technical College, 1998, pp. 2-8.

<sup>95</sup> Taylor and Price, p. 129.

<sup>96</sup> *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 13, 1892.

<sup>97</sup> *Edgefield Advertiser*, October 5, 1893.

<sup>98</sup> *Edgefield Advertiser*, July 31, 1901.

Whereas, as Christian people, we rejoice at all expressions and proofs of Christian brotherly love, Therefore Be It Resolved, That the thanks of Macedonia church are due, and are hereby tendered, to the Rev. Dr. L. R. Gwaltney for his earnest and eloquent sermon on the occasion of the dedication of our new church on Sunday afternoon last; to Mr. James T. Bacon for so kindly and so feelingly presiding at our organ; to Mrs. Kate W. Cheatham for not only leading our singing, but for several vases of rare and beautiful flowers for our pulpit; and to our many other white friends who so kindly attended our dedication services and contributed to our building fund. Robert A. Green, Church Clerk.”<sup>99</sup>

We have been unable to find any record of the architect of the church building. From the above-cited article in *The Advertiser* we discern that the contractor was Sewell Smith.<sup>100</sup> We do not have any information about who Sewell Smith was or what other structures he may have built. However, the magnificent building was clearly a major undertaking, and is a credit to Mr. Smith and to whoever designed it.

It is interesting that in these articles about the new church no mention was made as to who the pastor was. As noted above, we believe that Rev. George Morgan served as pastor from 1896 until 1901. Who then took over as pastor? Did that pastor inspire the construction of the new church? Or was there a group of deacons and other laity who had provided the inspiration and the means to make this happen? Was the fact that no one was given credit a result of an *unostentatious* mentality controlling the church? An article in *The Edgefield Advertiser* in March of 1908 noted:

Very Credible Showing. There is not a colored church in the county that is more thoroughly alive and progressive than Macedonia, the Baptist church of the colored people in Edgefield. Several years ago, they tore down their old church and erected a spacious and substantial building in its stead. On last Sunday, the members of the church held special exercises for the purpose of taking a collection, the funds to be used in painting the interior of the church. The sum of forty-odd dollars was raised, which was an exceedingly creditable showing. Rev. Frank Weaver is pastor of the church, and some of the most active workers among the laity are Andrew W. Simkins, Wallace A. Morgan and Robert A. Green. There are probably many other active members whose names are not familiar to the writer.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, September 5, 1901.

<sup>100</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 3, 1901.

<sup>101</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, March 4, 1908.

While *The Advertiser* was giving credit for the church's prosperity to Rev. Weaver, Andrew Simkins, Wallace Morgan and Robert Green, it is really interesting that no one at the church was giving – or taking – credit. We suspect that the answer to this lack of acknowledgment of contributions is a result of the personality of one who controlled the church's affairs for more than half a century, and whose *unostentatious* approach caused him to eschew taking credit or giving credit to anyone else – Andrew Simkins.

## Andrew W. Simkins

1851-1935

Andrew Whitfield Simkins was born on May 15, 1851<sup>102</sup> to Charlotte Nance (1830-1915),<sup>103</sup> a slave belonging to Arthur Augustus Simkins (1819-1863), scion of the prominent Simkins family of Edgefield and later editor of *The Edgefield Advertiser*. Family stories state that Andrew's father was a cousin of Charlotte's owner, Arthur Simkins.<sup>104</sup>

Unlike his older half-brother, Paris Simkins, who became actively involved in Republican politics during the Reconstruction period and went on to become a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives and to earn a law degree from the South Carolina College, Andrew Simkins apparently was not involved in politics nor did he seek higher education. Instead, he became a farmer and prospered in that vocation throughout his life.

Andrew Simkins was married twice. His first wife was Mary A. Elizabeth Stuard (1860-1906) and his second wife was Mary Bedenbaugh (1871-1965). He had ten children. Beginning in 1887 he began to assemble his home farm of 132 acres on the edge of Edgewood Plantation at a total cost of \$2,102 and lived there until his death.<sup>105</sup> What is interesting about

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<sup>102</sup> Andrew Simkins's birth date is shown on his tombstone as May 15, 1854. Other sources have shown 1851. His 1935 death certificate shows that he was 84 years old at his death which gives credence to the 1851 date which we have concluded is the correct date.

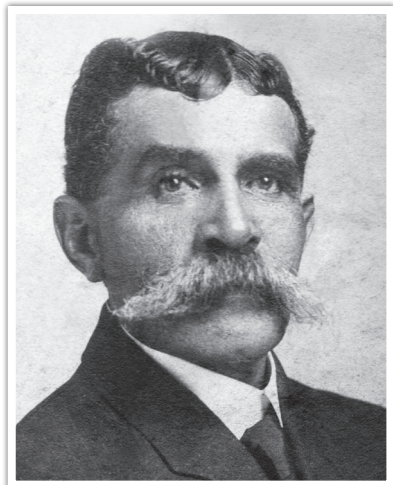
<sup>103</sup> See more information about Charlotte under the biographical sketch of Paris Simkins above.

<sup>104</sup> For more detailed information on the parentage of Andrew W. Simkins see Rainsford, Bettis C., "The Paris and Andrew Simkins Families of Edgefield," published as a supplement to this history, 2021.

<sup>105</sup> Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book 10 at page 585-586, deed dated December 15.1887 and recorded December 15.1887; Deed Book 13 at page 214, deed dated November 8, 1890 and recorded November 18, 1890; Deed Book 17 at page 693,

his land acquisitions is that each deed conveyed the property not to him, but to his wife, Mary A. Elizabeth S. Simkins. This is perhaps evidence of his extreme conservatism in financial affairs; that he wanted to put his property in the name of his wife, beyond the reach of his creditors. He had seen his brother Paris's house sold in foreclosure and bought in by Paris's wife, Mary Ann Nobles Simkins.<sup>106</sup> Andrew's lawyer in all of his land acquisitions was former Governor John C. Sheppard.

In the records of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, there is no mention of Andrew Simkins being a member of that church or of being



*Andrew W. Simkins*  
(1851 - 1935)

dismissed by letter to join Macedonia, as was the case of his half-brother Paris, his mother Charlotte and his stepfather, George. This may be because he was still very young (just 20 years old). Although the author strongly suspects that he became actively involved in Macedonia Church soon after the construction of the original building, the first concrete evidence found so far of his involvement is the 1908 article in *The Edgefield Advertiser* which identifies him as one of three members of the laity who were active workers in the church. In 1911 he was one of the trustees of Macedonia Church deeding the quarter acre site for the new school

building and one of the trustees for the new school receiving the property.<sup>107</sup> Later in 1911, *The Advertiser* editor credited "Andrew Simkins, who is always on the alert for an opportunity to be of real service to his people," with organizing an event to raise money for the new school building.<sup>108</sup>

Interestingly, although his brother Paris Simkins has always been thought by the larger Edgefield community to be the power behind Macedonia Church, the last evidence we have of Paris's actual official

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deed dated March 18, 1899 and recorded April 14, 1899; Deed Book 19 at page 505, deed dated September 2, 1902 and recorded September 9, 1902; Deed Book 20 at page 303, deed dated January 20, 1905 and recorded January 21, 1905.

<sup>106</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, July 8, 1886.

<sup>107</sup> Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book 21 at page 644, deed dated April 12, 1911 and recorded April 17, 1911.

<sup>108</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 4, 1911.

involvement in Macedonia was in the 1869 deed from Mrs. Bland.<sup>109</sup> Thus, what our research suggests is that it was Andrew Simkins, not his half-brother Paris, who became the real force behind Macedonia Church.

In his 1935 obituary, *The Edgefield Advertiser* gave us a vivid picture of the character of Andrew Simkins:

Andrew was a farmer from his early life and succeeded above the average, having gathered about him more property than most men of his race. He was economical and thrifty always dealing justly with those who worked for him. He reared a large family and gave them educational advantages. He was a leader of his race, always quiet and unostentatious. His counsel was sought in his church, Macedonia, where he was a member of the official board for probably a half century or longer. Andrew Simkins was honest and upright, his daily walk and conversation being an example worthy of emulation by his people. When he made you a promise or statement concerning a business transaction it could be relied upon to the letter.<sup>110</sup>

Although our evidence is admittedly slim, what emerges from this is a view that Andrew Simkins was a no-nonsense, hardworking and very conservative leader for the church who provided a steady hand for the ship for more than half a century. As noted by *The Advertiser* editor, he was economical and thrifty, but quiet and *unostentatious* [emphasis added]. This unostentatious part of his personality may have been the reason that he eschewed taking credit for his leadership or giving others credit as well. Perhaps that is why no one was given credit for the building of the new church. Additionally, he was undoubtedly cognizant of his Caucasian ancestry, and perhaps that appreciation played a part in the events which began to fracture the congregation in the period after 1900, as is discussed below.

## **Reverend Frank Augustus Weaver**

**1863-1942**

Although we have not yet found documentation to substantiate it, Rev. Frank Augustus Weaver (1863-1942) may have become pastor upon the resignation of Rev. George A. Morgan in 1901 and may have been the minister at the time of the construction and dedication of the new church building.<sup>111</sup>

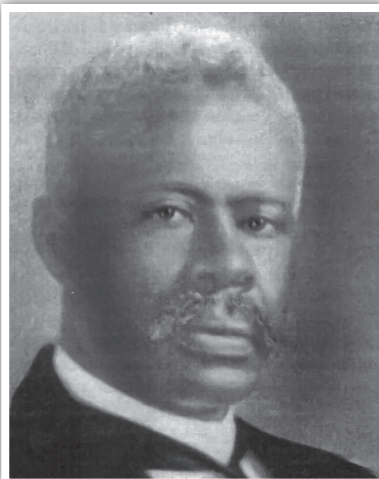
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<sup>109</sup> Paris Simkins was not even listed as a “Deceased Deacon” in the 1969 Centennial Booklet.

<sup>110</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, November 20, 1935.

<sup>111</sup> We do know that Rev. Weaver was the pastor of Shaw’s Creek Baptist Church at

Rev. Weaver was born in 1863 to Fannie and Allen Weaver in the Center Springs community of Edgefield County. His father was a slave owned by the Allen family. His mother was owned by the neighboring Tompkins family. After the marriage of Fannie and Allen, the Allen family gave Allen to the Tompkins family so that they and the other children belonging to the Tompkins family could all live together as one family.<sup>112</sup> Rev. Weaver attended grade school in 1870 at Simmons Ridge Church where his teachers were Mr. Simmons and Mr. S. H. Chiles. He was baptized in 1876 at the age of thirteen and attended the South Carolina College, now the University of South Carolina, in 1877. He had always wanted to preach and accepted the call in 1877.<sup>113</sup>



*Rev. Frank Augustus Weaver  
(1863-1942)*

Rev. Weaver was married to Alice Mathis, the daughter of Moses and Sarah Mathis, in 1884. He and his bride labored hard during those lean times of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and eventually acquired a substantial amount of farmland near the intersection of Center Springs Road and the Old Chapell's Ferry Road. In 1911 he built the Oak Grove school house near Center Springs for the young black children in that neighborhood. Rev. Weaver and his wife also provided the leadership for the acquisition of land at Edgefield Academy so that black children could have better school facilities in which to receive their education.<sup>114</sup>

Over the course of his life Rev. Weaver served as pastor to a number of churches, including Bethlehem Baptist Church, Bland Baptist Church,

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this same time and that he continued as the Shaw's Creek pastor throughout the time of his pastorate at Macedonia Church. See *The Edgefield Advertiser*, May 11, 1910.

<sup>112</sup> Weaver, Rev. William C., *Memoirs of Frank Augustus Weaver, 1863-1842*, privately published, 2012, page 8.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, page 7.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* For the Oak Grove School, see also *The Edgefield Chronicle*, November 9, 1911. With regard to the land acquisition for the Edgefield Academy, see "The Story of the Edgefield Academy." Rev. Weaver may well have worked with and inspired Governor Sheppard to sell the land and the School District Trustees, Dr. W. C. Lynch, Mr. George Mims and Mr. J. W. Kemp, to go forward with purchase.



Macedonia Baptist Church, Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, and Shaw's Creek Baptist Church. Although it was not mentioned in the biographical booklet published by his grandson, he was also pastor of Rosa Hill Baptist Church and indeed played a key role in the founding of that church as discussed below. Rev. Weaver was invited to speak at more than twenty different churches through the years. According to a little black book which he kept, he baptized 2,984 persons, officiated at 2,085 funerals and married 1,042 couples. When he died in 1942, his funeral service at Macedonia Church was called the largest colored funeral ever held here, with more than a thousand Caucasians and African Americans in attendance.

In his obituary, *The Edgefield Advertiser* stated:

The death of Reverend Frank Augustus Weaver last week brought to an end one of the State's most remarkable colored men. Walking always in humility, in kindness and courtesy emblematic of the best of any race. He formed a gentle and beloved figure in the community, yet a powerful influence among his people, leading them always in the right path through example and through his sermons which sometimes contained stinging rebukes and the most dire warnings.<sup>115</sup>

## The 1910s and 1920s

Although the Edgefield Academy was a separate institution, the leaders of Macedonia Church were constantly involved in the progress of the Academy and so those activities merit attention in this church history. In 1911, we find a notice in *The Advertiser* stating: "The colored people have planned to give a big barbecue Saturday at the fair grounds in order to raise funds to complete the large school building which they recently erected near Macedonia church."<sup>116</sup> A few months later, *The Advertiser* noted there would be a colored people's day at the fair. The paper credits "Andrew Simkins, who is always on the alert for an opportunity to be of real services to his people," with helping to organize the event. A portion of the proceeds for the day were to be shared with the school being built near Macedonia.<sup>117</sup> Several years after the new school building was constructed, there was an announcement in *The Edgefield Advertiser* that "The colored teachers rural school association will meet at Macedonia church in the town of Edgefield, S. C. on the third Saturday of April next, being the 19<sup>th</sup> day of said month at 10 o'clock a. m. All teachers, ministers and others who are friends to

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<sup>115</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, August 14, 1942, quoted in *Memoirs of Frank Augustus Weaver*, page 25.

<sup>116</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 26, 1911.

<sup>117</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 4, 1911.

education are urgently requested to be present. Able and experienced teachers will address the meeting on the subject of education.”<sup>118</sup>

With the entry of the United States into World War I in early 1917, Rev. Weaver and the other leaders of Macedonia Church were very supportive of the nation’s war efforts.<sup>119</sup> When the War was over and the soldiers were returning home, Macedonia participated in the dedication of the World War I Memorial Tablet on the Court House, and then hosted a dinner for the returning colored soldiers.<sup>120</sup> Rev. Weaver was also deeply concerned about the epidemic of influenza that shocked the nation and world in the fall of 1918. Churches and schools in Edgefield County had been closed by order of the governor to stop the spread of the disease which killed thousands of Edgefieldians in the fall of 1918 and the spring of 1919. Rev. Weaver’s letter to the editor in the *Edgefield Chronicle* on October 17, 1918 doubtless provided comfort to many in Edgefield County.<sup>121</sup>

Each year on April 9<sup>th</sup>, the African American community in Edgefield celebrated “Emancipation Day,” and Macedonia Church always played a big part in organizing and hosting that celebration. In 1919, the following notice appeared in the local newspapers:

#### Emancipation Celebration.

To the Colored People of Edgefield County.

#### Proclamation.

The Annual Emancipation Celebration will take place on Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at Macedonia Church. The orator of the day will be Rev. G. G. Daniels of Beaufort, S. C., and Mr. N. G. Evans of Edgefield. Dinner will be given to all soldiers of the county. Soldiers will please turn out in their uniforms.

A. W. Simkins, Chairman

S. B. Smith  
Rev. F. A. Weaver  
W. H. Holloway  
E. W. Anderson  
Charlie Bussey  
Solomon Atkinson

G. K. Jones  
Rev. M. E. Gordney  
Harry Oliphant  
Scott Stevens  
Wesley Oliphant  
M. A. Adams

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<sup>118</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 2 & 16, 1913.

<sup>119</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, May 23, 1917, *The Edgefield Chronicle*, July 5, 1917, November 8, 1917 & June 6, 1918.

<sup>120</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, August 6, 1919.

<sup>121</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, October 17, 1918.

After the event, *The Advertiser* reported that:

The attendance was larger than usual and the order was splendid throughout the day. A colored band dispensed music at intervals throughout the day. About one o'clock a procession of colored soldiers was formed at Macedonia church and marched down Main Street and around the public square, being led by the brass band, followed by the members of the colored Red Cross. After the parade, all assembled in Macedonia church where an appropriate programme was carried out. Three addresses were made, one by Hon. N. G. Evans. Dinner was served to the colored soldiers. The day was pleasantly spent by the great throng of colored people who assembled from all parts of the county.<sup>123</sup>

While we have not yet found definitive information as to the term of Rev. Weaver's pastorate at Macedonia, we suspect that he began there in 1901 and continued for a number of years, probably until at least 1921. On May 11, 1910, he wrote for the *Advertiser* a "Tribute to Alfred Butler by his Pastor."<sup>124</sup> A note in the *Edgefield Chronicle* indicates that he was still there in 1918.<sup>125</sup> On March 4, 1920, he wrote for the *Chronicle* a moving tribute to Sister Emma Jones who had been a teacher in the "Macedonia School."<sup>126</sup> In a letter to the editor in the *Edgefield Chronicle* of April 14, 1921, he referred to "Dr. Lee (the pastor of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church) preached one of the ablest sermons I ever heard at Macedonia, *my church* [emphasis added], Sunday afternoon, March 20."<sup>127</sup> Thus, we know that Rev. Weaver was still at Macedonia Church in 1921. However, this was about to change, as we shall see.

## The Division into Two Factions

From the beginnings of Macedonia Church, many of the initial members and leaders were mulattoes, that is, they were children of one white parent. Certainly, this was the case of Lawrence Cain, Paris

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<sup>122</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, March 27, 1919, *Edgefield Advertiser*, March 28, 1919.

<sup>123</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 16, 1919.

<sup>124</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, May 11, 1910.

<sup>125</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, June 6, 1918.

<sup>126</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, March 4, 1920.

<sup>127</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, April 14, 1921.

Simkins and Andrew Simkins, all of whom were extremely light skinned, but probably there were many other mulattoes as well. Over the years a practice developed in the church in which the light-skinned members sat on one side of the church and the darker-skinned members sat on the other side. It is even remembered that in cases where the husband was light-skinned and the wife was dark-skinned, the couple was not allowed to sit together. This system was imposed rigorously at Macedonia Church during much of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>128</sup> As might have been expected, this system began to create deep unhappiness among many of the members of the church – particularly among the darker skinned ones and their spouses.

According to a story told by the late Stella Youngblood Dorn (1910-2005), sometime in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a new minister whose skin was darker than was acceptable to the leadership of the Macedonia Church was proposed by some of the congregation. When the leadership refused to allow this minister to come to the church and locked the doors of the church to keep him out, a large part of the congregation left Macedonia Church and established a new church, Rosa Hill Baptist Church, in the Buncombe neighborhood. Mrs. Dorn mentioned the Simkins family as the principal leaders at Macedonia.<sup>129</sup>

These memories of long-time Edgefield residents about a deep division in the African American community were confirmed in a 1919 biographical sketch of William Erskine Parker (1884-1963) who became the principal of the graded school at the Edgefield Academy in 1913. In that sketch it was stated that at the time he arrived in Edgefield, “The work . . . needed a man of enthusiasm and energy for the colored population was divided into two factions. Prof. Parker has welded them together into one school which has prospered under his administration. His present enrollment is 226.”<sup>130</sup> Those memories were also confirmed in a June 6, 1918 letter to the editor

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<sup>128</sup> Interview of author with Willie Bright (born 1937), September 7, 2020 and interview of author with Willie Bacon (born 1931), September 7, 2020. Both men confirmed the segregation by skin color and particularly that one dark-skinned wife was not allowed to sit with her light-skinned husband. This was Charles and Bertha Bussey. This practice was also confirmed in a conversation with Tonya Guy, Executive Director of the Tompkins Library and Edgefield County Archivist, who related that a descendant of Abram Landrum, a black citizen of Edgefield in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, told her that Abram, who was dark skinned and who was not permitted to sit with his light skinned wife, left Macedonia as a consequence and became a member of Pleasant Grove Church.

