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ABNER McGEHEE

BY

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A.C.

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Clanton Ware Williams.

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ABNER McGEHEE

PART I

ANCESTRY AND EARLY LIFE

CHAPTER I.

THE McGEHEE FAMILY

It so happens in the course of events that many men live and labor, often unknown and more often unheeded as they toil onward across the stream of life. They die and are soon forgotten. A few days and the ripple they have made on the surface of the onrushing stream has, with them, disappeared.

But it also happens that other men, when they have crossed, may look behind them and proudly watch the mighty waves they have made sweep forward with ever increasing propensity, augmented by their very momentum, shaping the destinies of those left behind. The influence that men exert upon their fellows lives after them in such proportion of magnitude as its naked value shall have been deserving.

Abner McGehee lived and died; and when he had crossed the stream of life, he right proudly might have looked back upon a life whose powerful influence was not soon to die. Those who had known him and had felt that influence while he was yet alive, voiced the common sentiment: "He has left a memory to be hallowed, a character to be appreciated in

the warmest sentiments of our beings, a life to be studied and imitated."¹

Science tells us that there are three mighty forces that mold the life of every man. They are heredity, training and environment. It is well, therefore, in studying the life of a man to examine his heredity, and the training he received in youth.

One traveling through the Southern states, often comes in contact with the name McGehee. There are McGehees in Virginia, Texas, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and in many of the Western states. All are members of one family.²

"It is the only one that spells its name McGehee, however legion the Magees may be."³ The founder of the family came from Scotland. He was a son of the chief of the clan MacGregor.⁴ On coming to Virginia, James

1. Montgomery Advertiser and State Gazette (Weekly) February 28, 1855.
2. I have recently learned from Mrs. W. C. Woodall, of Columbus, Ga., who is a member of the McGehee family of which we treat, that there is a small family of Norfolk, Va., who claim descent from a Scotch immigrant to Pennsylvania, and which spells its name McGehee.
3. Young, Stark, Heaven Trees, Chas. Scribner's Sons, page 204.
4. Virkus and Marquis, The Abridged Compendium of American Genealogy - First Families of America. A. N. Marquis & Co., Publishers....1925. page 771.

MacGregor changed his name to Thomas Mack Gehee.¹ His grandsons, one of whom was Micajah, the father of Abner,² were the first to spell the name McGehee.

The MacGregor history is a fascinating story full of pride, splendor, and characteristic Scottish temper. "It was a history of supremacy, controversy, confiscation, restoration, confiscation, restoration, and so on, up and down. In the reign of Queen Mary Stuart's grandfather, for example, the head of the family was married to the king's daughter, and among other titles was Lord of the Isles. Under the next king [James V] the property of the MacGregors was confiscated. This property in turn, was redeemed by Queen Mary, with all the family honors, and that state of affairs lasted until Montrose Rebellion," in which "Patrick MacGregor joined Montrose in support of the royal cause.....with a thousand fighting men including his three sons, John, James, and Duncanand was held in the highest estimation by his illustrious commander."³ This was during the Civil War of 1644, in which Charles I was defeated and executed. The property of the MacGregors was again confiscated. Patrick's three

-
1. Virkus and Marquis, p. 771; Young, p. 205.
 2. Saunders and Stubbs, Early Settlers of Alabama, with notes and genealogies. L. Graham & Sons, Ltd., New Orleans, 1899, p. 448-449.
 3. Burke, Sir Bernard, C. B., L. L. D., Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage, London, 1898, p. 947.

sons "left Scotland in anger. One of them went to Eng-
 land, keeping out of his titles that of Sir John Ross."¹
 He was the ancestor of the present Sir Malcolm MacGregor
 of Ed nchip, Loch Earn Head, Perthshire.² The other two
 came to America. James MacGregor changed his name to Thom-
 as Mack Gehee. He is the progenitor of the family of which
 we treat.³ The other brother Duncan died unmarried.

The McGehees, with few exceptions have maintained
 certain common characteristics inherited from their Scotch
 ancestors. In appearance they are nearly all somewhat blond.
 They are a thrifty, energetic, and highly intelligent fam-
 ily. They pride themselves that they are aristocrats. Yet
 no finer example of cordiality and of true Southern chiv-
 alry may be found among their number. Honor holds first
 place in their lives. Love of country is hardly secondary.
 The colonial militia, the Indian wars, the Revolution, the
 War Between the States, the War for Texas Independence, and
 the World War have all seen the ancestors of the younger
 McGehees fighting for their country.

In the course of American history, we find each gen-
 eration of McGehees playing a prominent part. Pioneers,
 soldiers, planters, big business men, public officials,
 physicians, pharmacists, lawyers, teachers, ministers
 have all been found within their ranks. No more unique
 example of the western movement in America may be found

 1. Young, p. 205.

2. Burke, p. 946.

3. *ibid.*

than in the history of this family. From Virginia the second and third generations saw McGehees migrate to the Carolinas and Georgia. The fourth and fifth found them in all the southeaster states. Today they are scattered throughout the Southland, always energetic and useful citizens, prosperous and well-to-do.

Young, speaking of Abner McGehee's younger brother, Hugh, says, "He had a great deal of family pride, and imparted that to all his children. How many times have I heard my young cousins weigh the lure of something a little low and unbecoming, and dismiss it, not with any moral discussion or argument at all, but with the remark that, 'of course, we never do that sort of thing,' we, meaning McGehees. This McGehee attitude they had inherited through their fathers though it appears in their bearing, not in words."¹

Thus we have an insight into the McGehee heredity and something of what must have been the environment of Abner and Hugh when they were children.

1. Young, page 204.

CHAPTER II.

ABNER'S DIRECT ANCESTORS.

Abner's mother was Ann (also recorded Nancy Collier)¹ Scott before her marriage to Micajah McGehee. She, too, had been reared in an atmosphere of refinement and wealth. Her father, Captain James Scott, was a Revolutionary soldier, and a very wealthy planter of Prince Edward County, Virginia.² He had also held public office in the Old Dominion under the reign of George III.³ Col. Thomas Scott⁴ was the great great grandson of Francis Morgan, an early Virginia Burgess, and "a gentleman of wealth, owning large lands and servants in Virginia as early as 1637."⁵ Thomas Scott from 1714 to 1727 was a vestryman of Petsworth Parish,⁶ and at one time held the office of Capital Processioner of land for the Third Precinct.⁷ Ann McGehee's maternal grandfather was Captain John Collier of "Porto Bello," York County, Virginia.⁸ He, too, was a well-to-do planter. In 1707 accord-

1. Goode, G. Brown, Virginia Cousins, J. W. Randolph & English, Richmond, Va., 1887, p. 50-c; Sims, Mrs. Annie Noble, Francis Morgan, An Early Virginia Burgess and Some of His Descendants, Braid and Hutton, Savannah, Ga., 1920, pp. 50-54.
2. Sims, pp. 50-53.
3. Sims, p. 51.
4. Sims p. 36.
5. Sims, Chapter I.
6. Sims, p. 37.
7. *ibid.*
8. Goode, p. 50-c.

