

A Short History of Chicora Plantation, Anderson County South Carolina

For thousands of years, the land that eventually would be known as Chicora Plantation was inhabited by the Cherokee and other native people and used as a hunting ground. There is an ancient village site not far from the house, and a large burial ground on the hill across the road from the house. The last Cherokee to be buried there was brought back from the Oklahoma Territory in the 1850s to be interred with his people. There is a grave in the front yard that was excavated partially in the early 1900s when Broadway School Road was re-routed to run much closer to the house. It is described in Louise Ayer Vandiver's 1920s History of Anderson County.

In colonial times, there was some sort of non-Indian habitation on the site, and it is believed there may have been a small trapper/trader dwelling or trading post of sorts near the current house. There is a large spring very close to the house that would have supplied good water to whomever may have lived on the property at that time. There is a large rock in the garden, in the corner of a stone foundation, that is dated 1770. This date is around 15 years before the Hopewell Treaty was negotiated to open this area for legal settlement.

The first recorded house to be built on the site was a two-storey log house, constructed by John Wardlaw, a veteran of the American Revolution. He had received a SC land grant in 1787, and his house was most likely constructed soon thereafter. He had come to the Pendleton District from Abbeville soon after the Revolutionary War. He died around 1806 and is buried at Old Greenville Presbyterian Church (near Donalds SC) with other Wardlaw family members. The brick kitchen chimney, the huge granite front step, and many of the large granite slabs that support the current house are believed to have been in the original 1780s Wardlaw house.

The Wardlaw house burned to the ground in December of 1825. At that time, it was owned by Drury Hammond. His wife and two children died in the fire. He then sold the property to his brother, who constructed a new house sometime in 1826 or 1827. It also was a large two-storey log house, and it occupied the area where the front rooms of the current house are now. It is believed that the two large brick chimneys in the center of the current house were at the back of the 1826 house and were re-used in the 1850s when this house was built. It is assumed that the Indian name "Chicora" was first given to the plantation during the period of ownership by the Hammond family. It was popular in SC in the early 1800s to give plantations Indian place names.

Sometime between 1854 and 1858, the Hammond house was taken down (except for the separate frame kitchen that was saved and serves as the current kitchen). This was done by Scottish immigrant William Anderson, who had purchased around 300 acres of the Hammond property. It is believed that he was a kinsman of General Robert Anderson (not yet proven), for whom Anderson County is named. According to family legend, most of the logs / beams in the old house were re-sawn and the lumber was used in the construction of the current house. This house was completed sometime in 1858 or 1859 (date of 1858 inscribed on a granite corner pier). William and Rachael Lucretia McFall Anderson moved into the new house on their wedding day in April of 1859. Several pieces of McFall and Anderson furniture in the house have been in it since that day.

William Anderson served as Major in the Palmetto Sharpshooters Regiment, CSA. He was mortally wounded at the Battle of Frazier's Farm in Virginia in 1862 and died a few days later. His body was brought back to Anderson to be buried at Anderson First Baptist Church with the McFalls. His widow continued to oversee operation of the grist mill and sawmill on Broadway Creek throughout the War (until they were burned by the Yankees), and she also operated a finishing school in the house for young girls from the better local families until around 1866. Her parents (Col. John McFall and Elizabeth Todd McFall) had moved in with her around 1861, so perhaps her mother assisted with teaching the young ladies the domestic arts that were popular at the time. Col. McFall died in the house on Valentines Day, 1864. Elizabeth Todd McFall died in the house on July 8, 1879.

On the first day of May 1865, the house and plantation were ransacked, and the family terrorized, by Union raiders in what is known in Anderson as Brown's Raid. They were under the command of General Stoneman, and were in pursuit of Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Cabinet in their flight southward from Richmond, VA. During this raid, all food provisions and salt were stolen or destroyed, all cattle including the family's milk cow were shot, all mules and horses were taken, the smokehouse, seed house, mule barn, grist mill and sawmill were burned, and the family's cat was bayoneted. Soldiers also relieved their bowels into the well and spring to contaminate the water (from an account of direct descendant Elizabeth Sullivan Chapman).

After the War Between the States, Rachel Lucretia McFall Anderson married Sgt. Bailey Barton Breazeale, a local farmer who had served with her husband during the war and had been his good friend. Bailey Breazeale redeemed the plantation house and land, which by the end of the war was about to be lost due to tremendous debt, by selling his own plantation nearby. As a point of interest, Breazeale mentions in his memoirs of the War Between the States that he and three other men laid down their rifles to make a sort of stretcher whereon they carried the mortally wounded Barnard Elliott Bee off the field of battle (Battle of First Manassas, July 22, 1861).

Bailey and Rachael Lucretia Breazeale had several children (along with her two children by William Anderson) and lived in the house until he died on June 22, 1915, and she on June 21, 1918. After that, the house was owned by their youngest daughter Russie Breazeale Sullivan (1877-1935) and Arthur Talmadge Sullivan (1889-1967), and thereafter by their daughter Elizabeth Sullivan Chapman (owned Chicora until 1985). Tim Drake, a direct descendant of John Wardlaw and cousin of the Hammonds, bought the house in 1986 and restored it to its 1850s appearance.

A plantation cemetery exists on the property about 200 yards northwest of the main house. It contains numerous graves, many being of slaves who worked at Chicora. The name of only one slave who was buried there is known. He was Luke Mattison and he died in 1841. Two of his descendants visited and cleaned his grave until they passed away in the 1990s.

Three 18th century log dwellings, an 1830s fodder barn, and an 1850s corn crib have been relocated to the property and reconstructed.