<sup>129</sup> Interview of author with Stella Youngblood Dorn (1910-2005) circa 1990.

<sup>130</sup> *History of the American Negro, South Carolina Edition, Original Edition Illustrated*, edited by A. B. Caldwell, A. B. Caldwell Publishing Co., Atlanta, Georgia, 1919, pp. 262-264.

of Rev. Weaver in which he was clarifying the contributions to the World War I Red Cross effort by “my churches.” That letter follows:

Macedonia Pastor Makes Statement: Mr. Editor: Please allow me space in your paper to speak of the Red Cross Funds that were raised by the colored people through my churches. I want the people to have a clear understanding. To my surprise I saw [a] blind statement made in the *Chronicle* last week with my name as Chairman, one that I could not understand. So I want to make it just as my churches reported. Shaw’s Creek Baptist Church raised for the Red Cross fifty-two dollars. Allen Lloyd paid \$1.00 in this collection. Through Macedonia Baptist Church we raised one hundred and thirteen dollars and ninety-five cents. *There seems to be an element around here that can’t work together in peace. They hurt the cause which they represent. This is no time for foolishness and child’s play* [emphasis added]. We need all thinking men to come to the front and help the government to win the war. Don’t seek popularity among men, but seek Christ and the dollar to win the war. Yours for the cause. Rev. F. A. Weaver

In this statement one can sense the frustration that Rev. Weaver felt with the discord in his church and in the Edgefield community. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find Rev. Weaver playing a significant part in the founding of Rosa Hill Baptist Church. On August 28, 1922, the two acres upon which the Rosa Hill Baptist Church was built was conveyed by Rev. Weaver to “Lewis Moseley, Burwell Yeldell, Norman Youngblood, Willie Jackson and F. A. Weaver, as Trustees of Rosa Hill Baptist Church.”<sup>131</sup> Rev. Weaver had acquired these two acres from Mrs. Susie D. Strom on March 11, 1920.<sup>132</sup> It is probable that that initial acquisition marked the founding of Rosa Hill Church.

Although we do not have any specific documentation to confirm it, we suspect that Rev. Weaver had a significant parting of the ways with the lay leadership of Macedonia Church. Whether his disagreement was principally with Andrew Simkins or with a larger group of deacons, we cannot say. Nor can we say whether the “parting of the ways” was vocal and bitter. Given Rev. Weaver’s mild and deeply Christian character, we suspect that he was forthright but not bitter. Nevertheless, he felt called to lead the unhappy members of Macedonia in founding a new church where they were not under the dictates of the Macedonia leadership and their policy of color separation.

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<sup>131</sup> Deed Book 28, page 749, Edgefield County Archives, deed dated August 28, 1922.

<sup>132</sup> Deed Book 28, page 194, Edgefield County Archives, deed dated March 11, 1920.

According to Mrs. Dorn, a well-to-do Edgefield farmer and businessman, Roger Tompkins Hill (1879-1961) assisted the Rosa Hill members with a generous contribution for the construction of the church and therefore his name, "Hill," was made part of the name of the church. Mrs. Dorn did not know the origin of the name "Rosa."<sup>133</sup> We have tried to find some member of the families of Mr. Hill or Rev. Weaver named "Rosa" which might provide the answer, but we have thus far been unsuccessful.

Following Rev. Weaver's pastorate, subsequent pastors at Macedonia Church up to the time of its Centennial in 1969 were J. Marshall Timmons, G. W. Blocker, D. E. Jennings, C. Means, W. H. Hightower, H. Norris, Louie W. Moss (1922-1984), E. E. Gaulden, A. Adams, and W. B. Coleman.<sup>134</sup>

During this period Macedonia Church continued to work on projects related to its Christian mission. For example, Macedonia Church, together with other African American institutions and individuals contributed significantly to one of the most remarkable examples of philanthropy in Edgefield County history. Since the early 1800s, Edgefield County had maintained a "Poor House" to care for those truly destitute citizens of the county. From 1845 this institution was located on the present site of Pine Ridge Country Club. However, the facilities there had gotten into deplorable condition by the 1920s. With the onset of the "boll weevil depression" in Edgefield County in the early 1920s, and the subsequent national depression beginning in 1929, the number of destitute citizens – white and black – increased enormously. A wealthy bachelor farmer from the northwestern part of the County, William Arthur Reynolds (1850-1938), became greatly concerned with the status of the facilities to care for these people. Thus, in 1930 he contributed the sum of \$27,000 in cash to Edgefield County for the construction of a new home for the poor, provided that the county purchase a new site for the home. The John B. Hill farm, formerly known as "Breeze Hill," containing 266 acres, located four miles north of Edgefield, was selected and "Reynolds Memorial Home" was built.<sup>135</sup> In connection with this philanthropic project, the following notice was published in *The Advertiser*. We suspect it was written by the Rev. Weaver:

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<sup>133</sup> Interview of author with Stella Youngblood Dorn (1910-2005) circa 1990. The support of Roger Tompkins Hill can probably be explained by the close relationship which Rev. Weaver enjoyed with the Tompkins family of the Center Springs community where both of them had been reared and where both owned substantial acreage.

<sup>134</sup> Waldo, Mrs. H. R., "History of Macedonia Church," *Macedonia Baptist Church Centennial Program*, Sunday, December 7, 1969.

<sup>135</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, 1930.



## Notice.

### To the Colored people of Edgefield County

I take this means of calling your attention again to the outstanding contribution to the County by Mr. R. W. [sic.] Reynolds of the Reynolds Memorial Home. The home is now complete and occupied by white and colored inmates. I understand that the county is without funds to equip the home. We have been called upon to raise funds to equip ten rooms for the colored as the white people are raising funds to equip ten rooms for the white.

We ask and urge that every colored citizen contribute something to the cause.

We want to commend those who are at work; the ministers are handling the matter very successfully through the churches, the leaders and officers of the various societies will do well, and the teachers of the county have made a splendid contribution in this direction.

The teachers have pledged one dollar each, and a large number have paid.

Let us continue to work, churches, societies and individuals.

All committees are asked to meet at Macedonia Church, Edgefield, S.C. Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, at 3:30 P.M. We hope to make a report in the near future of money thus far collected.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE.<sup>136</sup>

Thus, Macedonia continued its Christian mission as it moved into its second half-century.

This story of Macedonia Church in its first half-century is an important part of Edgefield County's history. The people who founded this church and who played a part in molding it made significant contributions to our civilization. The Edgefield County Historical Society is pleased to be able to bring this history to the attention of its members, friends and the public. We hope that this history will instruct and inspire those who study it.

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<sup>136</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, January 14, 1931.



*Rev. J. R. Clark family  
Rev. Clark is the current pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church*



*Macedonia Church Interior*



*Francis H. Morina  
Mother of the Church*



*Deacon Henry Smith Sr.*



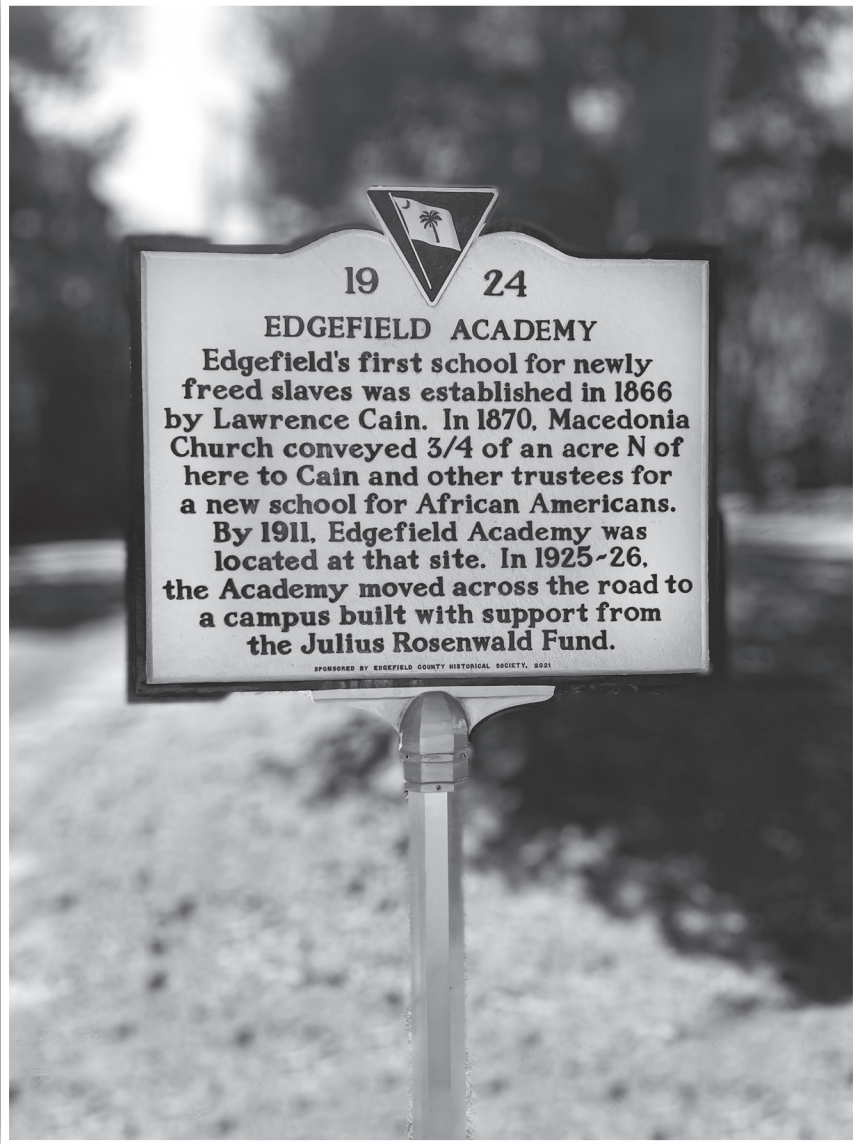
*Trustee Bruce Lee*



*Deacon Henry Smith, Jr.*



*Deacon Elvis Bussey*



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### EDGEFIELD ACADEMY

Edgefield's first school for newly freed slaves was established in 1866 by Lawrence Cain. In 1870, Macedonia Church conveyed  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre N of here to Cain and other trustees for a new school for African Americans.

By 1911, Edgefield Academy was located at that site. In 1925-26, the Academy moved across the road to a campus built with support from the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

SPONSORED BY EDGEFIELD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 2021

# The Story of the Edgefield Academy

## 1866-1955

By Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr.

The first school in the Town of Edgefield for the newly freed slaves was established in 1866 by Lawrence Cain. *The Edgefield Advertiser* published on July 11, 1866 an article from which the following is extracted:

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July, last past, was marked in Edgefield, by naught save an examination and pic-nic among the negroes. . . . The negro school in Edgefield is presided over by Lawrence Cain, a young man of twenty-one or two, formerly a slave of Major Zach Carwile; he is white in complexion, genteel in manners, and since becoming a “citizen” has deported himself in a way which proves that he has both good sense and good feeling. He has some fifty-odd scholars, of all ages between sixteen and seven, and of all colors, or shades rather, between ebon black and lily white. . . .

As to the examination, it revealed wonders. Boys and girls, as we have said before, from seven to sixteen, who six or eight months ago knew not a letter in the book, spelt in four and five syllables, and pronounced, and read, and answered questions in Arithmetic, and said their multiplication table, with unerring readiness and precision.

The young man who has taught these young colored folks deserves a great deal of credit, and we earnestly hope the means will be provided him of still further fitting himself for the business he is pursuing so commendably.<sup>1</sup>

Although the *Advertiser* tells us that the examination was held at “the pleasant grove around Mrs. Sheppard’s spring,” there is no indication as to where Cain’s school regularly convened.<sup>2</sup> Another commentator

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<sup>1</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 11, 1866. A biography of Lawrence Cain written by Kevin M. Cherry, Sr. was published in 2019: Cherry, Kevin M., Sr., *Virtue of Cain – From Slave to Senator*, Rocky Pond Press, Tokoma Park, MD, 2019. A brief biographical sketch of Cain is provided in Rainsford, Bettis C., *The First Half Century of Macedonia Baptist Church*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Sheppard lived in the house which sat way back on the west side of Buncombe Street and the north side of Academy Branch on the hill where an



on the colored school at this time was Major William Stone of the Freedmen's Bureau. A native of Massachusetts, Stone was the son of abolitionist parents and had served as a major in the Union army. His 1868 comments are contained in his reports to the Bureau:

At Edgefield C. H. a school was taught when I first came here by a Mr. Lawrence Cain, an intelligent colored man, formerly a slave of Maj. Carwile, Commissioner in Equity of Edgefield District. He was almost white and accompanied one of his owner's family to the war. He was at one time taken prisoner and passed for a rebel soldier and was exchanged as such, I think. He relied upon the pay received from the scholars for his support. A Mr. Green also taught a private school for some time, but last year they united and kept one school. I visited it two or three times and found that the scholars had really made great progress. . . . They have really accomplished a great deal and their scholars are further advanced than those in the other schools which have reported to me. There is no schoolhouse owned by the freedmen at Edgefield, and the one in use serves also as a meeting house on Sunday and for meetings for the Republican Club in the evening.<sup>3</sup>

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apartment complex is now located, and which is now accessed from Jeter Street. This was originally the home of William Simkins (1764-1802) and then later became the home of George McDuffie (1790-1851). It burned early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was occupied by Judge and Mrs. J. W. DeVore. The DeVores then rebuilt the house, not on the original site, but rather directly on Buncombe Street but facing Academy Branch. This house was occupied for many decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Frank Bland family. Since Major Z. W. Carwile lived just up Buncombe Street at the site of the house now known as the Adams-Mims house, and since his son Thomas, with whom Lawrence Cain was very close, lived in a house which had been owned earlier by the McClintock family on the southwest corner of Buncombe and Brooks Streets, it is probable that Cain's school was in the Buncombe Street neighborhood, probably in an outbuilding. Mrs. Sheppard's spring was close by and provided an ideal spot for the examinations and picnic.

<sup>3</sup> Stone, William, *Letters and Endorsements*, October 1, 1868, Freedmen's Bureau File, Record of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, National Archives, Washington, DC. Stone's writings have now been published in a book edited by Suzanne Stone Johnson and Robert Allison Johnson, *Bitter Freedom, William Stone's Record of Service in the Freedman's Bureau*, University of South Carolina Press, 2008. The quoted language in his report is found in that volume on page 37. Sadly, there is still no indication as to where this schoolhouse was located. One might be inclined to think that the school building was owned by and near the home of Cain's former owner, Major Z. W. Carwile, who would probably have been inclined to support Cain's efforts to educate young blacks,



Several years later, *The Edgefield Advertiser* again commented on the colored school's examination:

On Saturday last, an examination took place here in the colored school. The teachers in this school are two colored men, Lawrence Cain and Robert Green. Their school is largely attended by both sexes and seems to be a useful and well conducted institution. On Saturday last, their scholars were bright, tidy and well-behaved. As regards their proficiency, as evinced in the examination, it was decidedly admirable. They are evidently well taught in their books and in their manners. After the examination, the pupils and teachers enjoyed a handsome picnic in a neighboring grove.<sup>4</sup>

There is still no indication as to where the colored school was located.

Several years later, in 1870, following on the heels of the establishment of Macedonia Baptist Church, the trustees of the Church, including Lawrence Cain, deeded to "Paris Simkins, Lawrence Cain, Robert A. Green, David Harris and Albert Jackson, and their successors in office, as trustees" for the "purpose of a Site for a Schoolhouse to be used for the education of freedmen and children (irrespective of race or color)":



*Lawrence Cain*  
(1844 -1884)

All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the County of Edgefield in the State of South Carolina and described as follows, viz.: Lying and being on both sides of the branch known as the Academy Branch bounded north by lands of Henry W. Addison, East by a lane or alley twenty feet wide running north between the Church lot and lands of M. Lebenschultz and South and East by the Church lot before mentioned; it being a part of the lot of land conveyed by E. R. Bland to the [grantors] for church purposes the 13<sup>th</sup> day of July A. D. 1869, and containing about

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but the fact that the Republican Club also met there would have become problematic, particularly after the imposition of Congressional Reconstruction in 1868.

<sup>4</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 7, 1869.

three fourths of an acre more or less. . . .<sup>5</sup>

This property is where much of the Macedonia Cemetery is now located. Thus, a property was set aside for what was to become known as “the Edgefield Academy.” However, the year after the property was transferred for the school, *The Edgefield Advertiser* published another article about the schools of Cain and Green which revealed their status and their locations as of that date. Nothing in the article, however, suggested that there were immediate plans to build a schoolhouse on the property which had been deeded to the Trustees. The first challenge to those involved in Macedonia Church was the building of the church. The schoolhouse would have to wait until funding was available. The article from the *Advertiser* is as follows:

### The Colored Schools

In our town are two colored schools, the one taught by Robert Green at the school-house in rear of Mr. Bryan’s residence, the other by Lawrence Cain, at his own house. The *entente cordiale* between these schools is so good, however, that on Friday last they united in a joint examination at the locale of Robert Green. Being politely invited to attend the same, we did so – as did several other citizens – and found ourselves quite interested. The exercises were conducted in good order and good taste; and as a proof of the latter we would mention that there were on this occasion none of those memorized speeches, etc., which on former occasions have evinced such a disposition to inculcate enmity between the races.

As regards the older scholars, at the same time they stood a very fair examination, we could not help thinking their advancement and progress since their last annual examination not sufficiently marked and apparent.

Concerning the younger scholars, we can bestow upon them unqualified praise. Their progress and their aptitude seemed alike remarkable. In respect of deportment, the whole school was unexceptionable.

We believe both Green and Cain to be hard working, conscientious teachers, but remembering their lack of educational advantages in early life, they should themselves not cease to

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<sup>5</sup> Edgefield County Deed Book PPP at page 315, dated May 3, 1870 and recorded May 9, 1870, Edgefield County Archives.

study, and that well and diligently, that they may be the better enabled to satisfactorily discharge the duties of their positions.<sup>6</sup>

This article tells us where the schools were located. Mr. Green's schoolhouse was located behind the residence of the prominent merchant, B. C. Bryan (1812-1884), which was on Main Street on the site of Harwood, the house of Herbert and Susan Yarborough. Thus, it was accessed from what became Macedonia Street, not far from the church. Mr. Cain's school was in his house which he purchased from H. W. Addison in 1869.<sup>7</sup> This house was formerly the residence of prominent Edgefield druggist, Edmund Penn, and was located on the north side of Simkins Street and on the east side of the site where the Heath Building now stands, adjacent to the Old Law Building. Cain lived in this house until it burned in the fire of 1881 which destroyed much of downtown Edgefield.



*Robert Green  
(1839-1915)*

So the question is whether a building was built on the site that the Macedonia trustees had deeded to the trustees of the new school, or whether the school continued to be located in the schoolhouse that Robert Green had been using behind the B. C. Bryan residence. One clue as to this mystery is provided in a deposition taken in the wake of the election of 1876. In his testimony, the witness noted that the schoolhouse was on Macedonia Street “four hundred yards from the public highway (Main Street)” which would have put it on the Macedonia property – close to, if not on, the parcel deeded for the school.<sup>8</sup>

## **Box # 2 in the Election of 1876**

In the election of 1876, just a few years after the founding of the church and the academy, the Macedonia Church schoolhouse became the

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<sup>6</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 6, 1871.

<sup>7</sup> Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book TTT, page 295.

<sup>8</sup> *Papers in the case of Tillman vs. Smalls, Fifth District South Carolina*, November 9, 1877, House of Representatives, 45<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Mis. Doc. No. 11, Congressional Record.

site of a considerable controversy. In this highly contested election, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Wade Hampton, was trying to unseat the incumbent Republican governor, Daniel Chamberlain. There were also a number of other vigorously contested local elections. At the national level, the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, was running against the Democrat, Samuel B. Tilden. In order to avoid disturbances during the voting, all parties had agreed that the Republicans would vote at box number 2 which was located at the Macedonia schoolhouse, and Democrats would vote at the Courthouse.