ing to Crozier (whose authority is Henning 's Statutes), John Collier was a captain in the Infantry of King and Queen County.¹ In 1711, Queen Ann granted him land in King and Queen County "for divers good causes and considerations."² The Colliers were of noble descent and trace their ancestry even to the Crusades.³ All the Virginia Colliers were Whigs during the Revolution. Saunders refers to the fact that during the war, "Sir George Collier, Rear Admiral of the British Navy, was shelling the coast of Rhode Island while his American cousins, the Colliers of Virginia, were shedding their blood in defence of the Colonies."⁴

Abner's father, Micajah McGehee, born circa 1745,⁵ was a man of sterling character, " a man of industry, economy and honesty."⁶ He was, of course a Whig, and served as a soldier in the Revolution.⁷ His father, Edward Mack Gehee, son of the immigrant James MacGregor, married Miss Elizabeth DeJarnette, a French Huguenot.⁸ He was a wealthy planter and had given his sons large property interests in Virginia. After his marriage to Ann Scott,⁹ Micajah sold his property,¹⁰ and joined the movement westward. He set-

1. Sims, p. 42; Crozier, Wm. A., F. R. S., Virginia Colonial Militia, 1651-1776. The Genealogical Association, New York, p. 97.

2. Sims, pp. 42-44.

3. Sims, p. 41; Goode, pp. 50-50e.

4. Sims, p. 41; Saunders and Stubbs, p. 256.

5. Sims, p. 78.

6. Gilmer, G. M., Georgians, pp. 163-176.

7. For record see appendix.

8. Saunders and Stubbs, p. 449; Virkus and Marquis, p. 771.

9. Gilmer, p. 164; Sims, p. 78; Saunders and Stubbs, p.449.

10. Sims, p. 75.

tled in Wilkes (afterwards, Oglethorpe) County, Georgia. Here along the banks of the Broad River, he soon became one of the most prosperous men of early Georgia. He entered large tracts of land in this section of the state.¹

Gilmer records that besides his success as a tobacco planter, "he was the first of the settlers to plant a peach orchard on the Broad River."² From this orchard he cleared \$1600 a year, a handsome sum in that day. "He had thirteen children, upon each of whom he enforced the habit of hard work. He became rich through the labor of his negroes, his children's industry, and his own economy."³ He was a stern yet indulgent father. "He built the first comfortable frame house on Broad River."⁴ He seemed determined that his family should have the finest things that frontier life would permit. For his wife, he purchased a sport carriage, "the first one on Broad River."⁵ Their home was "a great place for the old Virginia amusement of dancing."⁶ They kept open house and a bountiful table. Micajah must have delighted as he quietly watched his graceful wife preside over these occasions. He died July 31, 1811.⁷

1. Some of these land grants are recorded in the office of the Secretary of State in Atlanta, Ga. See Books, F.F.F., pp. 652, 750.; K. K. K., pp. 258, 298; U. U. U., pp. 217, 219. Total here is 3104 acres.

2. Gilmer, p. 164.

3. Gilmer, p. 165.

4. *ibid.*

5. Gilmer, p. 166.

6. Gilmer, pp. 165-166.

7. Sims, p. 76.

CHAPTER III.

ABNER McGEHEE'S BROTHERS
AND SISTERS.

Into such an environment, then, was Abner McGehee born. Few homes can boast of being the birthplace of such a noble group of brothers and sisters as were the children of Ann and Micajah McGehee. There were ten boys and three girls. Two of the boys died just after reaching manhood. But in the study of the lives of those who lived there is in each case a fine example of lives well spent, of success well merited, and of distinguished and influential citizenship. Theirs were "lives to be studied and imitated."

Micajah McGehee's oldest son was James. He was born November 26, 1770. He was married to a Miss Johns, "a busy, bustling, little woman."¹ His home at first was south of that of his brother Thomas. It was a mile and a half from Broad River. Later they moved to Putnam County, where James became known as a shrewd and brave man. Gilmer recalls that James was thrown from his horse while still a young man, and was permanently injured.² For this reason, no doubt, he never made quite the financial success as did his brothers.

The second son, Thomas Baytop McGehee weighed before his death 350 pounds. "He was industrious, economical,

1. Gilmer, p. 167.

2. Gilmer, p. 166.

straightforward, truthful, and honest." ¹ When Tom Mc-
 Gehee had grown so wealth and had "acquired more ne-
 groes than he had land to cultivate, he was obliged to
 sell because nobody else would whose land adjoined his." ²
 He removed to upper Alabama, where he died having lived
 a most interesting and worthy life. ³ "Like many of the
 old stock, he had fine judgement, combined with that in-
 comitable energy, which gave him success and distinction
 wherever their lots were cast....He was of a most kind and
 affable disposition, but would not brook an insult for an
 instant....He was a very successful business man, and ^{at} his
 death was considered a very wealthy man for those times." ⁴
 His wife was Elizabeth Thornton Gilmer. "She was a woman,
 remarkable for her beauty; and excelled in all those virtues
 which go to make a noble Christian character. She emi-
 grated to Texas in 1840, where most of her children had
 already preceded her, and died in Bastrop county, September
 6, 1846, and is buried in the cemetery at the town of Bas-
 trop. Thomas had died April 18, 1832." ⁵

⁶
 William McGehee the sixth son was born November 7,
 1782. He married, first, Martha, the daughter of General
 Benjamin Taliaferro ⁷ of Virginia, and second Eliza (born
 1782, died 1844), daughter of James and Jane (Thompson)

1. Gilmer, p. 166.

2. op. cit., p. 167. 3. ibid.

4. Saunders and Stubbs, p. 520. 5. ibid.

6. Charles and Francis McGehee died just after reaching
 manhood.

7. Saunders and Stubbs, p. 450, recalls that Gen. Taliaferro
 was a Captain in the Revolution and Member of Congress
 from Georgia.

Watkins of Savannah River, Elbert County, Georgia. "He was a quiet and gentlemanly man."¹ According to Gilmer he afterwards moved to Mississippi,² but Stubbs claims that he "finally moved to Montgomery, Alabama, where he died,"³ May 3, 1833. He left a widow with ten children. They resided with her brother Major Robert H. Watkins, in Lawrence County, Alabama. When the mother died the children "returned to Montgomery, Alabama, under the care of their uncle Abner McGehee."⁴

The next son, Judge Edward McGehee, "Born 8th November, 1786, died October 1, 1880,"⁵ "was one of Mississippi's most remarkable men, as planter, philanthropist, and financier (See Memoirs of Mississippi Vol. 1, p. 1191)."⁶ Judge McGehee married four times and had nineteen children, many of whom have played a prominent part in American history.⁷ "He lived at Woodville, Miss., his lovely home was called 'Bowling Green' and he had

Gilmer, p. 169. 1.

2. *ibid.*

3. Saunders and Stubbs, p. 450. Alabama was then a part of Mississippi territory.

4. Saunders and Stubbs, p. 451, records the history of these children. Two of them deserve special mention here. David Meriwether McGehee, M. D., of Panola, Miss., married Elizabeth Greenlief Elsberry. He was in the Mexican War, Jeff. Davis Rifles. Went to California 1849, and was killed (in a party of nine) by the Indians. Issue two children. Robert (b. 1828), never married. Killed in Confederate Army, Battle of Shiloh.

5. Sims, p. 79.

6. Saunders and Stubbs, p. 452.

7. For their history see Saunders and Stubbs, pp. 453-4.

large planting interests." We also learn from Mrs. Stubbs that,

"He was also founder of the Corondo^{let} Street Methodist Church, South, New Orleans, and of the Female College at Woodville, named for him; built the first railroad in Mississippi; owned the first cotton factory; the patron of Centenary College; and engaged in every enterprise for the welfare of the State."¹

²
Gilmer describes him as "an active finely proportioned man, very courteous and affable, very industrious, and of good understanding....He is now reputed to be worth near a million of dollars." In Centenary Cameos (published, 1885, by Bishop O. P. Fitzgerald of the M. E. Church, South) it is stated that President Zachary Taylor offered Edward McGehee the portfolio of the Secretary of Treasury of the United States, which Edward McGehee declined.³ Gilmer says that, "President Taylor was his near neighbor, and had so great confidence in his financial capacity and honesty that he made him his executor."⁴

Micajah's eighth son was John Scott McGehee. He seems to have inherited many of the same characteristics as his illustrious uncle, Gen. John Scott, for whome he was named. He removed from Broad River to Panola County, Mississippi. He married Malinda, daughter of Miles and Tabitha Hill.⁵
"He was a most successful and wealthy cotton planter."

1. op. cit. p. 453.
2. Gilmer, p. 169.
3. Sims, p. 79.
4. Gilmer, p. 170.
5. Saunders and Stubbs, p. 451.

He had eleven children. Gilmer says this of one of them: Miles "made last year eleven hundred bags of cotton. All the Broad River settlers together did not make as much for many years after their arrival in Georgia."¹

Abraham McGehee was Micaajah's ninth son. He was born January 1, 1791. He early showed the sterling Scotch characteristics inherent in most of the McGehees. Two of these traits seem to have made a deep impression on the old Georgian, Gilmer. He speaks of Abraham as being about "my age..."² He tells us of a certain pugilistic combat in which he and young McGehee were the principals and of which the future governor of Georgia seems to have gotten the worst. Abram knew the value of money. "When a little boy he commenced buying fish-hooks and pins, and selling them for profit."³ The Governor seems to have had a very high regard for his boyhood foe. For example, he says with reference to Abram, "Let any one set out when young, and go straight forward, yielding to no obstruction and resisting all temptations to turn aside, he will have gone no inconsiderable distance by the time he arrives at sixty."⁴ Abraham McGehee had the esteem and admiration of all who knew him. Like most of his brothers he became wealthy. At the time of Gilmer's story

1. op. cit., p. 170.

2. ibid.

3. Gilmer, p. 171.

4. ibid.

he was "reputed to be worth four hundred thousand dollars,"¹ which would be considerably over a millions today. He married first, Harriet Hill, second Catherine, daughter of John Peniston, of Richmond, and formerly of England, and Governor of the Bermudas, and, third, Miss Smith of Alabama, who died without issue. He left two sons and two daughters.

Micajah's youngest son was Hugh (referred to in Chapter one). He was born the fourth day of January, 1793, and died the 24th of January, 1838. Gilmer says of him: "He was mild and amiable...He married Sarah the daughter of Shelton White, and settled on the Elbert side of Broad River a little below Webb's Ferry, where his uncle Mr. Gray had lived. He has removed to the upper part of the State of Mississippi, where has become very rich, and is regarded by everybody as a very good man."² Colonel Hugh is the hero of a chapter in Stark Young's Heaven Trees. He records that Hugh "began his career as a Georgia schoolmaster but came, after much labor, to great prosperity."³

Abner McGehee had three lovely sisters. They all became the mothers of splendid families.

The oldest, Elizabeth, was "born 21st October, 1773, died August 5, 1816; married Abraham Hill of Oglethorpe county, Ga., May 5, 1791."⁴ "Mrs. Hill was an exceedingly

1. Gilmer, p. 171.
2. *ibid.*
3. Young, p. 206.
4. Sims, p. 78.

nice woman, considering a speck of dirt upon her floor or furniture, a great stigma upon her character....Mrs. Hill was prim and formal. She had no children for sixteen years. Afterwards she had two, now Dr. Abram Hill and Mrs. Blanton Hill of Atlanta."¹

Sarah McGehee, "born 11th July, 1784; married first, Thomas Hill of Georgia, July 11, 1799; married second Dionysius Oliver (her brother-in-law),"² was a belle of Eastern Georgia. Old Gilmer describes her as:

"The prettiest woman on the frontiers of GeorgiaHer eyes were large, liquidly bright, with long dark eye lashes shading them so as to add to their fascination. Her features were regular, and her cheeks rosy. Her person was straight and all the roundings of her limbs and chest beautifully perfect. She had just begun to run all the young men crazy who saw her, when she and Tom Hill fancied each other, and married."³

She had six children by her first marriage, none by the second. Most of them moved to Texas, where they played a prominent part in the winning of Texan independence.⁴

Lucinda, the youngest and thirteenth of Micajah and Ann McGehee "was born 1st of January, 1795; married Dionysius Oliver, son of Peter Oliver."⁵ They had five children.⁶

1. Gilmer, p. 172; Saunders and Stubbs, p. 450.

2. Sims, p. 79.

3. op. cit., p. 172.

4. See Saunders and Stubbs, pp. 519-530, for account by George T. McGehee. Her youngest son, Wiley Hill is particularly mentioned on pp. 521, 524, and 530.

5. Sims, p. 80. (He was after this the husband of Sarah.)

6. See Oliver Family in Saunders and Stubbs, pp. 528-9.

CHAPTER IV.
HIS TRAINING IN YOUTH.

To Micajah and Ann Scott McGehee was born on the seventeenth day of February, 1779, their sixth child - Abner. At the time of his birth, the United Colonies were in a death grip with England for their independence. His father was fighting for the cause of liberty. The seriousness of the war was beginning to be realized by all. We cannot doubt that the babe's mother was in an anxious state of mind as she waited day after day ^{a word} from sturdy husband. Her father, too, though over fifty years of age, as well as several of little Abner's uncles, were out there somewhere fighting that he and his little brothers and sister might begin their lives in a new nation - a land of freedom, where new and greater opportunities might be theirs.