However, beginning in the weeks before the election and on election day, the Democrats used every tool at their disposal, including intimidation and fraud, to successfully limit voting by Republicans. This was particularly true at Edgefield's box #2 at the Macedonia schoolhouse where the Democrats delayed the voting process so that many Republicans were unable to cast their votes before the polls closed, thereby securing the election of local Democratic candidates and the defeat of local Republicans. Despite an extremely close state-wide vote, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Wade Hampton, was ultimately declared governor. By contrast, the South Carolina electoral college votes were cast in favor of the Republican Presidential candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, thereby insuring the continuation of the Republican administrations at the national level.

## **The Twentieth Century**

We have found relatively little information about the Academy in the last several decades of the nineteenth century. The only specific reference to the school was in an article in *The World*, a Charleston newspaper, which published a major article about Edgefield on February 7, 1891. In this article, it was noted that "The colored people are not behind in the matter of education, and their building, though not a handsome one, is sufficient for their purposes. They have a good school well attended and one making rapid strides in building up and maintaining a very fine school. They will doubtless build a more substantial building within the next year."<sup>9</sup>

Later in 1891, the following article appeared in *The Edgefield Chronicle*:

### **The Colored Institute**

For five days last week, Professor Cardozo and Miss Marshall, colored teachers of high reputation and undoubted capacity,

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<sup>9</sup>Taylor, Tonya Browder and Glenn, Tricia Price, *Remembering Edgefield, 1891* in two volumes, Old Edgefield Publishing Company, Johnston, SC, 2003, Volume 1, page 15.

conducted a Summer Institute for colored teachers in our town; and it must be conceded that they demonstrated to the colored teachers of Edgefield that the demand for qualified work in the school room is growing greater every year, and that these teachers' institutes are a means by which is furnished to teachers not only a very large amount of useful and helpful instruction, but also a much needed inspiration. Some thirty-five teachers attended the lectures of Prof. Cardozo and Miss Marshall. The sessions of the Institute were held in Macedonia Church and not only did order and respectability prevail, but also art and music and general good taste.<sup>10</sup>

A student at the Academy in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Braidwood "Braidy" Lester Holmes (1890-1966). In a biographical sketch of Holmes, written circa 1919, it is recorded that the Academy building when Holmes attended, presumably around 1905, consisted of only two rooms where two teachers instructed eighty or ninety students.<sup>11</sup> During the entire forty-six year period from 1867 until 1913, Robert A. Green presumably continued as the principal teacher and head of the school.

However, beginning in 1911, a movement began to improve the Academy. Whether this was the result of just wanting to improve the facilities, or whether it was triggered by the existing schoolhouse becoming no longer available, we do not know. In any event, on April 12, 1911, a resolution was passed by the members of Macedonia Baptist Church which authorized a deed to be executed by the deacons or trustees of the church, viz., R. A. Green, Wash Nobles, W. A. Morgan, L. W. Diggs, A. W. Simkins and Garland Williams, conveying one Fourth (1/4) of an acre of land, more or less, bounded on the North by lands of E. J. Mims, East by lands of J. C. Sheppard or Macedonia Street, South by lands of Macedonia Church and West by lands of Macedonia Church to A. W. Simkins, George Frazier, Eldred Green, Geo. K. Jones, West

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<sup>10</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, September 2, 1891, quoted in Thurmond, Sameera V., *Selected Newspaper Articles from the Edgefield Advertiser, Edgefield Chronicle and the Weekly Monitor Relating to African Americans from the Period of September 1833 to May 1900*, self-published, San Francisco, CA/Augusta, GA, 2008, p. 395.

<sup>11</sup> "The Edgefield Bard," a biographical sketch, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut (copy in the files of the author). See also, Rainsford, Bettis C., "Braidwood 'Braidy' Lester Holmes, The Edgefield Bard," published in the Program of the 2010 Fall Meeting of the Edgefield County Historical Society, September 25, 2010.

Oliphant, Wash Nobles and Walter Green as Trustees for a School for colored children in the Town of Edgefield.<sup>12</sup>

It is interesting that this quarter acre was essentially in the same area as the three-quarter acre parcel which had been deeded to school trustees in 1870. Perhaps in the forty-one years since 1870, everyone had forgotten that the three-quarter parcel had been deeded for school purposes. Of the school trustees in 1870, only Paris Simkins and Robert A. Green were still living. In all probability, the reason for the new deed was the desire to obtain a mortgage loan to finance the new school building.

Indeed, we learn from an article in *The Edgefield Advertiser* that a new “large school building” was being erected near Macedonia Church. Said *The Advertiser*: “The colored people have planned to give a big barbecue Saturday at the fair grounds in order to raise funds to complete the large school building which they recently erected near Macedonia Church.”<sup>13</sup> A few months later, *The Advertiser* reported on their progress:

Colored People’s Day. The managers of the county fair have arranged with some of the representative colored people to give them one day of the fair, October 28<sup>th</sup>, having been selected for their day. A portion of the receipts from the fair for that day will go to the school that the colored people are building at Macedonia church. This will be a great day for the colored people of the county. Through the efforts of Andrew Simkins, who is always on the alert for an opportunity to be of real service to his people, Rev. Richard Carroll of Columbia and Rev. C. L. Walker of Augusta have been secured to deliver addresses. October the 28<sup>th</sup> can be made a day of great pleasure and profit to the colored people. We trust that they will enter into the occasion with a spirit of full cooperation, making of it the success it deserves to be.<sup>14</sup>

As the work was underway on the new school building, the man who had done so much to provide educational opportunities for the black youth of Edgefield, Robert A. Green, was in declining health.<sup>15</sup> When

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<sup>12</sup> Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book 21 at page 644, deed dated April 12, 1911 and recorded April 17, 1911.

<sup>13</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, July 26, 1911.

<sup>14</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 4, 1911.

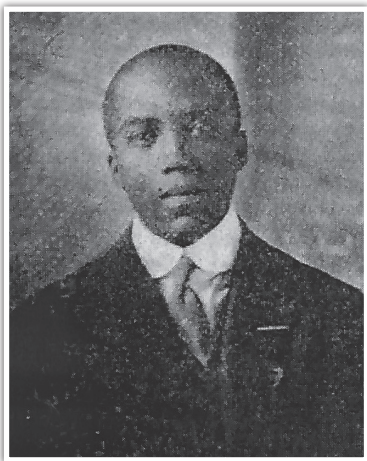
<sup>15</sup> Mr. Green’s death certificate indicated that senility was a contributing cause of his death.



Green died on August 27, 1915,<sup>16</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle* published an obituary note, stating that he was “a leading educator, having taught at Macedonia for many years. And he was a good religious man – always on the right side. His people will all do well to pattern after Robert Green’s life record.”<sup>17</sup> Robert Green was indeed an honored schoolteacher, having begun his teaching career at least as early as 1867 and continuing until his retirement circa 1913. He deserves a significant place in Edgefield history.

## **William Erskine Parker** (1883-1963)

In the fall of 1913, William Erskine Parker (1883-1963) became the principal of the graded school at the Edgefield Academy.<sup>18</sup> His arrival was probably triggered by the fact that Robert Green’s health was failing. A native of Laurens County, South Carolina, Parker had been educated at Brewer Normal School in Greenwood and at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg.<sup>19</sup> In a 1919 biographical sketch of Parker, it was stated that at the time he arrived in Edgefield, “The work . . . needed a man of enthusiasm and energy for the colored population was divided into two factions. Prof. Parker has welded them together into one school which has prospered under his administration. His present enrollment is 226.”<sup>20</sup>



*William Erskine Parker*  
(1883-1963)  
*Photo circa 1915*

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<sup>16</sup> State of South Carolina Death Certificate. See also *The Edgefield Advertiser*, November 22, 1916, Thanksgiving letter of Rev. F. A. Weaver.

<sup>17</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, August 27, 1915.

<sup>18</sup> *History of the American Negro, South Carolina Edition*, Original Edition Illustrated, edited by A. B. Caldwell, A. B. Caldwell Publishing Co., Atlanta, Georgia, 1919, pp. 262-264.

<sup>19</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 9, 1963.

<sup>20</sup> *History of the American Negro*, p. 264. For the explanation of the “two factions” see “The First Half-Century of Macedonia Church.”

## The Rosenwald School

Presumably, it was in the 1911 building that the regular teachers' examination was held in 1917.<sup>21</sup> However, subsequent events suggest that the site upon which the 1911 building was erected and the building itself were not very satisfactory. The site was in the Academy Branch bottom and the building may not have been well constructed. In any event, in just over a decade, community leaders began to think of a new scheme for the Edgefield Academy.

In 1915 the President of Sears and Roebuck, Julius Rosenwald, had established a matching grant fund to construct better quality schools for African Americans throughout the South. Between 1917 and 1932, his fund assisted in the construction of over 5,000 school buildings, forever changing the rural Southern landscape. Nearly 500 buildings were constructed in South Carolina. At a time when State support for educating African American children was woefully inadequate, these Rosenwald Schools played a critical role in educating South Carolina's children.<sup>22</sup>



*Julius Rosenwald*  
(1862-1932)

*American Philanthropist*

In all probability Professor Parker and County Superintendent of Education, W. W. Fuller, had heard about the possible availability of funds from the Rosenwald Foundation to help build a new building for the Edgefield Academy. Rev. Frank Augustus Weaver and his wife apparently came up with the idea of a better site for the school and provided the leadership for the acquisition of land across Macedonia Street from the church.<sup>23</sup> On the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, 1924, former Governor John C. Sheppard (1850-1931) deeded to W. C. Lynch, George Mims and J. W. Kemp, as Trustees of School District 25 in the County of Edgefield, four (4) acres of land across the street from Macedonia Church.<sup>24</sup> The property was bounded on the north by Academy Branch, on the East

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<sup>21</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 25, 1917.

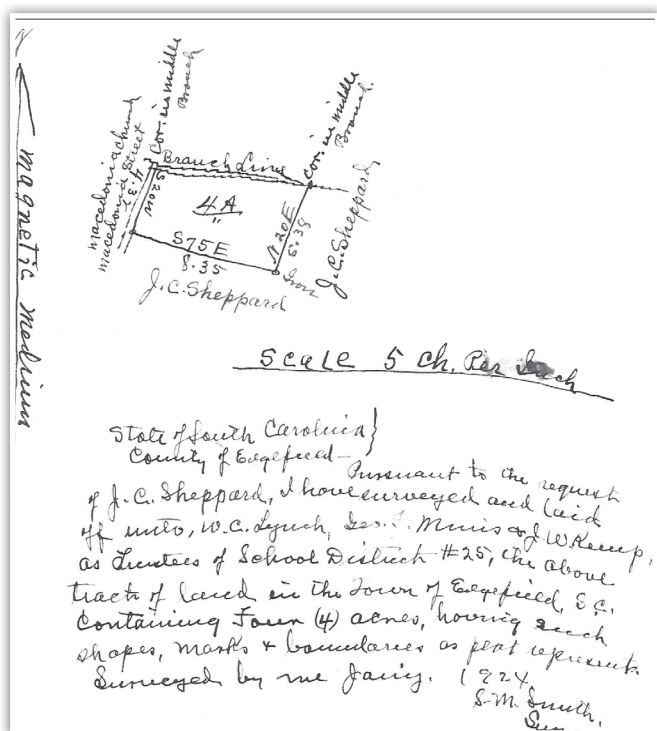
<sup>22</sup> "Rosenwald Schools" webpage on the website of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History ([www.scdah.gov/historic-preservation/resources/african-american-heritage/rosenwald-schools](http://www.scdah.gov/historic-preservation/resources/african-american-heritage/rosenwald-schools)).

<sup>23</sup> Weaver, Rev. William C., *Memoirs of Frank Augustus Weaver, 1863-1842*, privately published, 2012, page 7.

<sup>24</sup> Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book 30, page 116, deed dated January 28, 1924 and recorded January 30, 1924.

and South by other lands of Governor Sheppard and on the west by Macedonia Street. The plat for the property had been surveyed by S. M. Smith.<sup>25</sup> This was a far better site than the place where the 1911 building had been built.

In 1925, the Edgefield Academy became a “Rosenwald School” when it received a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation. The Academy building was constructed in 1925-1926 at a total cost of \$7,850, of which \$1,500 was a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation and \$6,350 were public funds of the County. The Rosenwald records indicate that there were four acres of land and six teachers at the Academy.<sup>26</sup>



*1924 Plat of the Edgefield Academy property*

The Academy Building was built way back on the rear of the four-acre parcel. A photograph of the building survives with Professor Parker and a number of the teachers pictured standing in front. According to

<sup>25</sup> Edgefield County Archives, Plat Book 5, page 61.

<sup>26</sup> Rosenwald Fund Papers housed at the Fisk University Archives, shown on the “Rosenwald Schools” webpage data base.



*Edgefield Academy faculty 1945-1946*

students who attended the Academy, a basketball court was located in front of the school.<sup>27</sup> Later a football field was built in front of the basketball court.<sup>28</sup> The Library at the Academy was located in a separate log building in front of the Academy Building against the southern boundary of the property. Even back in the 1940s some of the Academy classes were held in the two-story building of the Honor Society which still stands on the west side of Macedonia Street just south of the church.

Professor Parker earned great respect during his years at the Edgefield Academy. An article in The State newspaper declared:

W. E. Parker has been principal of the Negro school in Edgefield for 20 years (a remarkable record), steadily improving the school and raising the standard with each succeeding year. He has been able to do this through constant study and close application to his work. He returned several days ago from the summer school at the State college, Orangeburg, where he took a special course in school administration and sociology. He is ambitious and progressive, leaving no stone unturned in his efforts to improve his school. This accounts for his having made such a good record,

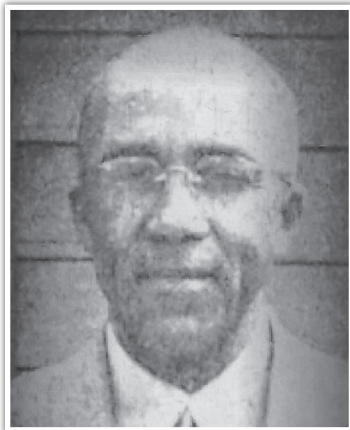
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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Willie Bacon by the author, September 7, 2020. Willie Bacon (born May 11, 1931) played basketball here from 1943 to 1947. He is remembered by Willie Bright as a very good basketball player. Apparently, the football field was not here until after 1947 when Mr. Bacon left to serve in the Army.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Willie Bright by the author, September 7, 2020. Willie Bright (born June 9, 1937) had a vivid memory of the football field.

holding all the while the confidence, respect and esteem of both white and Negro people.<sup>29</sup>

Mr. Parker retired in 1947, turning the reigns of the school over to Professor S. K. Dean. However, he continued to be an important part of life in Edgefield, at Macedonia Church and in the Macedonia neighborhood. According to his obituary in *The Edgefield Advertiser*, Professor Parker served as principal at this school “for forty-four years, to make a record probably unsurpassed in the entire state – in efficiency, in the impression he made on his students and of ever-increasing public esteem. He was a wise advisor to his race and a well-wisher and friend to everyone.”<sup>30</sup>



*William Erskine Parker  
(1883-1963)*

Some of the students at the Academy have wonderful memories of their time there. Mr. Herbert Morgan (1933-), a longtime masonry contractor who has lived in Augusta for many years, came to the Edgefield Academy for the third grade, having previously been in the first and second grades at the Simmons Ridge school. His third-grade teacher was Mrs. Rosa Parker, wife of Professor Parker. His fourth-grade teacher was Mrs. Sara Weaver Anderson, his fifth-grade teacher was Mrs. Gussie Oliphant. Miss Wheeler was his sixth-grade teacher and her class met in the log library building. Miss Owens taught him in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. When he got to “middle school,” there were a number of teachers, including Professor Parker who taught math, Miss Herndon, Miss Counts, Miss Cante, Mr. Floyd who taught agriculture, and Mrs. Ojetta Simkins Drake.<sup>31</sup> Mrs. Frances Hamilton Morina (1930-), valedictorian of the Class of 1948, recalls the same teachers as Mr. Morgan.<sup>32</sup> Willie Bacon and Willie Bright also spoke of the same teachers.

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<sup>29</sup> *The State*, Columbia, SC, August 5, 1936.

<sup>30</sup> “Professor Parker Died Here Sunday,” *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 9, 1963. The *Advertiser* was perhaps a bit in error on Parker’s tenure as principal. Several of the students in the 1940s, Willie Bacon (born 1931) and Willie Bright (born 1937) believe that Parker had retired in 1947 when Professor S. K. Dean became the principal. Thus, Parker’s tenure as principal was perhaps more accurately pegged at thirty-four years.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Herbert Morgan (born July 2, 1933) by the author, August 6, 2021.

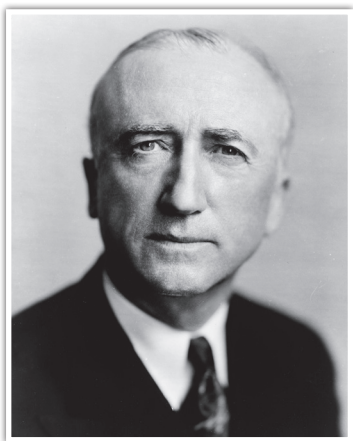
<sup>32</sup> Interview with Frances Hamilton Morgan (born August 1, 1930) by the author, September 30, 2021.



The concrete block building directly across the street from the church, “the Center,” was constructed in the late 1940s or early 1950s as a community center at the inspiration of one of the Jeanes teachers, Miss Murry.<sup>33</sup> The work was done by men in the neighborhood, led by the late Jerry Wilson (1908-1990).<sup>34</sup> In 1950 or 1951, the main Academy Building burned and the students had to move into the “Center” and the Honor Society building until the new consolidated school was completed in 1955.

## The New Consolidated School

In the early 1950s the Governor of South Carolina was James F. “Jimmy” Byrnes. A former Congressman, United States Senator, Supreme Court Justice, “Assistant President for Domestic Affairs” during World War II and Secretary of State after the War, Byrnes was greatly experienced and widely admired across the state. Shortly after his inauguration in 1951, he addressed the General Assembly, saying: “It is our duty to provide for the races substantial equality in school facilities. We should do it because it is right. For me, that is sufficient reason. If any person wants an additional reason, I say it is wise.” The case of *Briggs v. Elliott*, a case brought against the Summerton School District (Clarendon District 22) in South Carolina challenging segregation in the public schools, was pending in the federal courts, and Byrnes realized that ultimately the substantial inequality of school facilities across the state would provide the basis for ending segregation in the South Carolina schools.<sup>35</sup>



Gov. James F. Byrnes  
(1882-1972)

The South Carolina legislature responded to Byrnes’s initiative and passed the state’s first sales tax (3 percent) to provide increased funding for public education. Between 1951 and 1956 the governor’s school program

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<sup>33</sup> Herbert Morgan Interview. Jeanes teachers were teachers who received training and subsidies from the Jeanes Foundation, later known as the Negro Rural School Fund, which was set up by Philadelphia philanthropist Anna T. Jeanes (1822-1907) with the help of Booker T. Washington (1856-1915).

<sup>34</sup> Herbert Morgan Interview.