As days passed little Abner grew and developed into a splendid little son. His mother must have cherished a secret pride as she noticed day by day, that he had inherited many of her more gentle characteristics. Months passed, and one day the country was swept with the glorious news that Cornwallis had surrendered, and that American independence had been won.

Little Abner was too young to realize its significance, but the day was soon to come when he should see what a wonderful heritage was his. Opportunities were to present themselves and they were to be seized and developed by him.

A new nation - a young and ambitious man - Was his to be
 "a life to be studied and imitated?"

Micajah returned from battle, imbued with the spirit of the times, glorying in the thought of the work just done, and prompted by the vision of what lay ahead. He could now devote his time and energy to the duties of a husband and good father. He must provide the material things of life for his family, and he was determined that they should have the best. He would see that his children should learn the lessons of hard work and discipline. He was further determined that their education would not be neglected. And Micajah was a success.

Abner McGehee's childhood was thus begun. He was made to work, and he learned to love it. In after life we never find him idle. He was the embodiment of energy itself. He was working when death began to call.¹ He early built up a splendid physique. Abner McGehee was one of a family of large men, nearly all of them being over six feet in height. We can find no record of any illness until finally stricken just as he had begun his seventy-sixth year.

Micajah educated all of his children. On the Broad River in the latter part of the eighteenth century there were few advantages in educational lines. Nevertheless,

1. Montgomery Advertiser and State Gazette, Feb., 28, 1855;
 See Part II, Chapter V.

we find his children all well educated. We know that the children's mother was a woman of the highest culture.¹ It is to be expected, that in that day she must have given them their earliest lessons. Then they were sent to the Broad River settlement school. Gilmer informs us that the schoolmaster boarded with Abner's father.² We learn that one of Micajah's sons was later the master of this school.³

The Scotts were of Scotch descent. So were the McGehees. We would naturally expect, therefore, to find that Micajah and his children were Presbyterians. On the contrary, however, we find them and nearly all the McGehees today members of the Methodist Church. We know that Georgia was early visited by the Methodist divine, John Wesley. Gilmer tells us that in a religious revival Micajah joined the Methodist Church.⁴ To these facts, then, we must attribute the existing religious adherence of the McGehees. Abner McGehee was a devout member of this church. We shall hear more of his connections with the church in a later chapter.

To the excellent training in his youth do we largely attribute the unswerving moral character which he maintained throughout his days. But even more than moral compunc-

1. Gilmer, p. 164.
2. op. cit., p. 170.
3. Young, p. 206.
4. Gilmer, p. 164.

tion forbade little Abner to do things a little low or unbecoming. Like his brother Hugh, he had a great deal of family pride, and often refrained from doing wrong simply because his people never did those kinds of things.¹ This same characteristic he in turn passed on to his children.

We shall pause here and examine the prospects of the youth. We have examined his heredity, and have discovered in it the finest strains. Scotch has predominated, but English and French Huguenot have played a large part. We have noted the royal blood of the Scotts and the MacGregors. But we should note particularly the sterling characteristics of Abner's father and mother. And we must pronounce it a noble heritage. The training we examined, and we pronounce it excellent. We predict then that Abner McGehee has a two -to-one chance of living a good and useful life. The environment, which the young man should largely create for himself, would be the other determining factor, the three of them together would make the man.

The study of how Abner McGehee met the events of life and how he mastered the many problems that confronted him, comprises the second part of this dissertation.

1. Young, p. 204.

PART II.

ABNER McGEHEE

PLANTER, PHILANTHROPIST, FINANCIER.

CHAPTER I.

ABNER McGEHEE OF GEORGIA.

Abner McGehee remained in Georgia for many years and, like most of his brothers, he built up a fortune, and then moved west. Although he lived in Georgia the greater part of his life, we can find little written about the early activities of Abner McGehee. We find enough however, to conclude that he exhibited the same fine characteristics and habits in his private life and in his business dealings as he did later when he had established himself as one of Alabama's most useful and progressive citizens.

We have learned that Abner's boyhood home was the social center of Eastern Georgia. "It was a great place for the Virginia amusement of dancing."¹ Here the most handsome young men and most beautiful maids would gather and, to the strains of sweet music, partake of the joys accompanying the Virginia Reel. At these functions Abner and his beautiful sister, Sally, must have played a most prominent part, for we are informed that Abner was socially

1. See page 8.

inclined and that Sally "ran all the young men crazy" with her charms.¹ One may imagine that many a maiden's heart beat a little faster as it came her turn to gather her broad skirts in her left hand and to extend right across to Mr. Abner McGehee as they danced that quaint old step.

It is but natural in human nature that persons possessing wealth, much grace, and poise, as they move among social groups shall have in the eyes of the opposite sex a greater degree of attractiveness than those less fortunate. It follows, per se, that such persons will inevitably find a greater number of intimate associates from which to choose a sweetheart. And it is but natural that the one chosen must in turn possess a large degree of personal charm. So, we may believe, it was in the first courtship of young McGehee.

Among the frequent guests at the home of Micajah and Ann McGehee was Miss Charlotte Spencer. She was the daughter of Frances Scott Spencer, the ninth child of Captain James Scott.² She was about the age of Sally, and, no doubt, would often come over to spend the night or week-end with her. These must have been happy times for young Abner, as he and his beautiful little cousin would stroll along the banks of the Broad River, or take a ride in the gig before time for retiring. Soon Abner found himself falling in love. That love grew and one day Charlotte Spencer found herself, too, in love. And before long was engaged to become the wife of Mr. Abner McGehee. They were married in the year of

1. Gilmer, p. 169. 2. Saunders and Stubbs, pp. 162-163.

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1804.

Gilmer has drawn for posterity a map of the settlement along Broad River.² He records that Abner "settled on a high hill, not far from Broad River, on the Elbert side, opposite his brother Tom."³ Here, then, he took his bride to share his new home and build up a household to rival that of his father.

Abner McGehee early showed that he had inherited many fine characteristics. It was not long before he began to build up a fortune. He was primarily a planter throughout his life. Yet always we find him on the alert for new business enterprises. He knew the value of money, and like all his family, he knew how to save it. Gilmer recalls that, "he turned his hand to anything to make money."⁴ His plantation was one of the most prosperous. His slaves were well cared for, but we may be assured that none was idle, when there was work to be done. His father had taught him the meaning of hard labor, and his lessons were not in vain.

Besides his major business of planting, he engaged in general trading. In these avocations he was always a financial success. He even engaged in tanning, taking such negroes from his field as he deemed most fit for this kind of labor.⁵

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1. Their first child, Mrs. Harriet Louise Jarratt, was born Nov., 30, 1805. (See grave McGehee's Switch, Ala.)
 2. For copy of this map, see appendix.
 3. Gilmer, p. 169.
 4. *ibid.*
 5. *ibid.*

By his clear sighted methods and his straight forward business dealings, he soon became recognized as one of Georgia's most enterprising citizens.

During these years in Georgia, although he was continuously busy in some financial venture, he nevertheless found time to enjoy life. His home became noted for its pervading spirit of hospitality. When his children became old enough to partake of the joys of society, (there home like their home like their grandfather's, became a social center. Mr. McGehee was kind and hospitable to all.¹ His home life was beautiful.

Perhaps one of the outstanding traits of his life was dogged tenacity. When Abner McGehee was wrong he was willing to admit it, but when he was right and he knew he was right, he could not be moved. Again, and again, throughout his life do we find examples of this. Defeats came to him once in a while, but, man that he was, he refused to surrender, and in each instance he rose above them.

Sorrow came to him, too, but his strong courage and staunch belief in the wisdom and justice of his God, enabled him to bear them. Before he had reached middle age, death had come upon his household six times. Four children had died when hardly more than infants. Then his oldest son,

1. Gilmer, p. 169.

Spencer, died just before reaching manhood. The sorrow of all this told upon his noble little wife, his boyhood sweetheart, and ere long she, too, was called.

Mr. McGehee was left with four little daughters and two small boys. His responsibilities were great. His business occupied a great deal of his time. We can imagine that his hands were quite full, after he lost his beloved companion. It is but natural, then, that we later find him married a second time. He again had made an excellent choice. His second marriage was to "Jane, daughter of John Gilmer, and widow of Thomas Johnson (who was nephew of Col. Nicholas Johnson).¹ She became a mother to his little children and soon filled the vacant place in the McGehee home, and the empty space in Abner's heart, which the death of Charlotte had created. Abner and Jane McGehee had² three children.

Abner McGehee was now a wealthy and well-to-do citizen. His efforts and successes in many fields of endeavor had won

1. "Jane Gilmer was sister of Mrs. Burton Taliaferro, Mrs. Thomas B. McGehee, Mrs. Gabriel Christian, and of Thornton, Nicholas, Frances, George O., and David Gilmer; and Nicholas and David Gilmer married daughters of Micajah Clark." (From Stubbs and Saunders, p. 450.)
2. Saunders and Stubbs, p. 450. In later years, Abner married a third time, Jane McGehee having died soon after their removal to Alabama. There is a tombstone in the cemetery at McGehee's Switch of two small children born of this third marriage. His wife was Mrs. Mary C. R. Graves.

(Russell)

for him a reputation as one of Georgia's most successful business men. His polite, courteous, and affable bearing had established him as a man to be respected and admired. It must have been with a feeling of sincere regret that his many friends learned of his plans for moving to Montgomery, Alabama.

The immediate cause of his decision to leave Georgia seems to lie in his disappointment in the outcome of a law suit. Gilmer recalls that, "The Legislature in the year _____, incorporated a company to improve the navigation of the Broad River. The company contracted with Abner to do the work."¹ It seems that Mr. McGehee signed the contract with the facts connected therewith being somewhat misrepresented. This did not appear until Mr. McGehee had made a more thorough investigation. When he found "that he had made a losing bargain" he refused to continue in the services of the company. "The company sued him and recovered the full amount of his bond."² There is a tradition among his descendants that the amount of this bond was one hundred thousand dollars. Though nearly fifty years of age, Mr. McGehee, disappointed and disgusted, determined to move from Broad River. He, like his brothers, decided to go west. He selected Montgomery, Alabama, then a thriving little village on the banks of the Alabama River.

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1. This must have been about 1826. Abner McGehee moved to Alabama immediately afterwards (1827).
 2. This incident is taken from Gilmer, p. 169.

CHAPTER II

MR. McGEHEE'S EARLIEST ACTIVITIES IN ALABAMA

The story of how Abner McGehee and his family migrated to Alabama has not been preserved. Yet, it is not at all unlikely that he followed the same mode of travel which his brother, Hugh, had used when he left Georgia for Upper Mississippi.

"They came in carriages and on horseback, and in covered wagons, the long train scattered along the road at intervals for miles, with all the furniture, negroes, farming-implements and dogs. The money was in gold and carried in a keg in the middle of one of the wagons."¹

It was in 1827, that Abner McGehee with his wife and children (some of them now being nearly grown) finally arrived in Montgomery. It was on July 28 of that year, that he entered his first parcel of Alabama land from the United States government. From this date until February 10, 1831, the records show that he entered eight thousand, five hundred three and ninety eight one hundredths acres of Government land.² We find, further, from the deed books and from abstracts recorded that Abner, in these first years in Montgomery county, became owner of more than ten thousand acres of rural land.³ During his lifetime he also owned

1. Young, p. 207.
2. Deed Books E, W, X, etc. (Minute Book No. 12, p. 666.), Probate Judge's office, Montgomery County Court House, Montgomery, Alabama.
3. *ibid*; Files, 442---"The Distribution of The Lands to the Descendants of Abner McGehee, deceased," State Abstract Company, S. Perry Street, Montgomery, Alabama.

many of the most valuable lots in the heart of Montgomery. His ventures in real estate were for the most part successful.

Mr. McGehee's tiresome trip from Georgia had made at least one great impression upon his mind. He fully saw that the South, to prosper, must first solve the problem of transportation. To this end he devoted a large portion of his time and wealth during the remainder of his life. His earliest efforts in solving the transportation problem, began at home. When he found that it was particularly difficult to travel from his plantation to town, he set about to have constructed a plank road to extend south from Montgomery by way of his plantation to Mobile. The company was organized to construct the South Plank Road, as Mr. McGehee proposed. In Box 19 of the Probate Judge's Office in the Montgomery County Court House, we find a certificate of stock for three thousand dollars invested by him in this company. His efforts in railroad transportation are discussed in the next chapter.

Thus did Abner McGehee establish himself in Alabama. Here, as in Georgia, he was primarily a planter. He was usually successful with his crops. Year by year we find him becoming more and more wealthy. His money, he seems usually to have invested well. And it is worthy to note that his investments were not of a miserly sort. While his financial ventures, it is true, were for the purpose of the accumulation of greater wealth, yet they were in-

variably made with a view also to civic improvement, or in some way to better the living conditions of his fellow-men. In all his walks of life, Abner McGehee, portrays a distinctive altruistic outlook.