<sup>35</sup> Edgar, Walter, *South Carolina, A History*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1998, pp. 522-523.



spent \$124 million on new construction and buses. About two-thirds of that sum went to black schools even though black children composed only 40 percent of the school population.<sup>36</sup> It was under this program that the Edgefield County School Board built a new school for the black children of the County at a cost of more than \$600,000.<sup>37</sup> The site selected for the new school was about a mile north of the Court House at the edge of what had been Edgewood Plantation, the home of South Carolina Governor Francis W. Pickens (1805-1869). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the site had been a virgin forest with magnificent trees, never timbered since the first settlers had arrived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup>

The new school was occupied in March of 1955. A glowing article in *The Edgefield Advertiser* described it as “among the finest in the nation.”<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, it was not until the following September 30<sup>th</sup> that the school was formally dedicated. The *Advertiser*’s headline for the dedication read “Edgefield Academy Dedicated Sunday.”<sup>40</sup> However, the sign which was placed on the new school read “Edgefield County Colored School,” presumably as an acknowledgement that this school constituted the consolidation of almost all of the African American schools in the county and was an appeasement to those who had been in schools in Johnston, Trenton, the Bettis Academy section and other areas of the county.<sup>41</sup> In the mid-1960s the sign on the school was changed to read “Edgefield County W. E. Parker School.” The name of “Edgefield Academy” had slipped from use. However, the history of the Edgefield Academy needs to be remembered as a part of the history of Edgefield County because it tells the important story of nearly nine decades of effort on the part of the African American citizens of the Town of Edgefield to provide educational opportunities for their children.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

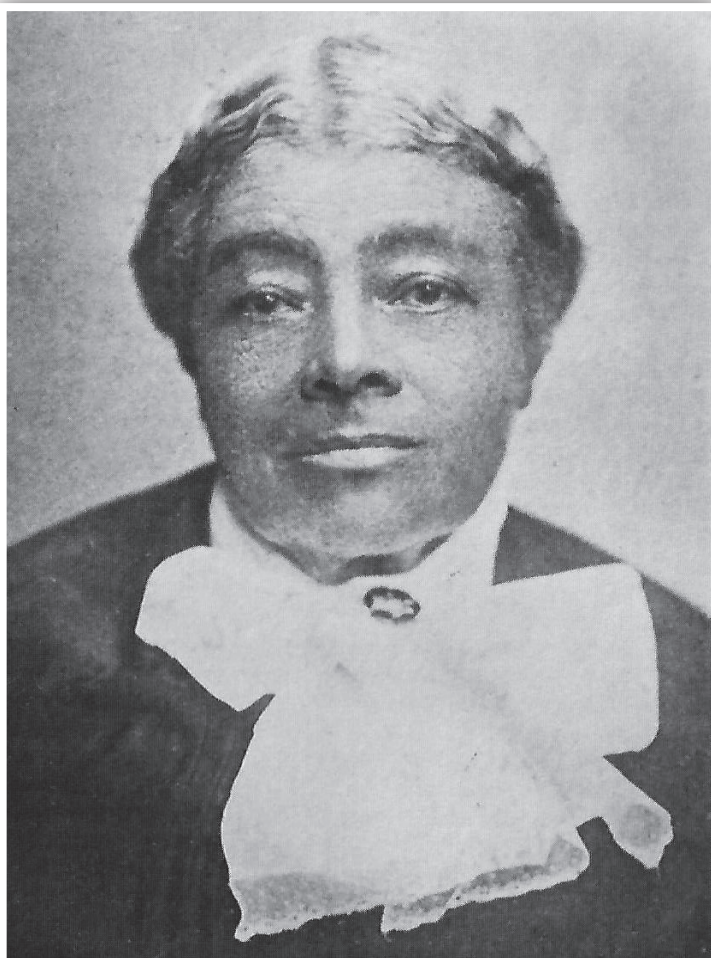
<sup>37</sup> “New Colored School Among Finest in the Nation,” *The Edgefield Advertiser*, March 9, 1955.

<sup>38</sup> As told to the author by Mrs. June Rainsford Butler Henderson (1895-1993), circa 1980.

<sup>39</sup> “New Colored School Among Finest in the Nation,” *The Edgefield Advertiser*, March 9, 1955.

<sup>40</sup> “Edgefield Academy Dedicated Sunday,” *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 3, 1955.

<sup>41</sup> It is interesting that it was at this same period that Bettis Academy, which had been a premier school for black youth in Edgefield County since 1881, was closed. According to Wille Bright, longtime County Council Chairman, its closure was the result of a lack of leadership following the death of longtime president, Alfred W. Nicholson (1859-1945).



*Charlotte Simkins*  
*(1834-1915)*  
*Martriarch of the Simkins family*  
*Mother of Paris and Andrew*

# **The Paris and Andrew Simkins Families of Edgefield, South Carolina**

**By Bettis C. Rainsford, Sr.**

Paris Simkins and his half-brother Andrew Simkins and their families played major roles in their hometown of Edgefield, South Carolina throughout the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Theirs is an interesting story and one worth preserving for future generations of their families and for all those interested in the complex history of Edgefield.

## **Arthur Augustus Simkins 1819-1863**

### **Ancestry, Early Life and Education**

This story begins with the scion of one of the wealthiest and most important families in the Edgefield District, South Carolina, Arthur Augustus Simkins (1819-1863). Simkins was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, 1819 in Edgefield Courthouse Village. He was the son of Eldred Simkins (1779-1831) and Hannah Smith (1791-1838) and the grandson of Arthur Simkins, Sr. (1742-1826), “the Father of Edgefield.” He was the fifth child and the second son of nine children in that family.

Arthur’s paternal grandfather for whom he was named, Arthur Simkins, Sr., had come to the Edgefield District in 1772 from the Eastern Shore of Virginia where his family had lived for many generations. He had been a Justice of the Peace and a member of the Provincial Congress before the Revolutionary War, a Captain in the Whig militia during the War, a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, a Commissioner for dividing up the Ninety Six District into counties, the donor of the 2¼ acres for the Public Lot for Edgefield County, a member of the State Senate, a Judge of the Edgefield County Court, a Presidential Elector in 1789 and a highly successful planter who accumulated “Cedarfields Plantation,” consisting of more than 5,000 acres just to the north of Edgefield Courthouse Village.

Arthur, Sr.’s son Eldred, the father of Arthur Augustus, was the youngest of his father’s four children and was apparently his father’s favorite. He had studied under the renowned educator Rev. Moses Waddel, and then attended Litchfield Law School in Connecticut. In this early part of his life, he had become a close friend of John C. Calhoun (1782-1850) who later referred to Eldred Simkins as “my earliest and best friend.” Returning to South Carolina after law school, he read law under Henry William DeSaussure, Esq. in Charleston before being admitted to the bar in 1805. He then began his practice of law in Edgefield Courthouse Village where he became highly successful with a large clientele.

Eldred Simkins served as Lieutenant Governor of the state from 1812 to

1814. When Calhoun resigned from Congress in 1817 to become U. S. Secretary of War, Simkins was elected to Congress to take his friend's seat where he served from 1818 until 1821. In 1821 he resigned in favor of his young law partner, George McDuffie (1790-1851), but then was elected to the State Senate where he continued to be highly influential in state affairs. Eldred Simkins gave the property for the Edgefield Village Baptist Church in 1823 and also the site for Furman University when it was first established in Edgefield in 1826. When Arthur, Sr. died in 1826, Eldred inherited the majority of his father's large estate. Eldred's wife, Arthur Augustus's mother, Hannah Smith, was the granddaughter of the Revolutionary hero of Georgia, Elijah Clark (1742-1799). Eldred Simkins died in 1831 when his son Arthur was only twelve years old. Hannah died in 1838 when Arthur was just eighteen.

In all likelihood, Arthur was born in the home of his parents which was located on the north side of what is now Simkins Street near where Lynch Street crosses Simkins.<sup>1</sup> He had eight siblings: Margaret Eliza Simkins (1808-1842) who married Francis Pickens, future Congressman, Ambassador and Governor, Susan Ann Simkins (1811-1830) who married Andrew Pickens Butler, future judge and United States Senator, Eldred Clark Simkins (1813-1832), who died as a young man, Maria Edgeworth Simkins (1816-1844), who married James Edward Calhoun, a wealthy planter and a cousin of John C. Calhoun, Emma Floride Simkins (1823-1840), William Lowndes Simkins (1825-1825), John Calhoun Simkins (1828-1863) and Elijah Clark Simkins (1830-c.1879).

Arthur was educated at the Edgefield Village Academy and then at the Mount Enon Academy.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards he attended the South Carolina College in Columbia from which he was graduated in 1836 at the relatively young age of seventeen, thus indicating that he had been a diligent scholar. He was known to have a strong interest in music and was described as an "accomplished Latin scholar."<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note that another contemporary Edgefieldian lived a nearly parallel early life to Arthur. Preston Smith Brooks (1819-1857) was also born in 1819 only a few blocks away from the Simkins house. He also attended the

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<sup>1</sup> This house stood here until 1914 when it burned. See *The Edgefield Advertiser*, March 11, 1914. Afterwards the Lynch family, who then owned the property, constructed Lynch Street, subdivided the property and built the first two houses which front on Lynch Street. From the Sanborn Insurance Map of 1909 we can see that the Simkins house was located slightly west of the current Lynch Street.

<sup>2</sup> Mount Enon was a school located in the northern part of the Old Edgefield District, now Saluda County, which was founded in the 1830s by Charles K. Johnson, "a fine scholar and a graduate of Yale." See the memoir of Mahlon M. Padgett, quoted in Herlong, Bela Padgett, Carol Hardy Bryan and Charles Reneau Andrews, *Where our Paths Crossed, Vol. 1, The Old Edgefield District Settlement of Mount Willing*, p. 309.

<sup>3</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, May 6, 1863.

Village Academy, Mount Enon Academy, and the South Carolina College.<sup>4</sup> We have no evidence that there was a particularly close relationship between the two men, but their paths obviously crossed quite often in their early lives. Based upon what we know about Arthur Simkins and Preston Brooks as mature men, we suspect that their interests were quite different: that is, Arthur was more studious, more social, and more appreciative of the fine arts; whereas Preston was more a man of action, more interested in the manly pursuits of military service and politics. Later, however, after Arthur had become the editor of *The Advertiser* and after Preston had become Congressman, particularly after the Charles Sumner Affair of 1856, Arthur became a strong supporter of Preston Brooks.<sup>5</sup> Another Edgefield contemporary and friend was Louis T. Wigfall (1816-1874) who was to become a United States Senator from Texas, a Confederate Senator from Texas and a Confederate General.<sup>6</sup>

After graduating from the South Carolina College, Arthur studied law, was admitted to the bar and practiced law in Edgefield briefly with W. H. Addison.<sup>7</sup> However, he apparently decided that the law was too dull and chose to devote himself to agriculture and literary pursuits. As a young man whose father and mother had died before he reached maturity, he had had some difficulty in growing up, particularly in handling his substantial inheritance. He had been deeded a tract of land in the Edgefield District known as “the Canebrake land,” which, due to financial difficulties, he had to sell in 1842 to his brother-in-law, Frances W. Pickens. Pickens, who was married to Arthur’s older sister, Margaret Eliza, and who was the executor of Eldred Simkins’s estate, had become very frustrated with Arthur’s financial irresponsibility. Shortly after purchasing the property, Pickens wrote to James Edward Calhoun, Arthur’s other brother-in-law, stating:

Arthur was far more in debt than I thought he was. He was entirely unable to take the place [Canebrake] at all, and he freely told me so a week before the sale. . . . Arthur was in great distress. I then determined

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<sup>4</sup> Chapman, John A., *The History of Edgefield County From Its Earliest Settlements until 1897*, Elbert H. Aull, Publisher, Newberry, SC, 1897, p. 266. After Brooks attended Mount Enon he went on to Willington Academy, the famous school of Dr. Moses Waddel which had closed in 1819 when Waddel went to assume the presidency of Franklin College (which became the University of Georgia) but which reopened under Waddel’s sons in 1830 and continued to operate until 1861. This may account for the fact that Brooks was several years behind Simkins at the South Carolina College.

<sup>5</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 9, 1856, quoted in Mims, Eleanor Hansen, *The Editors of The Edgefield Advertiser; Oldest Newspaper in South Carolina*, Master’s Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1930, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, May 2, 1855, quoted in Mims, p. 59. Simkins’s column in this issue indicated that Wigfall was one of the “noble fellows” who roomed together with him, Maxcy Gregg and Dick Harrison at the old “Buzzard Roost Tenement” while at the South Carolina College.

<sup>7</sup> Mims, p. 53.

to make him safe. I let him take 3,192 acres of land in Miss. on the waters of the Yazoo River at the lowest valuation . . . . Gave him \$1,000 in cash, gave him a home and place to work for a year. . . . I think that Arthur has got from me about \$12,000 for his interest, and if he cannot now recover his lost fortune by it, I am done with him forever and have told him so. My children will not allow me to help him again. I have done for him as if he were my own blood brother, but can do no more. I cannot bear his wife,<sup>8</sup> and shall certainly advise him to go to Miss. – I think there is no doubt but he will. I have talked to him plainly.”<sup>9</sup>

However, despite Pickens’ urging and prediction, Arthur remained in Edgefield. As the years went by, he matured considerably and became a very productive and useful citizen. Even though he had not been financially successful in his first efforts as a planter, Simkins retained a strong interest in agriculture and participated in and promoted the Edgefield District agricultural societies throughout his life.

Always a lover of music, Arthur was a bon-vivant in the fullest sense of that word and contributed much to the social life of Edgefield. Whitfield Brooks (1790-1851), the prominent Edgefield planter, Commissioner of Equity and father of Preston Brooks, wrote in his journals of several entertainments in which Arthur added considerably to the occasion. Of one entertainment in 1841, Brooks stated, “The music was of very high order, for skillful execution, tasteful selection & the harmony of the tones of the different instruments. Mr. Arthur Simkins sung several songs in admirable style.” On another occasion in 1845, Brooks remarked: “We had a few songs from Mr. Arthur Simkins, who sings with exquisite taste.”<sup>10</sup> Simkins also enjoyed an evening with a London playwright who was visiting Edgefield, Edwin Ransford, and the two of them performed together for the entertainment of the guests.<sup>11</sup> In Arthur’s nephew’s memoir he was described as “a singer and fine musician and a leader in church

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<sup>8</sup> At this point in 1842, Simkins’s wife was Mary Bonham, daughter of John W. Bonham of Alabama, who died several years later on March 21, 1845.

<sup>9</sup> Letter of Francis Pickens to James Edward Calhoun dated January 5, 1842, Francis Pickens papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, quoted in Bailey, N. Louise, Mary L. Morgan & Carolyn R. Taylor, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate, 1776-1985*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1986, p. 1459. This letter was doubtless written to James Edward Calhoun as a result of the Simkins family members believing that Pickens may have taken advantage of Arthur with the purchase of the Canebrake land. Interestingly, if Simkins had indeed executed a deed to Pickens for this property, it was not recorded, and the sale was never consummated. Later, on October 9, 1843, Simkins sold this property to Thomas Green Clemson (1807-1888), son-in-law of John C. Calhoun (1782-1850) and the person for whom Clemson University is named. See Deed Book CCC, pp. 395-397, Edgefield County Archives.

<sup>10</sup> Farmer, James F., Editor, *An Edgefield Planter and his World, The 1840s Journals of Whitfield Brooks*, Mercer University Press, Macon, GA, 2018, pp. 21, 230.

<sup>11</sup> Diary of James Beale Rainsford in the possession of the author.



choirs. He is said to have been the life of every gathering.”<sup>12</sup>

Arthur was also a member of various cultural organizations in the village of Edgefield, including the Village Literary Club, the Lyceum and the Thespian Corps, an organization which presented about six plays a year. Arthur always had an important role in these plays, usually exercising his musical talent.<sup>13</sup>

Arthur was elected to the State House of Representatives in 1846 where he served until 1847. He was a trustee for the Edgefield Male Academy and became a colonel in the local militia which provided the title for which he was afterwards known. He became the Commissioner of Equity of Edgefield County in 1851. At nearly the same time, he became the editor of *The Edgefield Advertiser*. Following the death of Preston Brooks in 1857, many citizens urged Simkins to run for Brooks’s unexpired seat in Congress. However, he turned them down, saying: “Candidly, we prefer the position of an independent South Carolina editor to a place in Congress, under the circumstances.”<sup>14</sup> In 1862 he was elected to the State Senate where he served until his death in 1863.

### *The Edgefield Advertiser*

For all of his accomplishments it was at *The Edgefield Advertiser* that Arthur found his calling. There he played an important role in monitoring and influencing public opinion throughout the district. It was there that he made his biggest impact. In this role he was forever the loyal son of Edgefield and was profoundly interested in every aspect of the life of the community. Through his editorials he promoted every possible community improvement, including the building of railroads and plank roads. His method was to publicize the important issues to bring public attention to them, then call for a public meeting to discuss the issue. At the meeting he would eloquently make the case for the proposed improvements. With his editorial influence and his popularity as a citizen, he often brought about many of the positive changes in the town and district which he had advocated.<sup>15</sup>

One area upon which he devoted considerable editorial efforts was that of beautifying the community. His editorials, in the form of a conversation with an imaginary companion, would recount long walks throughout the village in which he would comment on almost everything he saw, particularly on the eyesores, and he would make suggestions to the homeowners as to how their houses might be

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<sup>12</sup> Memoir of Samuel McGowan Simkins, quoted in Francis B. Simkins, “The Simkins Family of Edgefield,” speech delivered at the 1950 meeting of the Edgefield County Historical Society. This speech was published in a pamphlet at the time of the unveiling of a memorial tablet in Trinity Episcopal Church to the memory of Francis Butler Simkins in 1966, *Francis Butler Simkins, 1897-1966, Historian of the South*, privately published by his family, The State Printing Company, 1966, p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> Mims, p. 54.

<sup>14</sup> Mims, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Mims, p. 54.

improved. In many cases, the homeowners seemed to accept his suggestions and make the changes Arthur advocated.<sup>16</sup> The one area in which he was not successful was his sustained effort to bring a railroad to the Village of Edgefield. This was a recurrent theme of his, but it would be a quarter of a century after his death before this dream would be realized in 1888.<sup>17</sup>

He also encouraged his readers to revivify the social life of the town: "Our community has almost lost that enlightened liberal spirit of social enjoyment which once pervaded it and rendered Edgefield but another name for hospitality . . . . But it is a sickening theme, this hollow heartedness and long-facedness of the age in which we live. . . . Will not the generation now coming into place stand boldly forth in this business of social regeneration?"<sup>18</sup> And again, after a Cotillion party he noted: "It is pleasant to mark such improving symptoms. Youthful joy has been too long repressed in our midst by sanctimonious frowns."<sup>19</sup>

In regard to politics, Arthur announced upon assuming the editorship that "the paper will be, as it has been, purely South-Carolinian in every feature. . . . And first among his authorities stand the teachings of the immortal CALHOUN [who was his father's 'earliest and best friend'] . . . . Scarcely second in their influence upon his opinions, . . . the undersigned feels and admits to have been the matchless integrity and transcendent ability of GEORGE MCDUFFIE [who was his father's law partner and successor in Congress]."<sup>20</sup> Thus, in 1851 and 1852, as a follower of Calhoun and McDuffie, Simkins was a staunch secessionist, writing weekly editorials espousing cutting ties with the Union.

As time went on, though, he became increasingly more moderate, siding more and more with the "co-operationists" who hoped to secure Southern rights while remaining in the Union. In 1860 Simkins became a delegate for Edgefield at the state Democratic convention and then served as a delegate at the national Democratic convention held in Charleston. Unlike the majority of the South Carolina delegates who withdrew from the meeting, he would have preferred to remain at the convention and assist Benjamin Franklin Perry who led the effort to keep the Democrats together in the hope of winning the presidential election.

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<sup>16</sup> Mims, p. 57. One such change was the elimination of the narrow front piazza on Halcyon Grove and the construction of the broad piazza which we see there today. See *The Edgefield Advertiser*, August 7, 1851. See also Rainsford, Bettis C., *The Story of Halcyon Grove*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2011, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> See Rainsford, Bettis C., *Central Business Study for the Town of Edgefield*, privately published, 1978, pp. 7-9, and Rainsford, Bettis C., *The History of the Piedmont Technical College Building*, Piedmont Technical College, 1998, pp. 2-5.

<sup>18</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, January 5, 1853, quoted in Mims, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 5, 1855, quoted in Mims, p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, January 23, 1851, quoted in Parham, Steve, "A Southern Editor Grapples With Secession, Arthur Simkins and *The Edgefield Advertiser*, 1851-1860," A research paper submitted for Journalism 720, University of South Carolina, Spring, 1995, copy in the possession of the author, p. 8.

According to Perry, Simkins “concur[s] with us . . . and would act with us if he were here, but he has been called home by the sickness of his family.”<sup>21</sup>

However, by September of 1860, Simkins had come to realize that secession was inevitable, and he therefore supported the unanimous vote of the state convention on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1860 to secede.<sup>22</sup> An excellent summary of his views during this period was provided by a master’s student at the University of South Carolina, Steve Parham, in a 1995 research paper submitted for a journalism class. That summary follows:

Over a period of 10 years, Arthur Simkins wandered through the political wilderness of a sharply divided nation. He wrote often about the problems and difficulties faced by his countrymen. Previous researchers have cast this small-town South Carolina editor in various lights. He has been labeled a secessionist, a radical, a moderate, a Unionist. All are true. There is a complexity to his character that challenges any labeling. Yet, there is one consistent factor revealed in Simkins’ writing, . . . an unwavering belief in the culture, society, traditions, and institutions of his native state and of the South. Every word he wrote speaks to this commitment. Throughout the tumultuous decade of the 1850s, as the American nation teetered on the edge of collapse, Simkins maintained a steady course and kept his eyes on one objective: the preservation of the lifestyle and culture of the South through whatever means was most expedient.<sup>23</sup>

The profound sense of devotion which Arthur had for his county and his state, as well as his deep sense of foreboding about the future, was expressed vividly in an inscription accompanying several books which he gave to his brother, Elijah Clark Simkins (1830-c.1879) upon his brother’s embarkation for a new home in Florida, circa 1858. That inscription is as follows:

To my brother on his departure for a new home in Florida, I present Ramsay’s History of S. Car. and Carroll’s historical collections. I trust he will make himself thoroughly acquainted with these records of his native state.

Although it is to be feared that the day has arrived when the lustre of Carolina’s ancient glory is to fade and perhaps die forever, yet let every true son of hers, wherever he may wander, fondly cherish the memory of what she has been – and let that remembrance stimulate him to become an untiring propagandist of the old Carolina principles. Thus, may they survive – thus may they eventually rise triumphant in some new land

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<sup>21</sup> Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate*, p. 1450. See also Parham, p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, November 14, 1860.

<sup>23</sup> Parham., pp. 39-40.

when Freesoilism and Consolidation shall have overrun the spot which gave them celebrity for a time.

A. Simkins<sup>24</sup>

When war broke out, Simkins actively supported the war effort. He was appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury of the Confederacy as a commissioner to solicit loans for the Confederacy. He was also one of the citizens appointed to receive donations for the families of absent soldiers. More significantly, he announced to his readers that the *Advertiser* “had been placed on a new basis. Instead of having three members of the partnership, the staff had decided to take in a fourth – the Southern Confederacy. That partner would receive a fourth of the profits at the end of the year.”<sup>25</sup> He praised the patriotic sons on the battlefield and the “Workers at Home.” Each week he used one particular column for a long letter “To Our Boys,” relating all the news of interest and in general trying to cheer them with declarations of loyalty and devotion from the district. This column in *The Advertiser* was particularly appreciated by the soldiers who were always anxious to get news from home and to be encouraged in their cause by the local newspaper.<sup>26</sup>

As one tries to know and understand Arthur Simkins, it would be very satisfying to have an image of him: a portrait or a photo. Certainly, such an image must have been done at some point in his life. Unfortunately, no image has yet been found. In 1936, on the occasion of the centennial celebration of *The Edgefield Advertiser*, a search was made, but none was found.<sup>27</sup> More recently, a considerable effort has been made to track down other Simkins descendants who might have such a portrait or photograph, but so far the effort has been unsuccessful.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> A copy of the handwritten manuscript is in the possession of the author.

<sup>25</sup> Mims, p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> Mims, p. 61; Letter of James T. Bacon to Yates Snowden, March 9, 1896, in reference to the history of newspapers in Edgefield, copy in the possession of the author.

<sup>27</sup> Simkins, Francis Butler, “The Simkins Family of Edgefield,” a speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Edgefield County Historical Society, 1950.

<sup>28</sup> The author has undertaken a comprehensive effort to trace the white descendants of Arthur Simkins (see below) to determine if they might have had a portrait or photo of Arthur Simkins. Unfortunately, it appears that all of the descendants of this line have died out. Of the four daughters of Arthur Simkins and Mary Elizabeth Pratt Simkins, the third daughter, Caroline “Carrie” Pratt Simkins (1850-1906), would perhaps be the most likely to have preserved such an image of her father. She was married to Wilkinson Call (1834-1910), United States Senator from Florida from 1879 until 1897. She lived in Washington, DC during her married life and was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, indicating that she was knowledgeable of her paternal history and proud of it. However, we have been unsuccessful in finding any repository that has Call

## Death, Burial and Legacy

Although Simkins had come from a very wealthy family, he had not retained a particularly large estate when the 1860 census was taken. In that census he was shown to have real property valued at \$8,000 and personal property valued at \$12,000, which included 13 slaves. That compares to his sister's husband, Francis Pickens, who had real property valued at \$45,400 and personal property valued at \$244,206, which included 276 slaves.<sup>29</sup>

Strangely, we had not been able to determine where Simkins lived. After his 1863 death his estate did not list any real estate and his family did not seem to have any real property to deed away until 1881 when his widow and daughters sold a small parcel on the town square. However, we discovered a very interesting 1939 memoir of South Carolina Chief Justice Milledge Lipscomb Bonham (1854-1942) who grew up in Edgefield. In that memoir Bonham states that Simkins lived in a house on the southeast side of Edgefield that had been the residence of Col. Marshall Frazier before Frazier moved to Oakley Park.<sup>30</sup> This house was on the north side of the Long Cane Road, the current Bausketts Street, about a quarter mile east of the Edgefield County Hospital.<sup>31</sup> As there is no deed on record for any sale of this property to Arthur Simkins, we must assume that Simkins leased the property rather than buying it.

It was on the piazza of this house, on the evening of April 29, 1863, that the life of Arthur Augustus Simkins came to a premature and tragic end.<sup>32</sup> At the age of forty-four, he died by apoplexy, or, as is more commonly called today, by stroke. Family stories have contended that he died while drinking from the faucet of a keg of apple brandy.<sup>33</sup> That may or may not be true, for the members of the Simkins family who told this story were known for their cynicism and exaggeration, but

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family papers which might contain such an image. We will continue to search.

<sup>29</sup> Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate*, p. 1272.

<sup>30</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 19, 1939, which contains Bonham's memoir. Bonham also tells us that this was the house that John R. Abney (1850-1927) afterwards lived in which he called "Clairmont."

<sup>31</sup> An 1871 plat of this property has a sketch of the house upon it. See Plat Book 4, p. 5, Edgefield County Archives. The 141-acre property fronted on the Long Cane Road (the current Bausketts Street) and extended back to the Augusta Road just southeast of the current railroad trestle.

<sup>32</sup> *Edgefield Advertiser*, April 19, 1939, Bonham memoir in which Bonham clearly states that Simkins died on this piazza.

<sup>33</sup> Simkins, Francis Butler, *Memoirs of Litchwood, "I Have Things to Tell," Francis Butler Simkins Remembers the Edgefield of His Youth*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2016, pp. 25, 139. Simkins attributes his knowledge of this story to Mrs. Kate Wigfall Cheatham (1849-1826).

there was no doubt that Simkins enjoyed a social life. As news of his death spread throughout the village and across the district, there was almost universal sorrow. Arthur Simkins was indeed widely beloved. The *Advertiser* reported his death on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 1863, as follows:

### Death of Col. Arthur Simkins

Died at his residence near this village on the night of 29<sup>th</sup> of April of disease of the heart. Col. Arthur Simkins in his 45<sup>th</sup> year.

A sad duty it is for us to chronicle the melancholy event that our beloved friend and Editor and partner in business is no more. For many years his genial spirit, his high toned and courteous bearing, his even-tempered disposition, his generous and kind nature – yea the very love of his heart, as it were, has gladdened and made pleasant our long sojourn together. And now to have those affectional ties so unexpectedly broken asunder – to be forced to give up to Death – stern, cold, relentless Death – so good a man, so dear a friend, casts a dark cloud of sorrow o’er our soul that time alone can efface.

From being in full health, he was suddenly stricken down in the vigor of manhood and in the midst of distinguished usefulness.

He was the second son of Col. Eldred Simkins who was so long beloved in this community. He graduated from the S. C. College in 1836 and was an accomplished Latin scholar. He has for many years been Editor of this paper and acquired a high reputation in making *The Advertiser* one of the first papers in the State. He represented the district in the House of Representatives and for several years was its Commissioner in Equity. At the time of his death, he was our senator and filled a large place in the respect and admiration of the people. He was full of life and the captivating powers of entertainment.

There was nothing in song, poetry or music of which he was not the master. A rare man with rare accomplishments, he was the soul of society. He formed the link that connected the present generation with the Bacons, the Simkinses, the Butlers, the Glasscocks, the Brookses who cast such a brilliant and genial light over “Old Edgefield” that once made it so famous for wit and hospitality in days that are gone.

Peace to thy ashes, warm and bright man of genius. Many a tear will be dropped over thy tomb, while the whole community will feel sadness and sorrow from the loss of that glowing light which has been so suddenly extinguished in their midst.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, May 6, 1863.



The following week an elegy [*sic.*] for Simkins was published in the *Advertiser*, as follows:

For *The Advertiser*

### The Elegy of Arthur Simkins

The community of Edgefield has been called on recently to deplore the loss of one of its most useful and estimable citizens. It is seldom that the public grief has manifested so deep a feeling upon the decease of a private individual, as it exhibited on the mournful occasion of the interment of the mortal remains of the late Arthur Simkins. It seemed as if the solemn sentiment of the people was expressive of the reverence of old and familiar ties, rudely snapped by the fiat of inexorable death; and of the breaking of the last link in the chain which had bound the present with the pleasant memories of the past. Sorrow was not confined to the chamber of death, nor to the sanctuary of the affections alone, but it penetrated the hearts of the citizens generally as they silently followed to the grave the shrouded corpse of the lamented dead. Sadly, and earnestly the conviction was felt that the melancholy duty was then being paid to the lifeless remains of the last representative of the type of the ancient social regime in Edgefield; and mournfully they retired from the silent precinct of the Necropolis, where they had laid in its eternal repose the incarnation of noble impulses and generous affections. Scarcely did the hand that now pens this mournful tribute to the memory and which but a few days before his death had been clutched in the grasp of warm and sympathetic friendship, imagine that ere the change of another moon, it would be weaving a chaplet for his tomb.

Col. Simkins was fashioned not in the ordinary mould of common men. His nature had in it nothing of the littleness of humanity, "What he would highly, that would be holily, was not without ambition, but without the illness should attend it." His aspirations were lofty – his impulses noble – his affections large and imperial. In a different sphere, and under other circumstances he would have left a proud name to his countrymen, associated with humanizing influences and utilitarian advancement. In the limited area of his ambition, his character and influence were strongly felt, and few private citizens have produced so decided an impression upon the social conditions of their communities. Born and raised in competence, he had not the stimulus to exertion necessary to develop the full complement of the intellectual faculties. Yet he was no laggard in the exhibition of mental energy when called on for its manifestation in the public service. The ease with which he understood and demonstrated the problems of civil and political life, requiring protracted labor in others, satisfied him of his ability to cope successfully with the antagonists with whom he was thrown in contact and induced a disregard of the laborious appliances by which men ordinarily rise to success.

His mind was capacious and active, it scorned meanness and duplicity of every sort, and was too proud to seek place or power by the cunning artifices of the demagogue and parasite. It was noble in its aspirations because the orientalism of its character had tinged its conceptions with the hue of eastern romances and had peopled its realms with the creations of beautiful imaginings. It was delicate and refined in its perceptions because it was attuned to the key of exquisite harmonies. It was suggestive in its activity from the exuberant fertility of a large and brilliant fancy. In the garden of polite knowledge, it extracted from every flower its peculiar essence to unfold in social converse the combined and charmed treasures of its industry.

His heart was large, warm, generous and confiding. It anticipated no treachery because it harbored no deceit. It was gushing and overflowing in its tenderness and reflected as in a polished mirror every change, real and fancied in [. . . missing text . . .] and friendship he valued. It was keenly alive to the attrition and the coarse spirits, with which it was forced to mingle; and like the leaf of the sensitive plant, it shrank from the touch of rude and uncongenial intercourse. It beat with no selfish throb. It forgave quickly the wounds which harsh, inconsiderate and uncharitable criticism inflicted on its fervidity and its frankness and preferred to live in peace with an unappreciative society rather than be tossed on the wave of angry bickering and contestation. It o'erleaped oftentimes the bounds of a narrow conventionalism to embody some enlarged and favorite idea of social enjoyment and progress; and its spirit was never so chafed and dispirited as when canting hypocrisy and envious pseudo morality excepted to the peculiar exhibition of its zeal for the improvement of the social circle. It seemed truly as if in him, the early characteristics of the past socialistic features of Edgefield society were converged as the last representative of its most brilliant epoch.

In the cause of education, he was a diligent and earnest advocate. In the cultivation of the amenities of life, he was an enthusiast. In the production and development of a refined taste, he gave the whole weight of his character, counsel and example. In the extension of the courtesies and hospitalities of life, there were few who equaled him in the gracefulness of the one, none certainly who surpassed him in the fullness and genuineness of the other. There was a whole souled welcome, exhibited in the reception of his friends which breathed in every lineament of his gladsome and speaking countenance and permeated the very atmosphere of the temple of home.

In the contest of his country for the achievement of her independence, he felt the undying love of the unselfish friend and devoted patriot. Her honor and her salvation were the subjects of his continued labors and the themes of his most anxious reflections. To those brave, gallant and

heroic men who represent her cause on the bloody battlefield of the revolution, his heart yearned in sympathy for their toils and trials and beat in unison with their patriotic sacrifices and devotions. He looked forward with abiding hope to the joyful period of their return to their homes when the dusty, but honored trappings of the camp and the field would be exchanged for the garb of the citizen and amid the general joy occasioned by the recognition of our independence, each bronzed and scarred veteran would receive the homage of a grateful country. And at the Alter of gratitude erected in the Pantheon of a People's heart he would have ministered on that occasion as the chief Priest to the great spirits of the revolution.

But the light of life has gone out in its meridian brightness and the genial character which gave tone and rife to his place, and his time is overwhelmed in the victory of the grave. His loss will not be adequately felt until the turmoil and tumult of the contest is hushed into the calmness and quiet of peace and society seeks for a Maestro to reconcile and attune its discordant elements. Then, but not until then, will it truly recognize and appreciate the immensity of its bereavement and in tendering a tardy, but impartial verdict upon the character of the dead, do justice to the memory and virtues of Arthur Simkins.

“So may he rest; his faults lie gently on him.”

M.<sup>35</sup>

Simkins was also remembered in the State Senate where he had served. The following announcement and resolutions were offered in the Senate chamber by John Edmund Bacon (1827-1897), a close friend and confidant of Simkins, under the sponsorship of the Senator from Newberry District, Thomas H. Pope:

#### Resolutions in the State Senate

It has fallen to my lot, sir, to announce to this body the death of the Hon. Arthur Simkins, of Edgefield District. I feel confidently assured I shall fall far short of the undertaking. It may be best that this lot should have fallen upon me, as no man knew him longer, no many knew him better, and no one could more fully appreciate his open and manly course as a gentleman and friend.

From his boyhood up to the day of this death, which occurred on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1863, of apoplexy, we lived firm and devoted friends,

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<sup>35</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, May 13, 1863, believed to have been written by Maximilian Laborde (1804-1873). Mims (p. 62) suggested that it was written by W.C. Moragne (c.1816-1862), but since Moragne died the prior year in 1862, it could not have been written by him.

and for many years were neighbors. After having finished his collegiate education, he studied the profession of law and was admitted to the practice. The dull monotony of the practice did not give scope to his cheerful and buoyant spirit. He left the bar soon after his admission and devoted his attention to farming and politics.

Death, under any circumstances, brings with it calamities. It drapes the home of the deceased in mourning. In the death of Arthur Simkins his family has lost a kind, a feeling, a loving and devoted husband and brother. The State has been deprived of his services at a juncture in our affairs which demands our every effort. The social circle has lost its great chief. He has left us but to mourn his loss. The vacuum thus created can never be filled. No more are we to hear his cheering voice around the festive board. No more to hear his councils in our frequent meetings. Time alone can obliterate the deep impression for respect and esteem upon the hearts of all who were familiarly acquainted with Arthur Simkins. Time must bring to its assistance that powerful agent "Death," before Arthur Simkins can ever be forgotten. For many long years to come, the tear of sorrow will moisten the cheeks of very many of his ardent friends who he has left behind.

As he lived, honored and respected, so he died. May his spirit, which has so often cheered the drooping spirits of friends while living, abide forever in that peaceful mansion prepared for all who hold out faithful to the end.

*Whereas*, The death of the Hon. ARTHUR SIMKINS, formerly a member of this body, has been announced.

*Resolved unanimously*, That we deeply deplore the loss of one so fully calculated to discharge the duties of a Senator.

*Resolved unanimously*, That the State has lost a bright star from its political firmament, and this body has been deprived of the counsels of one quick in perception and strong in intellect.

*Resolved unanimously*, That we truly sympathize with the family of the deceased as a testimonial of our respect and esteem.

*Resolved*, That a copy of these proceedings be sent to his family.

The resolutions offered by Mr. POPE and Mr. BACON were considered and agreed to.

On motion of Mr. BACON, it was ordered that, as an additional mark of respect for the deceased Senator, the Senate should now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to, and the Senate adjourned at half past 1 P.M.<sup>36</sup>

Another assessment of Arthur Simkins was provided many years after his death by his protégé, James T. Bacon (1830-1909), who was a successor to Simkins as editor of *The Advertiser*. Said Bacon, “Col. Simkins was of the old regime – finely educated, brilliant, gay, witty, worldly, generous, reckless, volatile, horribly licentious, generous, merciful. When I was a boy, I was devoted to him. The breaking out of the war found him in harness [as editor of *The Edgefield Advertiser*]. He was the idol of the soldiers. From 1861 to 1864 [sic.] he wrote in *The Advertiser* a weekly letter to the Edgefield soldiers in Virginia. It was bread & meat & home to them. In the spring of 1864 [sic.] he died.”<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting that in none of the articles regarding his death and funeral was there any mention as to where he was buried. Some have assumed that he was buried at the Simkins family cemetery at Cedarfields alongside his grandparents, his parents and some of his siblings. Others, including this author, think that it is far more likely that he was buried in the village cemetery behind the Baptist Church which, in the late antebellum period, was rapidly becoming the cemetery of choice for prominent Edgefieldians. However, there is no tombstone marking his grave at either location. Since he died in the middle of the war when every man who might have been involved in making tombstones was probably off fighting, it is not at all surprising that no tombstone was erected.<sup>38</sup> After the war, his widow and young daughters were probably in desperate financial straits and were unable to afford to erect a tombstone to him. Thus, unless and until some evidence is found, we cannot be sure where he is buried.

### **Descendants of Arthur Simkins Through his Two Wives, Mary Bonham and Mary Elizabeth Pratt Simkins**

Arthur Simkins was married first on June 18, 1840 to Mary Bonham (1821-1845), daughter of John W. Bonham of Alabama.<sup>39</sup> They had one son, Arthur Pickens Simkins (1841-1844) who died at the age of three.<sup>40</sup> Mary Bonham Simkins died the following year on March 21, 1845.<sup>41</sup>

Less than five months later, on August 10, 1845, Arthur married Mary Elizabeth Pratt of Newberry (1820-1904)<sup>42</sup> and, in the ensuing years, had four

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<sup>36</sup> Proceedings of the South Carolina State Senate.