In Blue's History of Montgomery, Alabama, the first mention of him refers to the fact that there were two large Indian mounds near the present ^{site} of Montgomery when white settlers first came there. "In 1833 these mounds were dug down to make brick for Mr. McGehee's Planters' Hotel on Montgomery Street." Later he tells us that

"In 1833 Mr. Abner McGehee, the wealthy planter, became smitten with the mania for hotel building in Montgomery, and began the erection of the Planters' Hotel. This hotel was a two story brick building that fronted sixty feet on Court Square and extended two hundred feet up Montgomery Street. It was first kept by Daddison Powell, Sr., father of Col. James R. Powell, who was succeeded by Hardy Herbert and Patrick N. Madigan. These latter were running it when it was destroyed by fire on the night of December 16, 1838."

On pages twenty-eight and twenty-nine of Blue's work appears the following:

"The most extensive fire that ever visited Montgomery, occurred about midnight. It originated in the 'Alabama Journal' printing office on Court Square, about the present location of Goetter, Weil, & Co., and spread up and down the square. It destroyed all the tenements up Court Street on the west side as far up as the store of Messrs. Davidson, and down to the corner of Montgomery Street, where it consumed the Planters' Hotel, facing sixty feet on Court Square and two hundred feet, two story, on Montgomery Street.

"Mr Abner McGehee, who owned the hotel building, and without insurance bore the heaviest loss."

In another account of the fire in his history, Blue estimates that the loss to Mr. McGehee was from forty to fifty thousand dollars. But he was not daunted. He soon had his hotel rebuilt and in 1840 even bought the lot upon which it stood.¹ In 1849-50, the "charter of the Planters' Hotel was diverted in behalf of the Exchange Hotel Co."² Abner McGehee also owned the lot upon which the present Exchange Hotel stands.³ It is agreed by real estate men of Montgomery today that these are the probably the most valuable pieces of property in that city. He also owned several lots on Dexter Avenue. We shall see how he disposed of one of these later.

The true worth of Abner McGehee was soon recognized by all the citizens of Montgomery. It was natural that such a public spirited man should soon win the esteem of all his associates. Yet he never ran for any office. He was not a politician and seems never to have had a desire to obtain public honor. He was however interested in the political affairs of his day, and always voted the Whig ticket. But for himself, he never entered the political

1. Old Series, P, p. 482. This deed book shows Abner McGehee to have bought this lot from the "The Alabama Company."
2. Blue, M. P., Esq., History of Montgomery, Ala., T. C. Bingham & Co., Montgomery, Ala., 1878, p. 32.
3. Old Series S, p. 509; T, p. 264; L, p. 474; Q, p. 309; S, p. 156; X, p. 151; Y, p. 54; Z, pp. 15-17 show this and other valuable sites in the heart of Montgomery which at some time belonged to Mr. McGehee.

field, but was content in the knowledge that he had the respect of everyone who knew him. As a token, however, of Montgomery's appreciation of his value as a citizen we find that on March 21, 1839, he was selected along with E. A. Holt, to represent the city at the Commercial Convention in Charleston, South Carolina.¹ These Commercial Conventions were attended by the leading planters and business men of the various Southern states.

1. Blue, p. 53.

CHAPTER III

ABNER McGEHEE AND THE RAILROAD

"The 'flush times' spirit in Alabama in the early thirties was not displayed more in any one line of endeavor than in transportation development." It was but natural that the capital city should be among the first to catch the spirit of the times. This was, perhas due not only to its position of importance in the state, but also to its strategic location. If a railroad could be constructed which would deflect the trade of north-west Georgia and the upper Tennessee Valley through Montgomery to central Alabama and to Mobile, the capital would become a great commercial center. Moore further points out:

"The fact that it the railroad would perfect the chain of steam communication between the Alabama River and the Atlantic was a consideration of importance also. It was estimated that 40,000 to 50,000 bales of cotton would be brought to Montgomery, and that vast quantities of merchandise would be carried to east Alabama and north Georgia."²

Among the far sighted men who planned this railroad "to penetrate the heart of 'New Alabama'" none was more deeply interested than Abner McGehee.

Indeed it would seem that it was he who took the lead-

1. Moore, A. B., History of Alabama and Her People, American Historical Society, Chicago, 1927, p. 307.

2. *ibid.*

ing part in launching the project. On January 20, 1832, a charter was granted to the "Montgomery Rail Road Company."¹ We learn from the files in Atlanta of the West Point Route, Western of Alabama Railroad Company, the present successor to the earlier companies, that Abner McGehee was elected the first president. Brice Battle was selected as Topographical Engineer. On November 27, 1833, there was held in Montgomery a meeting at which Mr. Battle reported the distance between Montgomery and West Point as seventy-six miles. He estimated the cost of construction at \$8,000² per mile.

With this information, the company definitely set to work, and on January 15, 1834, secured a new charter. The company was reorganized³ and Col. Charles T. Pollard was elected president to succeed Mr. Abner McGehee. It appears that Col. Pollard was president from this time until May 31, 1875, except for the period 1841 to July 5, 1842, when the company's property was leased to Mr. McGehee, who operated it on his own responsibility during this critical period of its history.

Blue informs us that on October 26, 1835, after \$700,000 had been subscribed by the citizens of Montgomery and Mobile, the "First Board of Directors of the Montgomery and Chattahoochee Railroad Company were elected....."⁴

1. Blue, p. 22. 2. Blue, pp. 23 and 84.
 3. Blue, p. 23. 4. Blue, p. 79.

This board "consisted of Messrs., Justus Wyman, Abner McGehee, George Whitman, Peyton Bibb, Charles T. Pollard, John Scott, John Goldthwaite and John Gindrat of Montgomery and John Everitt, Henry Hitchcock, Thaddeus Sanford, Philip McLaskey and Duke Goodman of Mobile." The files in the Atlanta Office show that until his death in 1855, Mr. McGehee was a member of the Boards of Trustees, and "always the largest stockholder."

The next problem which confronted the company was letting the contract for construction. Abner McGehee, always energetic, applied in connection with John Scott¹ for the contract of constructing the first thirty five miles.

On February 2, 1836, ground was first broken by McGehee and Scott, with forty slaves.²

Four years later on June 6, 1840, "A public dinner and railroad celebration took place seven miles from Montgomery on the Montgomery and West Point Railroad."³ Two days later, railroad transportation, for a distance of twelve miles, was offered to the public. There was much rejoicing in Montgomery when it was seen that the little engine was really capable of pulling a load of passengers. The papers carried notices of the event and congratulations to the public -

1. General Scott was Abner McGehee's uncle and Col. Pollard's father-in-law.

2. Blue, pp. 22-23.

3. Blue, p. 63.

spirited men who had backed the project.

It was soon found, however, that the cost of operation slightly exceeded the gross receipts.¹ The panic of 1837 swept the nation and dark days seemed to lie ahead of the little group of promoters. The Mobile subscribers failed to pay their promised amounts and the company was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Again Abner McGehee stepped forward. He leased the entire holdings of the company, and until July 5, 1842, carried the work forward.² His implicit faith in the ultimate success of the railroad and his untiring energy alone kept it from failure.

At a meeting of the city council of Montgomery, September 14, 1841, it was resolved;

"On motion of alderman Armstrong, seconded by Alderman Randolph....."

"That Abner McGehee have the privilege of extending the railroad from the present depot to the court house then on Court Square in this city, and that horses and mules be required to convey the train. - Provided, nevertheless, it shall not interfere with private property."³

Thus the first franchise granted by the City of Montgomery was to Abner McGehee and for the convenience of passengers

1. This information and that following comes from a letter from Mr. Frank G. Browder, of the West Point Route, Atlanta offices, to Miss Mildred Beale.
2. *ibid.*
3. Minute Book "C", p. 176, City Hall, Montgomery; Parrish, J. S., Franchises of the City of Montgomery, Brown Printing Co., Montgomery, Alabama, 1913, p. 5.

on his railroad. This was the first street car run in Montgomery. We do not find that this project was part of the Montgomery Railroad Company, but was a private enterprise of Mr. McGehee.¹

On July 5, 1842, the property of the railroad was sold at public auction.² We find that several of the trustees purchased this property. They were: Abner McGehee, Judge B. S. Bibb, Wm. B. S. Gilmer, Wm. Taylor, Jas. E. Scott, Judge Thos. M. Coles, Col. Lewis Owens, Col. Chas. T. Pollard, and Chas. P. Shannon.³ The company was re-organized as the Montgomery and West Point Rail Road Company,⁴ and the sale confirmed by the legislature.

The road had now been extended as far as Franklin, Alabama - a distance of thirty three miles.

"After its reorganization, the new owners, found it very difficult to obtain the necessary capital with which to extend the road beyond this pointEffort was made to borrow Money from the State. This resulted in the passing of an act by the Legislature, in the winter of 1844, permitting the Governor to lend to the railroad, one-half of the 'TWO PERCENT FUND' upon favorable terms, provided that the return of the money at the expiration of ten years, should be satisfactorily secured, and further, that the road be extended and operated to Auburn, Alabama, for the public use, by January 1, 1849.

"The Governor could be satisfied with hardly any security which the railroad company could offer, and finally, in order to obtain the money from the State, the owners of the property, then consisting of Mr. Abner McGehee, Mr. William Taylor, Col. Thomas M. Coles, Col. Charles T. Pollard, Mr. Alfred V. Scott, by

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1. It might be remembered here that Mr. McGehee's Planters' Hotel was on Court Square, the south terminus of the street railway.
 2. Browder's Letter. 4. *ibid.*

"mortgaging their private property, obtained such personal security as was satisfactory to the Governor, who on March 1, 1845, directed the payment by the State treasurer to the Railroad company, of the sum of \$116,782.64. With this sum the extension of the road as required was undertaken."¹

The history of how the road to West Point was finally completed May 1, 1851, only to be destroyed a few years later by Federal troops, is a story of supreme and heroic effort, under circumstances which even today would tend to discourage the stoutest of hearts. Yet it was not in the makeup of such men as Abner McGehee and Charles T. Pollard to be daunted by the most disheartening of backsets. Mr. McGehee lived to see the railroad completed to the Chattahoochee, but it was not until just before his death that his investments began to reap returns. "An Inventory of the Personal Estate of Abner McGehee, deceased," written by Mr. William Taylor, one of his executors, and probated May 29, 1855, shows that at the time of his death he owned "one thousand seven hundred and seventy five shares of stock in the Montgomery and West Point Rail Road company of one hundred dollars each."² The value of these shares had increased enormously within the last few years of his life, and during the years following until completely destroyed in 1865 by the Federal General Wilson "the company's in-

1. Browder's letter.
2. Probate Judge's Office, Court House Montgomery, Box 31.

crease in value¹ and its earnings were stupendous."

Abner McGehee is remembered in history, chiefly for his leadership and unending support in organizing and completing this the first successful railroad in the state of Alabama. Brewer in his history of Alabama makes this significant statement; "To the untiring energy of Mr. Abner McGehee of Montgomery, almost alone, are the public indebted for the early construction of that part of the road lying between Montgomery and West Point."²

In addition to Mr. McGehee's active participation in the affairs of the railroad to West Point we find that he subscribed \$10,000 to the Alabama and Florida Rail Road Co.³

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1. Browder's letter. These dividends were paid during the lifetime of the Confederacy in bonds on that government. Today, in Box 19 of the Probate Judge's Office of Montgomery there are over \$100,000 of worthless bills and bonds belonging to the "Estate of Abner McGehee, deceased."
 2. op. cit., p. 78 -footnote.
 3. From receipt dated February 1, 1856, in Box 19, Montgomery County Probate Judge's Office, for "the fifth and last payment on the Ten Thousand dollarsSubscribed." There is another receipt dated March 2, 1858 and signed by Geo. H. Winston for \$9.13 "for Taxes paid on the Private Property in West Point, Ga."

CHAPTER IV

MR. McGEHEE'S BENEVOLENCE

Gilmer, in mentioning the wealth of the sons of Micajah who left Georgia, speaks of them as moving to states farther west, "in search of what all the McGehees have peculiar genius for finding." ¹ Money does, at first sight, seem to be the paramount aim of these brothers. Yet when we examine their lives more closely we are struck by the fact that in nearly every instance the wealth which they accumulated were never hoarded as a miserly person would do, but expended, in many cases, for worthy causes.

We have seen that Abner McGehee was a public-spirited man, and that his investments were largely made with some worthy end in view, whether it be civic improvement, or state wide advancement.

Mr. McGehee, however, was more than a public-spirited man. His will stands as a perpetual testimonial that he was in the highest sense a philanthropist. ² Here we find that he left a large portion of his fortune to benevolent causes.

At the time of his death the greater part of his capital was invested in stocks in the Montgomery and West

1. op. cit., p. 168.

2. For will see Will Book, No. 6, pp. 44-54, in Probate Judge's Office, Montgomery County Court House, Montgomery, Alabama.

Point Rail Road Company. The railroad at that time had begun to reap large returns. Mr. McGehee's gifts, therefore, consisted in substantial investments already made.

The largest single donation made by him at his death, went to the American Bible Society. Here in Article VII, of his last will and testament, Mr. McGehee gave to this organization " a sufficient number of shares in the said Montgomery and West Point Rail Road Company to amount to the sum of \$50,000....."

Mr. McGehee knew the value of education. He was desirous of seeing higher institutions established in his state. It is but natural, that any man facing death, and with the realization that his life has been well spent, should have a desire that his name be not soon forgotten. Abner McGehee wanted to establish a "McGehee College" in Alabama as his brother, Col. Edward McGehee, had done in Mississippi. For this purpose he bequeathed "to the corporation created by the Legislature of Alabama for the establishment of the "McGehee College" railroad stock to the amount of ten thousand dollars. There was a provision, however, that the corporation, in order to receive this amount must raise "sixty thousand dollars exclusive of this bequest" within five years of the probating of his will. This amount seems never to have been raised, perhaps largely because of the pending conflict between the states. McGehee College was never established.