<sup>37</sup> Letter of James T. Bacon to Yates Snowden, dated March 9, 1896, in reference to the history of newspapers in Edgefield, copy in the possession of the author.

<sup>38</sup> Another prominent Edgefieldian, Francis Hugh Wardlaw, who died during the war and was buried in the village cemetery, also did not have a tombstone to mark his grave for many, many years.

<sup>39</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, June 18, 1840; April 2, 1845.

<sup>40</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, March 20, 1844.

<sup>41</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 2, 1845.

<sup>42</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, August 27, 1845.

daughters with her: Eliza S. Simkins (1846-1852), Emma Ann Simkins (1848-1919), Caroline Pratt Simkins (1850-1906), and Mary Simkins (1859-1929).<sup>43</sup>

As far as descendants of the marriage of Arthur Simkins and Mary Pratt are concerned, it appears that their oldest daughter, Eliza S. Simkins died in childhood without issue.<sup>44</sup> Emma Ann Simkins married William Alexander Kimbrough and lived in Greene County, Georgia.<sup>45</sup> She had three children: May Simkins Kimbrough (1876-1918), William H. Kimbrough (1877-1929), and Edward Augustus Kimbrough (1881-1937). May Simkins Kimbrough appears to have never married or had issue.<sup>46</sup> William H. Kimbrough, Sr.,<sup>47</sup> had one son, William H. "Bill" Kimbrough, Jr., who became very successful in Georgia in law and politics but had no children of his own.<sup>48</sup> Emma's youngest child, Edward

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<sup>43</sup> Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate*, p. 14. Ancestry.com family tree (Driggers, Hyman Branches family tree accessed by Mary Pratt Simkins).

<sup>44</sup> Eliza, who appeared in the 1850 census was not there in the 1860 census.

<sup>45</sup> Emma Simkins Kimbrough sources: Deed in Edgefield County, South Carolina dated July 18, 1882 from "Mary E. Simkins, Carrie P. Call and Mary Simkins of the County of Deval, Florida and Emma Ann Kimbrough of the County of Greene, Ga" conveying property in Edgefield to J. L. Addison, Edgefield County Archives, deed book 7, page 151; 1880 federal census for Greene County, Georgia; 1900 federal census showing her husband and children, but for some reason she is not shown; Georgia Death Index showing her to have died on April 9, 1919 in Greene County, Georgia.

<sup>46</sup> May Simkins Kimbrough sources: 1880 federal census for Greene County, Ga showing May S. Kimbrough to be 3 years old; Find-a-Grave Index showing May Simkins Kimbrough to have been born on September 18, 1876 and died on June 10, 1918; 1900 federal census showing her to be single living with her father, brothers and an uncle (mother not shown).

<sup>47</sup> W. H. Kimbrough, Sr. sources: Marriage license for William H. Kimbrough and Maude W. Elder, dated October 31, 1911. 1920 census for Greene County, Georgia, showing him living with his brother Edward and his 7-year-old son, William H. Kimbrough, Jr. Death Certificate of "W. H. Kimbro" dated April 28, 1929 showing him to be a "R.F.D. Carrier," his father to be W. A. Kimbro of Greene County, his mother to be "Miss Emma Simpson" of S.C. and his spouse to be "Cilla."

<sup>48</sup> W. H. Kimbrough, Jr. sources: 1920 federal census for Greene County, Georgia, showing W. H. Kimbrough, Jr. to be a 7-year-old son living with his father and uncle; showing service in the Army from January, 1942 to November, 1945, and date of death on June 17, 1979; World War II Hospital Admission Card showing W.H.K. admitted March 1944 for Measles, Air Force, General or Unspecified, 9, 10 or 11 months in the service; Find-a-Grave Index showing W.H.K., Jr. was born 28 June 1912 in Greensboro, Greene County, Georgia, died December 18, 1979 in Lithonia, DeKalb County, Georgia, and was buried in the Resthaven Cemetery, Decatur, Georgia with a spouse named Margaret Shepherd(?); Atlanta



Augustus Kimbrough never married or had children.<sup>49</sup> Thus, there do not appear to be any remaining Kimbrough descendants of Arthur and Mary Pratt Simkins.

Arthur and Mary Pratt's next daughter, Caroline "Carrie" Pratt Simkins, married Wilkinson Call (1834-1910) who served in the United States Senate from Florida from 1879 to 1897.<sup>50</sup> They had three children; two sons died in childhood and the remaining child, a daughter, Lucy Lee Call (1881-1961), was never

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City Directory showing W.H.K. living in 1947 at 205 The Prado, NE in Atlanta with his spouse, Margaret T[almadge] Kimbrough; another Atlanta City Directory shows W.H.K. to be Chairman, Georgia State Board of Pardons & Paroles and having a wife named Edith; a very interesting article in the *Atlanta Constitution* of December 20, 1979, showing that William H. Kimbrough, Jr. was born in 1912 in Greensboro and was raised by his uncle, Edward A. Kimbrough, graduated from Atlanta Law School in 1938, passed the bar, met and married Margaret Talmadge, daughter of Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge; joined the Talmadge law firm in January of 1943, then entered the U.S. Army Air Corps, participated in the Okinawa campaign, rejoined the Talmadge law firm, was later executive secretary to Governor Herman Talmadge, was divorced in 1950 from Margaret Talmadge, remarried Edith Langford Davis of Lubbock, Texas, had no children with Margaret or Edith, but Edith had children by a previous marriage, including the singer, Mac Davis, appointed by Governor Talmadge to the state Pardon and Paroles Board in 1953, became chairman in 1959, in 1961 appointed by Governor Ernest Vandiver to the five-member Public Service Commission where he served until his death.

<sup>49</sup> Edward Augustus Kimbrough sources: 1920 federal census showing him to be 38 years old and living with his brother, W. H. Kimbrough, and his nephew, W. H. Kimbrough, Jr.; 1930 census showing him to be 48 years old, single, a bank cashier and living with his nephew, William H. Kimbrough; World War I Draft Registration Card showing him to have been stout, short, with dark hair and brown eyes, living in Green County, Georgia, working for the Greensboro National Bank, with a relative listed as May S. Kimbrough; Social Security Application showing him to have been born on July 11, 1881 to William Alexander Kimbrough and Emma M. Simpkins [sic]; Find-a-Grave Index showing him to have been born on July 11, 1881, died on December 7, 1937, and buried in the Greensboro City Cemetery.

<sup>50</sup> Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina Senate*, p. 1460. Ancestry.com family tree (Driggers, Hyman Branches family tree accessed through Mary Pratt Simkins). It is interesting that the Simkins family of Edgefield apparently knew that Arthur Simkins's younger brother, Elijah Clark Simkins, who went to Florida, married, as a second marriage, the sister of Wilkinson Call. See "The Simkins Family of Edgefield," a speech delivered to the Edgefield County Historical Society in 1950 which was published in a 1966 pamphlet *Francis Butler Simkins, 1897-1966, Historian of the South*, privately published, 1966, p. 55. Yet, the Edgefield family apparently thought that Arthur Simkins was a bachelor and was not aware that Arthur had a daughter who married the Senator himself.

married and had no issue.<sup>51</sup> She was a noted opera singer who performed for the New York Metropolitan Opera.<sup>52</sup>

Arthur and Mary Pratt Simkins's remaining daughter, Mary Simkins, lived in Moons, Newberry County in 1870, in Duval County, Florida in 1882, and in Washington, DC where she was married on April 6, 1886 to Oscar Henry Herring (1857-1934) of Iowa. They had two sons born in Washington: Charles Eldred Herring (1887-1931) and Oscar Henry Herring, Jr. (1889-1930). Mary apparently continued to live in Washington until at least 1910 when it appears that she and her husband may have become separated with him going back to Iowa where he died in 1934.<sup>53</sup> At some point Mary moved to Germany where she died in 1929 in Berlin and was buried there.<sup>54</sup> Both of her sons died early, with Oscar dying in 1930 in a hotel in Houston, Texas by cutting his own throat<sup>55</sup> and Charles dying in Berlin on October 7, 1931. Neither of these two sons appear to have had issue.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, based upon our research, there do not appear to be any remaining descendants of Arthur Simkins with his wife Mary Elizabeth Pratt.<sup>57</sup>

## Charlotte

At the time that Arthur married Mary Pratt in 1845, there was an eleven-year-old slave girl who apparently belonged to the Pratt family. This was the mother of Paris and Andrew Simkins. Charlotte, her given name, began her life

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<sup>51</sup> Ancestry.com family tree (Driggers, Hyman Branches family tree accessed by Mary Pratt Simkins).

<sup>52</sup> *Wikipedia* article on Wilkinson Call.

<sup>53</sup> Ancestry.com family tree (Driggers, Hyman Branches family tree accessed through Mary Pratt Simkins).

<sup>54</sup> She was buried at Schoneberg, Tempelhof-Schoneberg, Berlin. Ancestry.com family tree (Driggers, Hyman Branches family tree accessed by Mary Pratt Simkins).

<sup>55</sup> Death Certificate, Texas Department of Health, August 22, 1930.

<sup>56</sup> Ancestry.com family tree (Driggers, Hyman Branches family tree accessed through Mary Pratt Simkins).

<sup>57</sup> It is interesting and puzzling that Francis Butler Simkins described his great uncle as a "bachelor" in his *Memoirs of Litchwood*, apparently being unaware that Arthur Simkins had married twice and had children. See *Memoirs of Litchwood*, p. 139. This can best be explained by the fact that Simkins's grandfather, John C. Simkins, (1828-1863), had been killed in the War when his son, Samuel McGowan Simkins (1858-1929), the father of Francis Butler Simkins, was only five years old. After the War, John C. Simkins's widow and children lived in Chappells, Newberry District where they probably had little contact with other members of the Simkins family. By the time that Samuel McGowan Simkins moved to Edgefield in 1883 to begin practicing law, Arthur Simkins's widow and daughters had moved away and had little or no contact with Edgefield.

as a slave of the Pratt-Nance family of Newberry, South Carolina<sup>58</sup> where she was born in 1834<sup>59</sup> in Newberry. According to her 1915 death certificate, she was known as Charlotte Simkins, was a mulatto, born in Newberry, her father's name was unknown, her mother's name was "Izabella Pratt," and her mother had been born in Newberry as well.<sup>60</sup> However, on the 1930 death certificate of her oldest son, Paris, the information for which was supplied by Paris's younger half-brother Andrew, her maiden name was shown as "Charlotte Powell."<sup>61</sup> However, on the 1935 death certificate of her youngest son, Andrew, her name was shown as "Charlotte Nance."<sup>62</sup>

We had initially assumed that Charlotte had been a slave of the Simkins family with roots in Edgefield going back perhaps into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. We attributed the information that she was born in Newberry to her being born on one of the Simkins plantations near Chappells in Newberry County just across the Saluda River from Edgefield County. However, when we focused on the names of Pratt and Nance and realized that these were names associated with Arthur Simkins' second wife, Mary Elizabeth Pratt, whose mother was Dorothy Nance, we realized that her heritage was different from what we had presumed. Thus, we have concluded that, at the time of her birth, Charlotte's mother was owned by Thomas Pratt (1786-1837), a wealthy Newberry merchant and community leader. Thomas Pratt's wife was Dorothy Nance (1798-1854), the daughter of Major Frederick Nance (1770-1840), the one-time Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina (1808-1810) who was said to have been the very first resident of the Town of Newberry and who had become one of its leading citizens.<sup>63</sup> In the inventory file of the Estate

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<sup>58</sup> The place of her birth comes from her 1915 death certificate which was based upon information supplied by her son Paris Simkins.

<sup>59</sup> Many sources consistently show her birth date to be 1834. We came to question this date because in the Estate of Eldred Simkins, Sr. we find a transfer of ownership of "Moses and Charlotte, a negro and child," from the Estate to Maria E. Simkins (1816-1844) dated February 11, 1831. See the Estate of Eldred Simkins, Sr., box 28, package 994, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C., quoted in Lucas, Gloria Ramsey, *Slave Records of Edgefield County*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2010, p. 364. However, we find that "Moses and Charlott" were also transferred from the Estate of Arthur Simkins (1742-1826) to Eldred Simkins on October 25, 1826, thus making it clear that this was a different Charlotte. See Estate of Arthur Simkins, box 26, package 929, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C., quoted in Lucas, p. 363.

<sup>60</sup> Death Certificate for Charlotte Simkins dated July 2, 1915.

<sup>61</sup> Death Certificate for Paris Simkins dated September 28, 1930.

<sup>62</sup> Death Certificate for Andrew Simkins dated January 11, 1936.

<sup>63</sup> Pope, Thomas H., *The History of Newberry County, Volume One: 1749-1860*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1973, pp. 64, 72, 91, 92, 93, 94, 111, 130, 131, 145, 149, 159, 161, 167, 179, 190, 191, 201, 215, 216, 218, 233n. O'Neill, John Belton & John A. Chapman, *The Annals of Newberry*,

of Thomas Pratt who died in 1837 we find among the slaves listed, “Isabel and her children, Henry, Ben, Charlotte and Perry,” confirming the name of Charlotte’s mother which was listed on her 1915 death certificate.<sup>64</sup> Thus, we have a record of Charlotte from the age of three.

On August 12, 1845, when Charlotte was only eleven years old, Thomas and Dorothy Pratt’s daughter, Mary, was married to the Edgefield widower, Colonel Arthur Augustus Simkins.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps Charlotte had been given by Mrs. Pratt to her daughter Mary to be a personal servant, or perhaps Charlotte was part of the dowry which was given to Colonel Simkins in a marriage contract for Mary Pratt. Since the 1935 death certificate of Andrew Simkins indicated that Charlotte’s maiden name was “Nance,” one might surmise that Charlotte’s mother had at one time been owned by Major Frederick Nance and his wife, and then was transferred to their daughter who married Thomas Pratt. We have not come up with any theory as to why Charlotte’s maiden name on Paris’s death certificate was listed as “Powell.” In any event, what we do know is that somehow Charlotte became the property of Arthur Simkins and thus came to Edgefield Courthouse Village, probably in 1845.

On February 18, 1849,<sup>66</sup> the fifteen-year-old Charlotte gave birth to a baby boy.<sup>67</sup> The baby was named Paris, and, for all that we have been able to determine, was, even at the time of his birth, widely acknowledged to be the son of Arthur

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*In Two Parts*, Aull & Houseal, Newberry, SC, 1892, pp. 81-82, 119-120.

<sup>64</sup> Newberry County, Probate Court, Newberry, SC, Estate of Dr. Thomas Pratt, Box 89 at page 6. See also note 60 *supra* for Charlotte’s death certificate.

<sup>65</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, August 27, 1845.

<sup>66</sup> The exact birth date of Paris Simkins is not clear: It has been shown as February 10, 1849, February 15, 1849, and February 18, 1849. His death certificate, obviously mistaken, shows his birth to be Nov. 6, 1844.

<sup>67</sup> In the twenty-first century most people consider marriage and carnal relations below the age of eighteen or twenty-one to be immoral and illegal. However, in earlier centuries, this was not the case. The minimum age written into English civil law many centuries ago was twelve for females and fourteen for males. In eighteenth and nineteenth century South Carolina, marriage at the age of fifteen was very common. Even today, certain religious, cultural or ethnic sects – like Edgefield County’s Irish Traveler community – practice early marriages, especially for females. In Hawaii today, marriage at fifteen is permitted with parental and judicial consent. Of course, sexual relations with a slave girl, though a common occurrence in the antebellum South, is certainly considered immoral today and was significantly frowned upon even in that day. See the comments of “Brother” James Dannelly (1786-1855), a visiting Methodist circuit rider, at the Edgefield Methodist Church in the 1830’s quoted in “An Old-Fashioned Edgefield Mince Pie,” by James T. Bacon, *The Anderson Intelligencer*, June 27, 1906, re-printed from the *Charleston Sunday News*. An annotated version of this article is in the files of the author.

Simkins. One can speculate that the name “Paris” was given by Arthur Simkins to the baby in acknowledgement that he was Arthur’s son, just as the Paris of Greek mythology was the son of King Priam. However, we are not aware of any other source which has speculated on the origin of his name.

One also cannot help but speculate how Arthur’s wife, Mary Pratt Simkins, might have reacted to her young servant girl becoming pregnant and then giving birth to a clearly mulatto baby. However, it appears that the marriage of Arthur and Mary Pratt Simkins continued, for Mary gave birth to another daughter the year after Paris’s birth and then to a fourth daughter some years later.

Certain descendants of Paris Simkins have told the story that Charlotte rejected the sexual advances of Simkins and did not submit to him until she was forced to sit naked indefinitely on a pile of manure.<sup>68</sup> Whether this story is true or not, we will never know for sure. However, we must acknowledge that Simkins’s protégé, James T. Bacon, in describing Simkins, used, in addition to many other complementary adjectives, the phrase “horribly licentious.”<sup>69</sup> Some may take Bacon’s phrase as confirmation of the “pile of manure” story.

Two years after the birth of Paris, on May 15, 1851,<sup>70</sup> Charlotte gave birth to another son, Andrew Whitfield Simkins. A story from the Paris Simkins family states that Andrew’s father was a cousin of Arthur Simkins.<sup>71</sup> We have no indication of where Andrew’s name, “Andrew,” came from. There were

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<sup>68</sup> Bailey, Andrew W. and John W. Bailey, “The Story of How We Became ‘The Bailey’s,’” manuscript in the possession of the author. That manuscript states “She had so strongly and consistently resisted the sexual advances of her elite slave owner, Arthur Simkins, as to be an honored folk heroine. But to have his way, Arthur kept applying different pressures until he found success by forcing Charlotte to sit naked indefinitely on a pile of manure. As a result of finally submitting to her lecherous slave owner, she bore their child, Paris Simkins.” See also Burton, Orville Vernon, *In My Father’s House Are Many Mansions, Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1985, p. 185; and “A Tiny Piece of my Life,” a manuscript written by Julia P. White as told by Grace Simkins Jenkins, the youngest daughter of Paris Simkins, February 10, 1980, copy also in the possession of the author.

<sup>69</sup> See Bacon’s full description of Simkins in his letter to Yates Snowden, dated March 9, 1896, copy in the possession of the author, which is quoted above under “Arthur Simkins, Death, Burial and Legacy.”

<sup>70</sup> Andrew Simkins’s birth date is shown on his tombstone as May 15, 1854. However, many other sources have shown 1851. His 1935 death certificate shows that he was 84 years old at his death which would confirm the 1851 date.

<sup>71</sup> The Bailey manuscript continued with this sentence: “After Arthur was through with her, he passed her on to his cousin, by whom she had another child, Andrew Simkins.” This is the only source of which we are aware for the “cousin” theory.

many Andrews in Edgefield for whom he could have been named, or perhaps Charlotte, or Arthur Simkins or others in the Simkins household, just liked the name. However, with regard to his second name “Whitfield” which is not so very common, it may be significant that Whitfield Brooks,<sup>72</sup> a very prominent member of the Edgefield community whom Charlotte and all of the Simkinses – black and white – undoubtedly knew well, died on December 28, 1851, some seven months after Andrew was born. Perhaps that was the origin of his name, Whitfield. This is not to suggest that this name implies any blood relationship between Brooks and the baby Andrew for there has never been any such speculation of which we are aware.

The author has made an effort to determine which of Arthur Simkins’s Simkins cousins might have been Andrew’s father.<sup>73</sup> At the time of his conception there were relatively few Simkinses who could have been eligible. Most of Arthur’s first cousins, Jesse Simkins (1784-1821), Stewart Simkins (1797-1832), Eldred James Simkins (1802-1845), William Isaac Simkins (1807-1845), and John M. Simkins (1809-1842), were dead; Several sons of Arthur’s first cousin, Jesse Simkins, are potential candidates, specifically John Lawrence Simkins (1814-1887) and Zachariah Smith Simkins (1818-1891). These two men were living in Florida in 1850 but were known to visit Edgefield from time to time. Eldred James Simkins (1839-1903), another first cousin once removed, was probably too young; Another candidate is Erasmus Jefferson (“E.J.”) Youngblood (1801-1887), the son of Arthur’s aunt Nancy Simkins Youngblood Lowe (1769-1843) who lived right here in Edgefield. E.J. Youngblood had fathered another prominent Edgefieldian of African American heritage, Norman Youngblood (1842-1927), and the community generally acknowledged that E.J. was Norman’s father. We are unaware of any rumors in Edgefield suggesting E.J.’s paternity of Andrew, and therefore, upon reflection, we doubt that he was the one. Thus, to summarize, the potential fathers of Andrew are John Lawrence Simkins (1814-1887), Zachariah Smith Simkins (1818-1891), Eldred James Simkins (1839-1903), and Erasmus Jefferson (“E.J.”) Youngblood (1801-1887).

If this author had to make a wager as to who was the father, he would probably put his money on the Florida cousin, Zachariah Smith Simkins, a well-respected man who was known to have visited Edgefield from time to time in the 1840s & 1850s. Smith was the son of Jesse Simkins (1784-1821) and Behethland Brooks Simkins (1793-1864). Jesse was the son of John Simkins (1862-1833), who was, in turn, the son of the “Founder” Arthur Simkins (1742-1826). What we know of “Smith” Simkins comes from the journals of his uncle, Whitfield Brooks,

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<sup>72</sup> For information on Whitfield Brooks, see Farmer, James O, Editor, *An Edgefield Planter and his World, the 1840s Journals of Whitfield Brooks*, Mercer University Press, 2019.

<sup>73</sup> The author acknowledges that the “cousin” could have been a cousin through Arthur Simkins’s mother, Eliza Smith Simkins (1791-1838), the daughter of Benajah Smith of Lincoln Co., Ga., but the author has not yet made any investigation of that possibility.



an Edgefield planter and lawyer, from *The Story of Halcyon Grove* by Bettis C. Rainsford, from the *History of Jefferson County, Florida* by Jerrell H. Shofner, and from a manuscript novel, *Settling Bloody Florida*, by Smith Simkins's great, great granddaughter, Alice Denham (1927-2016).<sup>74</sup> The fact that he was not a resident of Edgefield probably kept the local gossip to a minimum, and once he had returned to Florida, he probably dropped from the Edgefield consciousness. Had the father been E.J. Youngblood or any other member of the family who lived in, or remained in close touch with, Edgefield, inevitably there would have been speculation and gossip. Unless and until other evidence is discovered, specifically DNA evidence, we will probably never know who, for sure, was the father of Andrew Simkins.

Sometimes after the birth of Andrew, Charlotte was married to another slave of the Simkins family, George Simkins (c.1817-1890). He adopted Charlotte's two sons and made a home for them. He was a brick mason<sup>75</sup> and a very respected member of the Edgefield community. Charlotte and George did not have any other children together.

George was the son of Malinda Simkins (1795-1888), who was the last black member of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church. A slave of Eldred Simkins (1779-1831), she was transferred upon his death to his widow, Mrs. Eliza H. Simkins (1791-1838).<sup>76</sup> Upon Mrs. Simkins' death, she was transferred to Mrs. Simkins's son Elijah Clark Simkins (1830-c.1879).<sup>77</sup> Throughout her life and until her death in 1888, she continued to be a member of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church. Writing in *The History of the Edgefield Baptist Association*, Miss

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<sup>74</sup> See Farmer, James O., editor, *An Edgefield Planter and his World, The 1840s Journals of Whitfield Brooks*, Mercer University Press, Macon, GA, 2010, pp. 79, 250-251; Rainsford, Bettis C., *The Story of Halcyon Grove*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2011, pp. 15-24; Shofner, Jerrell H., *History of Jefferson County, Florida*, Sentry Press, Tallahassee, 1976, pp. 44, 177, 197, 216, 220, 226, 256, 287-288, 305, 317, 321, 325, 327, 417; and Denham, Alice, *Settling Bloody Florida*, unpublished manuscript, now owned by, and in the possession of, the Edgefield County Historical Society, passim. Several years ago, the widower of the late Alice Denham (1927-2016) gave the Edgefield County Historical Society a silver knife which belonged to Smith Simkins, Mrs. Denham's great, great grandfather.

<sup>75</sup> That George was a brick mason is confirmed by the 1870 census and by the fact that he signed his name on the brick chimney on the rear of the Dr. E. J. Mims house on Main Street in Edgefield.

<sup>76</sup> Estate of Eldred Simkins, Sr., box 28, package 994, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C., quoted in Lucas, Gloria Ramsey, *Slave Records of Edgefield County*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2010, p. 364.

<sup>77</sup> Equity File #545, August 27, 1838, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C., quoted in Lucas, p. 365.

Hortense Woodson described Mrs. Simkins<sup>78</sup>: “The gallery of the original church had a door entering from the outside east, and she would come in and occupy the gallery alone. She was said to have a mild and peaceable face, and always dressed with great precision and neatness, wearing a black dress, a small cape and a white handkerchief on her head, and carrying a turkey feather fan, which was used in those days. She wore a black bonnet to the church but would take it off when coming inside. She was the mother of [George] Simkins and the grandmother of Paris and Andrew Simkins.”<sup>79</sup> At her death in 1888, Mrs. Simkins’s obituary appeared in the *Edgefield Chronicle*:

The oldest and most honored colored person in our community was buried on Friday afternoon last, in the presence of a concourse of friends, white no less than black. This was Malinda Simkins, the mother of that well known and much-esteemed colored citizen, George Simkins. This good woman who belonged to the old-time Simkinses in the earliest days of Edgefield and who at all periods of her life maintained the highest respectability, was ninety-three years of age when she died on Thursday last. Up to her very death, her faculties of body and mind were most wonderfully preserved. In May 1823, just sixty-five years ago, at the first conference meeting ever held by the Edgefield Baptist Church, she joined the said church by experience and was baptized. And in this church lay her membership, ever a faithful and honored one, on the day of her death. A rare and noble example. At any hour, at any moment, “Aunt Malinda” was ever a welcome friend in any house in Edgefield. She rests from her labors, and God hath brought her to the haven where she would be.<sup>80</sup>

Census records indicate that Malinda Simkins lived in the house with George and Charlotte at least from the time of the 1870 census until her death nearly twenty years later. Therefore, she would have unquestionably been a very formative influence on her son’s two stepchildren, Paris and Andrew. Unfortunately, we do

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<sup>78</sup> Woodson, page 221. Miss Woodson refers to Mrs. Simkins as “Mrs. Morris.” This was perhaps due to the fact that Malinda appears to have had a son whose first name was “Morris.” See Equity File #545, August 27, 1838, Edgefield County Archives, Edgefield, S.C., quoted in Lucas, p. 365.

<sup>79</sup> Woodson, page 221. Miss Woodson described her as the mother of Charlotte Simkins, but the *Chronicle* article, undoubtedly written by Editor James T. Bacon who would have known her well, said she was the mother of George Simkins. This is confirmed by Charlotte Simkins’ death certificate which shows that her mother was named “Izabella Pratt.” The 1870 census shows Malinda’s last name to be “Brooks” in the entry under George Simkins. The 1880 census does not have a last name for her, but the entry would suggest that her last name was Simkins since she is listed under George Simkins.

<sup>80</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, May 30, 1888. Woodson, p. 221.

not have any direct statements by either Paris or Andrew mentioning their step grandmother.

After the War Between the States, George became one of the founders of Macedonia Church. We do not have any specific information about what role he played in the founding of the church, but he was greatly esteemed in Edgefield. Upon his death in 1890, the *Edgefield Chronicle* editorialized:

Since emancipation day, perhaps no colored man in our county has enjoyed so much of the respect, nay love, of our people of both races as George Simkins. This honored colored citizen died at his home in our town on Friday last, aged seventy-one years. George Simkins was a man whose heart was so brave, so honest, so kind, that he was enabled, even in the midst of the most trying and embarrassing circumstances, social, political and religious, to do his duty all around. He was also industrious and public spirited. On Saturday afternoon, we all followed him to his grave, white and black, high and low, rich and poor. The white and the black, alike, uttered tender words above his coffin. The white and the black, alike, sang his requiem. The white and the black, alike, mingled their tears at the spot where God gives him sleep.<sup>81</sup>

When Charlotte died some twenty-five years later, the *Edgefield Chronicle* published this obituary of her:

Death of honored Colored Woman. On Wednesday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, Charlotte Simkins, the aged mother of Paris and Andrew Simkins, died at the home of the latter in her 81<sup>st</sup> year. She was a life-long Baptist – having been a member of Macedonia church ever since its erection during or soon after the War Between the States. With only two sons she died leaving the remarkably large number of eighteen grandchildren and twenty-one great grandchildren. Of late years she had been a considerable sufferer, and the end came as a great relief. Charlotte Simkins's passing removes from Edgefield one of the last links that binds the old antebellum times with the new, modern South – a realization that make the older heads sad and genuinely regretful.<sup>82</sup>

## **Paris Simkins**

### **1849-1930**

As noted above, Paris was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of February, 1849. Of his early life we know little except that he probably lived in a cabin with his mother, his half-brother, his stepfather and his step grandmother at the town house of his

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<sup>81</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, February 19, 1890.

<sup>82</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, July 8, 1915.

father and owner, Arthur Simkins. He had begun to learn to read as a child when taught by his father's coachman and later by the pastor of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, the Reverend Luther R. Gwaltney.<sup>83</sup> As was described in a family narrative written after his death:

He was loved by the old coachman of his master, who had by stealth learned to read. At a tender age, one night between midnight and dawn his mother, Charlotte Simkins, heard him running through the grassy patch, almost out of breath. He tapped lightly upon the door and called in a whisper, "Mother, Mother, get up and open the door. I have learned my A, B, C's!" He and the old coachman had hid in the swamp and struggled with the alphabet all night, for it was against the law for a slave to be taught to read.<sup>84</sup>

When the War broke out, at the age of only twelve or thirteen, Paris Simkins went to Virginia with the Confederate soldiers of Edgefield to serve as a barber. He was with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Kershaw's Brigade, and served through nearly all of the War. He witnessed a number of battles, including Gettysburg. After each battle "he, with another slave boy, ran and stumbled over the battlefield from one wounded and dying soldier to another taking water to them and rendering whatever aid they could, knowing that it was not for their cause that they were dying."<sup>85</sup> In the aftermath of the Battle of Brandy Station, he heard of the wounding of Edgefield's General M. C. Butler whom he had known and went to the house where Butler had been taken and offered to minister to him. Butler treated him very kindly.<sup>86</sup>

After the War, Simkins returned to Edgefield and opened a barber shop. He also had a shoe shop.<sup>87</sup> His barber shop was his classroom for he never attended public school a day in his life. He continued to be very close to the Rev. Luther R. Gwaltney, who took great interest in him, baptized him, married him, and became his devoted friend.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Simkins, Edwin Booth and other children, "A Brief Narrative of the Life of Paris Simkins, Esq. of Edgefield, S. C., Who Died September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1930." A copy of the typed manuscript is in the possession of the author.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. See also *Edgefield Chronicle*, November 2, 1898, Paris Simkins's letter to the editor.

<sup>87</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, April 29, 1868.

<sup>88</sup> Simkins, Edwin Booth and other children. Rev. Gwaltney (1830-1910), a Virginian by birth, served as the pastor of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church from 1857 to 1867. He was married to Sophie Bonham Lipscomb of Edgefield. Later he moved to Rome, Georgia, becoming the president of Shorter College. In 1895 he moved back to Edgefield where he once again assumed the pulpit at the Edgefield Village Baptist Church until 1900. His ministry to Edgefield's African American popula-

On July 13, 1869 Paris Simkins, along with his stepfather, George Simkins, became a founder of Macedonia Baptist Church when he was named as one of seven trustees to whom four acres of property was transferred for the purpose of building a new church for the black citizens of the town.<sup>89</sup> On April 23, 1871, he, together with twenty-eight other black members, was given a letter of dismission from the Edgefield Village Baptist Church so that they could be united with Macedonia Church.<sup>90</sup> Throughout his life, Paris continued to be a loyal member of Macedonia Church. According to the family memoir, he was a “great Sunday School and church worker. For many years he taught the Bible Class of the Church.”<sup>91</sup> He was generally considered by the greater Edgefield community to be the principal member and leader of Macedonia Church. Some sources have stated that he was a licensed preacher but there is no documentary evidence of that.<sup>92</sup> It is interesting that when the church celebrated its Centennial in 1969, he was not even listed as “Deceased Deacon.”<sup>93</sup> Perhaps this was just an oversight, but the fact is that the last documentary evidence we have of Paris’s actual official involvement in Macedonia was in the 1869 deed whereby the land for the church was acquired.<sup>94</sup>

Beginning in 1866, Paris Simkins became active in the Republican Party and participated in many events during the period of Reconstruction. He was the head of the local militia, served on the jury commission and was a trial justice. In 1872 he was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives from Edgefield County and served in that position until 1876. As a legislator, he was described by even the Democratic press as a “colored man of more than average intelligence.”<sup>95</sup>

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tion was significant, as he was also the mentor and supporter of the Rev. Alexander Bettis, even recommending that Bettis be licensed to preach to the slaves during the War. See Nicholson, Alfred W., *Brief Sketch of the Life and Labors of Rev. Alexander Bettis, also an Account of the Founding and Development of The Bettis Academy*, published by the author, Trenton, SC, 1913, p. 14.

<sup>89</sup> Deed Book PPP, page 061, Edgefield County Archives, deed dated July 13, 1869 and recorded July 21, 1869.

<sup>90</sup> Minutes of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, April 23, 1871, page 179.

<sup>91</sup> Simkins, Edwin Booth and other children.

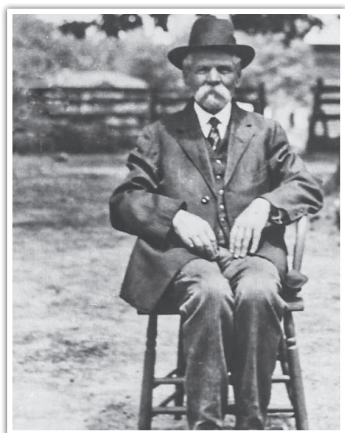
<sup>92</sup> This assertion appeared in a manuscript page by Francis Frederick, “The Honorable Paris Simkins,” a copy of which is in the files of the author, and was repeated in Burton, p. 256, and in Underwood & Burke, p. 109. However, we have found no credible contemporary evidence of Simkins being licensed as a preacher. The fact that his son and other family members failed to mention it in their “A Brief Narrative of the Life of Paris Simkins, Esq. of Edgefield,” written at the time of his death, suggests that it was not true.

<sup>93</sup> *Macedonia Baptist Church Centennial Program*, Sunday, December 7, 1969, p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> Deed Book PPP, page 061, Edgefield County Archives, deed dated July 13, 1869 and recorded July 21, 1869.

<sup>95</sup> *Columbia Daily Union Herald*, Feb. 26, 1875, quoting the *Charleston News and*

He was elected chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee where his legislative proposals attracted national attention. As chairman of that committee, he helped bring embezzlement charges against Niles Parker.<sup>96</sup> He was severely criticized by the white community for a bill which he introduced in 1875 to add a special tax of two mills on all property in Edgefield County to be paid to the unemployed laborers of the county who had been dismissed from their jobs because of their political activism.<sup>97</sup>



*Paris Simkins  
(1849 - 1930)  
The only know image of  
Paris Simkins*

While in Columbia attending to his legislative duties, he enrolled in the School of Law at the South Carolina College, graduating with a Bachelor of Laws degree on December 13, 1876.<sup>98</sup> He was defeated in his campaign for reelection to the House of Representatives in 1876, losing by a vote of two to one, largely as a result of the intimidation and fraud in that election. He subsequently testified before a congressional committee about the election.<sup>99</sup>

After Reconstruction Simkins continued his career as a barber, but in 1885 he was admitted to the South Carolina Bar with the support of Governor John C. Sheppard of Edgefield. However, he never had a substantial law practice and never tried cases in the courthouse.<sup>100</sup> It has been said that he was a

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*Courier*, as shown in Underwood, James Lowell and W. Lewis Burke, Jr., *At Freedom's Door; African American Founding Fathers and Lawyers in Reconstruction South Carolina*, University of South Carolina Press, 2005, p. 109.

<sup>96</sup> Underwood and Burke, p. 109.

<sup>97</sup> *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, January 22, 1875; letter of A. J. Norris to R. Cantelou, February 5, 1875, in the possession of the author.

<sup>98</sup> Simkins, Edwin Booth and other children.

<sup>99</sup> Underwood and Burke, p. 110.

<sup>100</sup> In a 1940 article about Rev. Alexander Bettis and Bettis Academy, local historian Miss Hortense Woodson stated that Paris Simkins represented a group of members of the Mount Canaan Baptist Association who filed suit against Rev. Bettis for his use of their funds to support the fledgling Bettis Academy. The article stated that after Paris argued his clients' position in court and Rev. Bettis represented himself, Bettis prevailed and was able to use the funds for Bettis Academy. However, a diligent search could find no such case in the circuit court records for either Edgefield or Aiken Counties. A copy of Miss Woodson's article is in the Bettis Academy file of the author. See also Nicholson, p. 28, which mentions the case but does not mention the involvement of Paris Simkins.



secretary to Governor Sheppard of Edgefield for a period.<sup>101</sup> He served as postmaster in Edgefield at various times during Republican Presidential administrations.<sup>102</sup> In 1884 he drew up the Constitution and By-Laws of the Mutual Aid and Burial Society and was its first president. He was also actively involved in the Knights of Pythias chapter in Edgefield.<sup>103</sup> Both of these organizations met in the two-story building erected adjacent to Macedonia Church.

Paris Simkins was married in 1868 to Mary Ann Nobles (1850-1916). To this union were born sixteen children. Upon her death in 1916, the *Edgefield Chronicle* noted that “she was a good woman, a good mother and a good wife. She was the faithful mother of sixteen well reared, honest and capable sons and daughters. She was also a faithful member and one of the organizers of the Macedonia Baptist church. . .”<sup>104</sup> The sixteen children of Paris and Mary Ann Simkins were: Sallie Lou Simkins Hayden (1869-18??), Emma Moria Simkins Cain (1870-1???) who had a son named Willie, Arthur Simkins (1873-19??), Benjamin L. Simkins (1875-19??), Ophelia Rebecca Simkins (1877-19??) who married John Watson Bailey, “Babe” Simkins (1879-19??), Walter Lincoln Simkins (1883-1???), Joseph Simkins (1885-1???), James Blaine Simkins (1887-1???), Mattie Rosa Simkins (1889-19??), Cora Alethia Simkins (1891-19??) who married Scott, Edwin Booth Simkins (1892-198?), Grace Irene Simkins (1894-19??) who married a Jenkins, and three others whose names we have not yet been able to discover.



*Mary Ann Nobles Simkins  
(1850-1916)*

We are fortunate to have a photograph of Paris in his last years. In this photograph he is seated in a chair in the yard in his coat and tie and wearing a hat, but his image is very clear, showing his large moustache and friendly visage. We are very hopeful that in the future some of his descendants may provide us with another photograph which shows him as a younger man. In his last years he looked so much like his first cousin, Samuel McGowan Simkins (1858-1929), an Edgefield lawyer, that when McGowan Simkins’s young grandson, Augustus Tompkins “Gus” Graydon (1916-2007) visited Edgefield and saw Paris walking down the street, he rushed over to Paris to hug him, calling out “Grandfather.”<sup>105</sup>

<sup>101</sup> According to an interview with Simkins’ grandson, C. B. Bailey. See Underwood & Burke, p. 110.

<sup>102</sup> Records of the Post Office showing Paris Simkins to have been appointed Postmaster at Edgefield on October 31, 1887.

<sup>103</sup> Simkins, Edwin Booth and other children.

<sup>104</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, November 23, 1916.

<sup>105</sup> Simkins, Francis Butler, *Memoirs of Litchwood*, “I Have Things to Tell,” Francis

Paris Simkins died on September 26, 1930<sup>106</sup> at the age of 81. *The Edgefield Advertiser* published his obituary as follows:

Death of Paris Simkins: Sunday, September 27, Paris Simkins, one of the oldest persons in Edgefield, especially among the colored people, died at his home here. He was born in Edgefield 81 years ago. During the reconstruction period he was a conspicuous figure in Edgefield and in the state, being a member of the legislature in 1876. But for fifty years or more he has given no attention to politics, going in and out among our people an humble and respected citizen. He was a lawyer but never practiced in the Edgefield court. Paris Simkins loved Edgefield and was loyal to the place of his birth. He had children residing in Columbia and in the North who urged him in his old age to live with them, but he preferred to live, die and be buried in Edgefield.<sup>107</sup>

An interesting perspective on Paris Simkins has been passed down to us by the eminent Southern historian, Francis Butler Simkins (1897-1966) who grew up in Edgefield. In his autobiography, the first six chapters of which the Edgefield County Historical Society published in 2016 under the title of *Memoirs of Litchwood, "I Have Things to Tell," Francis Butler Simkins Remembers the Edgefield of his Youth*,<sup>108</sup> Simkins describes Paris Simkins as follows:

The lonesomeness colored in history as far as my acquaintance runs was the man previously mentioned as resembling Father. Rome Simkins had grown up during Reconstruction period when a colored man of talents and good white ancestors could aspire to be a gentleman. He could become a lawyer, a judge or major or a colonel in the Negro militia. Rome looked the part of the Southern gentleman – the unpretentious and plain one, not the ostentatious fellow of romance – and through his ability at oratorical expression proved he had the right type of education. His

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*Butler Simkins Remembers the Edgefield of His Youth*, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2016, pp. 139. Also, this story was told to the author by Gus Graydon himself circa 1998.

<sup>106</sup> “The Brief Narrative,” which was dated September 26, 1930 makes clear that Paris Simkins died on September 26, 1930. The Death Certificate, executed afterwards without a physician in attendance, shows September 28, 1930.

<sup>107</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 3, 1930.

<sup>108</sup> Francis Butler Simkins used pseudonyms throughout his autobiography, presumably to disguise the people who he was describing. In publishing this book, the Edgefield County Historical Society has annotated it, footnoting names and providing actual names when they could be identified. “Litchwood” was, of course, Edgefield; “Rome Simkins” was Paris Simkins.

talents had been rewarded by his admission to the bar and by his election to the state legislature. Then came the overthrow of the Reconstruction regime. The price Rome had to pay for not being sent into exile with the carpetbaggers was retirement from public activities. He could no longer practice law or be a candidate for the legislature. For the sake of what he had once been, he was allowed to cast one of the three or four Republican ballots left in Litchwood County.

Rome did nothing for the remaining fifty years of his life. He did not have to work because he husbanded carefully the modest competence he had acquired when there were political pickings of colored men. He had no friends; he considered himself above all the blacks and all the whites considered him beneath them. A barrier grew between him and his own children because they, becoming artisans, accepted without thought the status conventional to their kind in post-Reconstruction society. He walked the streets of Litchwood endlessly with no other apparent purpose than to get the mail. He was the one person among both the whites and the blacks to whom the Simkins children never spoke. His house, a purely Southern structure sitting high on brick pillars amidst tall oaks, was the one Litchfield structure we never entered. He had a wife, but we never saw her.<sup>109</sup>



*Paris Simkins' House Edgefield, SC  
Demolished circa 2000*

Paris Simkins was truly an important part of the history of Edgefield County. His story, beginning as a slave before the Civil War, going through the entire War with the Confederate Army, returning to his Edgefield home, participating in the founding of Macedonia Church, joining the Republican Party, becoming a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, attending the University of South Carolina and getting a law degree,

being defeated in the 1876 election by the Red Shirt campaign, continuing to participate in the Republican Party in the years after the 1876 election, becoming a member of the South Carolina Bar, fathering sixteen children and remaining in Edgefield until his death in 1930, is a saga which needs to be remembered by all who have an interest in the history of Edgefield County and of South Carolina. His record makes clear that he stood up against the challenges he faced and acquitted himself with honor and dignity.

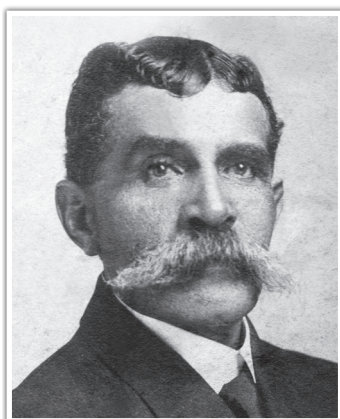
<sup>109</sup> Simkins, *Memoirs of Litchwood*, pp. 141-142.

## Andrew Simkins

### 1851-1935

Andrew Whitfield Simkins was born on May 15, 1851 to Charlotte, a slave belonging to Arthur Simkins. Family stories state that Andrew's father was a cousin of Charlotte's owner, Arthur Simkins, as discussed above.

Unlike his older half-brother, Paris Simkins, who became actively involved in Republican politics during the Reconstruction period and went on to become a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives and to earn a law degree from the South Carolina College, Andrew Simkins apparently was not involved in politics nor did he seek higher education. Instead, he became a farmer and prospered in that vocation throughout his life. A surviving document from 1875 show that he, his brother Paris and Lawrence Cain rented a plantation from John L. Cheatham two miles below Pine House station.<sup>110</sup> The eminent Southern historian, Francis Butler Simkins, a cousin of Andrew's, described Andrew as "the county's most prosperous Negro farmer."<sup>111</sup>



*Andrew W. Simkins*  
(1851 - 1935)

Andrew Simkins was married twice. His first wife was Mary A. Elizabeth Stuard (1860-1906) and his second wife was Mary Bedenbaugh (1871-1965). He had nine children by his first wife: Belle S. Nix, George C. Simkins, Alice S. McKelvy, Mattie S. Handy, Charlotte S. Ramey, A. W. Simkins, Jr., Ben M. Simkins, Allene Simkins, and Roger W. Simkins, and one daughter by his second wife, Sarah Ojetta Simkins. Beginning in 1887 he began to assemble his home farm of 132 acres on the edge of Edgewood Plantation at a total cost of \$2,102,<sup>112</sup> and lived there until his last days when he had to be admitted to the state hospital in Columbia where he died.<sup>113</sup> What is interesting about his land acquisitions

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<sup>110</sup> Note for the rent which was payable to Cheatham on January 1, 1876, copy in the possession of the author.

<sup>111</sup> Simkins, Francis Butler, *Memoirs of Litchwood*, p. 142.

<sup>112</sup> Edgefield County Archives, Deed Book 10 at page 585-586, deed dated December 15, 1887 and recorded December 15, 1887; Deed Book 13 at page 214, deed dated November 8, 1890 and recorded November 18, 1890; Deed Book 17 at page 693, deed dated March 18, 1899 and recorded April 14, 1899; Deed Book 19 at page 505, deed dated September 2, 1902 and recorded September 9, 1902; Deed Book 20 at page 303, deed dated January 20, 1905 and recorded January 21, 1905.

<sup>113</sup> His death at the State Hospital in Columbia is documented on his death certificate.

is that each deed conveyed the property not to him, but to his wife, Mary A. Elizabeth S. Simkins. This is perhaps evidence of his extreme conservatism in financial affairs; that he wanted to put his property in the name of his wife, beyond the reach of his creditors. He had seen his brother Paris's house sold in foreclosure and bought in by Paris's wife, Mary Ann Nobles Simkins.<sup>114</sup> Andrew's lawyer in all of his land acquisitions was former Governor John C. Sheppard.

In the records of the Edgefield Village Baptist Church, there is no mention of Andrew Simkins being a member of that church or of being dismissed by letter to join Macedonia. Although the author strongly suspects that he became actively involved in Macedonia Church soon after the construction of the original building, the first concrete evidence found so far of his involvement is in a 1908 article in *The Edgefield Advertiser* which identifies him as one of three members of the laity who were active workers in the church. In 1911 he was one of the trustees of Macedonia Church deeding a quarter acre site for the new school building and one of the trustees for the new school receiving the property.<sup>115</sup> Later in 1911, the *Advertiser* editor credited "Andrew Simkins, who is always on the alert for an opportunity to be of real service to his people," with organizing an event to raise money for the new school building.<sup>116</sup>

Interestingly, although his brother Paris Simkins has always been thought by the larger Edgefield community to be the power behind Macedonia Church, as noted above, the last evidence we have of Paris's actual official involvement in Macedonia Church was in the 1869 deed for the acquisition of the land for the church.<sup>117</sup> Thus, what our research would suggest is that it was Andrew Simkins, not his brother Paris, who was the real force behind Macedonia Church.

In his 1935 obituary, *The Edgefield Advertiser* gave us a vivid picture of the character of Andrew Simkins:

Andrew was a farmer from his early life and succeeded above the average, having gathered about him more property than most men of his race. He was economical and thrifty always dealing justly with those who worked for him. He reared a large family and gave them educational advantages. He was a leader of his race, always quiet and unostentatious. His counsel was sought in his church, Macedonia, where he was a member of the official board for probably a half

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<sup>114</sup> *The Edgefield Chronicle*, July 8, 1886.

<sup>115</sup> Deed Book 21 at page 644, deed dated April 12, 1911 and recorded April 17, 1911, Edgefield County Archives. See also Rainsford, Bettis C., "The Story of the Edgefield Academy," unpublished manuscript, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2021.

<sup>116</sup> *The Edgefield Advertiser*, October 4, 1911.

<sup>117</sup> Paris Simkins was not even listed as a "Deceased Deacon" in the 1969 Centennial Booklet.



century or longer. Andrew Simkins was honest and upright, his daily walk and conversation being an example worthy of emulation by his people. When he made you a promise or statement concerning a business transaction it could be relied upon to the letter.<sup>118</sup>

Although our evidence is admittedly slim, what emerges from this is a view that Andrew Simkins was a no-nonsense, hardworking and very conservative leader for the church who provided a steady hand for the ship for more than half a century. As noted by the *Advertiser* editor, he was economical and thrifty, but quiet and *unostentatious* [emphasis added]. This unostentatious part of his personality may have been the reason that he eschewed taking credit for his leadership or giving credit to others as well. Perhaps that is why no one was given credit for the building of the new church building at Macedonia in 1901. Additionally, he was undoubtedly cognizant of his Caucasian heritage, and perhaps that appreciation played a part in the events which began to fracture the congregation at Macedonia Church in the period after 1900.<sup>119</sup>

Andrew Simkins was a very valuable part of the Edgefield community for over eight decades. He provided sound leadership for the community, for his race, and for his church. Equally importantly, he raised ten children who, together with other of his descendants, have gone on to establish records of great achievement across America. Andrew Whitfield Simkins should long be remembered in Edgefield County.

### **Andrew Simkins's Descendants**

Perhaps the most remarkable legacy of Andrew Simkins is the record established by many of his descendants who have succeeded in law, business, medicine and entertainment. A bit of information about a few of these outstanding descendants follows:

Andrew's son, Andrew Whitfield Simkins, Jr. (1881-1965), moved to Columbia, South Carolina and became a successful businessman. Having had two previous wives, he married Modjeska Monteith Simkins (1899-1992) in 1929. With his financial backing, she became one of the principal Civil Rights leaders in South Carolina in the middle of the twentieth century and brought considerable fame to the Simkins name. Her portrait hangs in the South Carolina State House, becoming only one of two women so honored.

Andrew's son, George C. Simkins, Sr. (1880-1958) became a respected dentist in Greensboro, North Carolina. He was a leader of the NAACP in that

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<sup>118</sup> *Edgefield Advertiser*, November 20, 1935.

<sup>119</sup> These events are described in Rainsford, Bettis C., "The First Half-Century of Macedonia Church, Edgefield, South Carolina," unpublished manuscript, Edgefield County Historical Society, 2021.



city.<sup>120</sup> His son, George C. Simkins, Jr. (1924-2001), a graduate of Talladega College and the Meharry School of Dentistry, was also a dentist and was one of the leaders of the Civil Rights movement in Greensboro. He was a plaintiff in several lawsuits which successfully challenged segregation at a golf course and a hospital in Greensboro. He also forced a bank to begin hiring African Americans. An elementary school in Greensboro bears his name. He was honored in 2016 by having his statue erected on the grounds of the Guilford County Old Courthouse.<sup>121</sup>

Andrew's grandson, Joseph William Handy, Jr. (1920-1991), the son of Andrew's daughter Mattie Simkins Handy, became an Associate Judge in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois (Chicago) where he served from 1977 until his death. During World War II, he was an aerial photographer in the 477th Bombardment Group of the U.S. Army Air Corps as one of the "Tuskegee airmen." Returning to Chicago, he earned a bachelor's degree from Roosevelt University in 1947 and a law degree from John Marshall Law School in 1951.<sup>122</sup>



*Judge O. Rogeriee  
Thompson (1951 - )*

Andrew's granddaughter, O. Rogeriee Thompson (1951-), the daughter of Andrew's youngest daughter, Sarah Ojetta Simkins Thompson, a graduate of Brown University and Boston University School of Law was appointed a Judge on the First Circuit Court of Appeals for the United States in 2010 by President Barack Obama. She was formerly a Judge on the Rhode Island District Court from 1988 to 1997, and a Justice on the Rhode Island Superior Court from 1997 to 2010.<sup>123</sup>

Andrew's granddaughter, Lorilyn Simkins "Lolly" Daniels (1948-2003), daughter of Andrew's son, Roger, became chief judge of the District of Columbia Contract Appeals Board. She was a 1964 graduate of the Connecticut College for Women and Boston University Law School.

<sup>120</sup> A very interesting story about George C. Simkins, Sr. was told by Francis Butler Simkins in *Memoirs of Litchwood*, pp. 142-143. At the time the Edgefield County Historical Society published this book in 2016, we did not know who "George Johnson" was. Thanks to his grandson, we now know. We still have not figured out who the "shrewd white reprobate" was who came to see George to get free dental care.

<sup>121</sup> *Wikipedia* article on George C. Simkins, Jr.; *News & Record, Greensboro.com*, Greensboro, North Carolina, October 4, 2016.

<sup>122</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 21, 1991.

<sup>123</sup> *Wikipedia* article on Ojetta Rogeriee Thompson; Website of the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

Andrew's great grandson, Eric T. Washington (1953-), the grandson of Andrew's son George, a graduate of Tufts University and the Columbia University School of Law, was appointed by President Bill Clinton to be a judge of the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. Later, he was appointed by President Clinton to the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. He served as the Chief Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals in Washington, DC from 2005-2017, and is now in senior status and retired in Hilton Head, South Carolina.<sup>124</sup>



*Judge Eric T. Washington  
(1953 - )*

Andrew's great grandson, Elerby Washington, III, and great, great grandson, Elerby Washington, IV, grandson & great grandson of Andrew's son George both became medical doctors.

Andrew's great, great granddaughter, Carol Thompson Cole (1951-), great granddaughter of Andrew's son Andrew, Jr., became a special advisor to President Clinton on the District of Columbia and Deputy Mayor of Operations and Economic Opportunity for the District of Columbia. She is a graduate of Smith College, received her master's degree in public administration from the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service at New York University and was a senior executive in the State and Local Government Program at Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She currently serves as President and CEO of Venture Philanthropy Partners in Washington, DC.

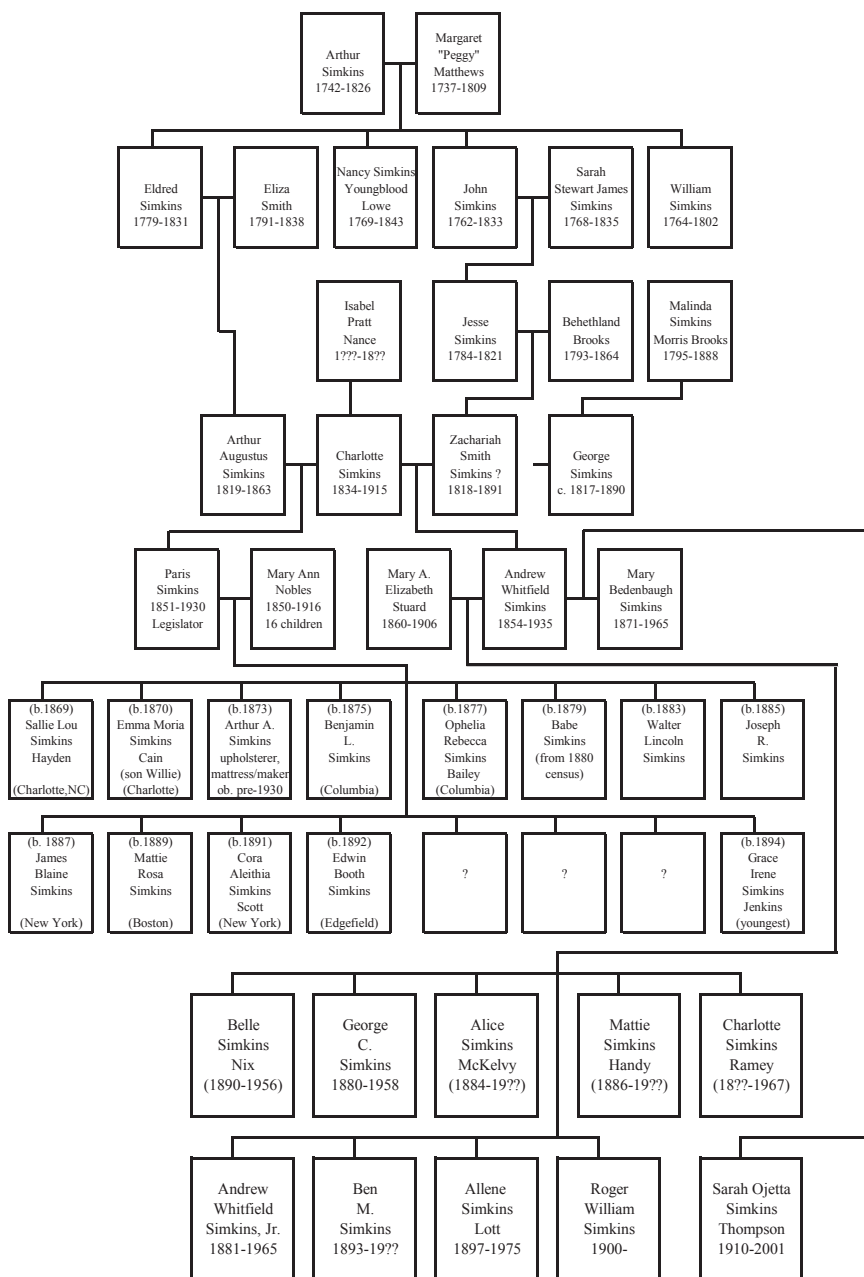
And there are many more remarkable descendants of Andrew Simkins! The character of this man, as described in *The Edgefield Advertiser* almost a century ago, has had an amazing impact on his progeny. His dedication to hard work, being "always on the alert for an opportunity to be of real service," "being economical and thrifty always dealing justly with those who worked for him," "always quiet and unostentatious," "honest and upright, his daily walk and conversation being an example worthy of emulation," "When he made you a promise or statement concerning a business transaction it could be relied upon to the letter." All of this is clearly a recipe for building a great family and one which is "worthy of emulation"! Andrew Simkins certainly built a great family!!

The Edgefield County Historical Society is proud to acknowledge the considerable contributions of Paris and Andrew Simkins and their families to Edgefield County, to South Carolina and to our nation!

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<sup>124</sup> *Wikipedia* article on Eric T. Washington.

# The Genealogy of Andrew and Paris Simkins



\* The father of Andrew Simkins is uncertain. Family stories suggest that he was a cousin of Arthur Simkins. See the discussion in "The Paris and Andrew Simkins Families of Edgefield."

\*\* We have been able to find the names of only thirteen of the sixteen children of Paris and Mary Ann Simkins.