When Abner McGehee came to Alabama he was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Dr. Anson West tells in his history on Methodism in Alabama that among those prominent citizens who joined the movement away from this church to form a new church, to be known as the Methodist Protestant Church, "...in Montgomery County, were B. S. Bibb and Abner McGehee, a man of wealth and worth, who in after years made considerable contributions to benevolent objects..."¹ Abner McGehee was from the first a staunch supporter of this new church. Article V, of his will contributes to "the Samaritan fund of the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church" ten thousand dollars worth of railroad shares.

Abner McGehee during his later years, seemed almost as much interested in the Alabama Bible Society as he was in the railroad. In the minutes of this branch organization of the American Bible Society, we find that a motion was made and passed on March 13, 1852, that notice be given to the papers that the Society had been organized, and was to occupy the building on the north side of Dexter Avenue, near Court Square, which had been donated to the Society by Abner McGehee.² The donor's name appears upon the list of the directors of the Society from this date until his

1. West, Rev. Anson, A History of Methodism in Alabama, Barbee and Smith, Nashville, Tenn., 1893, p. 423.
2. This Minute Book is in the safe of the Bible House on Dexter Avenue in Montgomery, Alabama.

death in 1855. The minutes show him to have exerted great influence on the conduct of the Society. From its organization until February 3, 1855, Mr. McGehee was not absent from any meeting of its board of directors. Indeed he was not tardy except on one occasion. On this day February 4, 1854, the other members of the Board took advantage of his tardiness to pass the following resolution:

"That a Committee be appointed by the President to request Mr. Abner McGehee to sit for a full length portrait to be kept in the Bible House as a memento of Gratefull affection to the Donor of the Bible House - And that the Said Committee be authorized to do all things necessary to carry out the objects of this Resolution, and draw on the Treasurer to defray the expenses of the same."

The resolution was carried out, and today there hangs in this valuable building in the heart of Montgomery the portrait of the stern yet kind features of Montgomery's most notable philanthropist.

In the minutes of the Society for February 3, 1855, at which meeting Mr. McGehee, for the first time failed to answer the roll call, we find the following;

"On Motion of John Whiting. Resolved -that in view of the declining health of Mr. Abner McGehee -and the probability that he will never take his seat as a Member of this Board again -as a mark of high Regard -this Board meet at the Bible House on Monday Morning next at nine o'clock a. m. -And proceed to the residence of Mr. McGehee to pay him a visit as the Board of Directors of the Alabama Bible

"Society of Montgomery."

The motion unanimously carried.

On March 3, 1855, we find the following resolution recorded:

"Whereas it has pleased the Providence of Almighty God our Heavenly Father to remove from our midst Abner McGehee, to whose Christian liberality the Alabama Bible House is mainly indebted for its existence; And whereas, our long and intimate association with him in the various relations of life and especially our connections with him in the affairs of this Society have deeply impressed us with his practical intelligence, simplicity of motive, earnestness of purpose, as well as high appreciation of what constitutes the truest and noblest philanthropy; And Whereas the career of Abner McGehee was a signal illustration of that thoughtfull and devout spirit which humbly acknowledges its stewardship before God and labors to make human existence a ministry of beneficence in imitation of Him 'who went about doing good' -Therefore be it resolved: 1st. That the Directors of the Alabama Bible Society hereby express their deep sense of Religious Character and Worth of the late Abner McGehee -and their heartfelt convictions of a great loss sustained by his death; -And 2nd. That this Preamble and Resolution be entered on the minutes of the Board and a copy thereof be furnished by the Secretary to the Widow and the Family of the deceased friend.

H. A. Lipscombe,
Chairman.

In his last will and testament Abner McGehee made the bequest of the "sufficient number of shares of my stock in the Montgomery and West Point Rail Road Company, to amount to Ten Thousand Dollars" -to the Alabama Bible Society.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN AS OTHERS KNEW HIM

We have thus far discussed the activities of Abner McGehee. From a study of his actions we have necessarily learned much of his personal character. Yet no account of his life, written many years after his death, as this is, would be complete without some record of what his contemporaries thought of him.

We have discovered that perhaps the predominant characteristic of his life was a great love for work. Energy is the keynote to his success. The Weekly Alabama Journal on February 24, 1855, says in this connection:

"He lived to an advanced age, retaining in a remarkable degree, the vigor and energies of his nature, and died full of years, and honors, due a most worthy and respected citizen."

Another paper says:

"A more active, industrious, and energetic man probably never lived. So constitutional was his energy, and fixed his habits, that he continued within a few hours of his death, the same untiring and laborious person."

We should not forget in the study of the numerous enterprises in which Mr. McGehee engaged that he was always primarily a planter. He owned more than ten thousand acres of land and many slaves to do the labor. No finer example of the

1. Montgomery Advertiser and State Gazette (Weekly), February 28, 1855. (Article reprinted from Daily Montgomery Mail of Tuesday.)

false conception by Northern Abolitionists that the Southerner's slaves were cruelly treated may be found than in the manner in which Abner McGehee managed his slaves. Nearly forty years later, Robertson, in Recollections says of him, "He was....a kind husband and father, and a humane master of his slaves....." Indeed we find the first article of his last will and testament providing for the care of his slaves, thus:

"It is my will and desire that such of my slaves as are superannuated at the time of my death, shall be supported and maintained during the lifetime of each as comfortable as the institution of slavery will admit of, and that for the purpose a sufficient fund be set apart from my estate as suitable provisions be made by my Executors."

Our study so far, has revealed to us the man's fine Christian character. We have seen his connection with the Methodist Church and have noted his generous gifts at death. During his life, "Schools, benevolent funds, and other means of moral and social advancement had his warm support and liberal patronage." ¹ Robertson recalls that his;

"Was a character of strength and earnestness. One of the most distinctive qualities of Mr. McGehee's Christian character was his modesty. He went about doing good, but was never heard to boast of any good thing he ever did; his test was, 'let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.' His resignation was a beautiful trait; he was never heard to murmur or complain, but

1. Montgomery Advertiser and State Gazette, Feb., 28, 1855.

"-on the contrary was always pleasant, affable and agreeable in manner."¹

The papers all carried articles of tribute to him at the time of his death, which occurred at his residence at McGehee's Switch, February, 19, 1855. The following is a portion of an obituary which appeared in the Montgomery Advertiser and State Gazette on February 28, 1855:

"Few men have been so long and so well known in our community. Prominent in every movement that was connected with the progress of this section of the country, possessing large wealth, and using it with princely generosity, full of public spirit, and always ready to lend a helping hand to everything enterprising, and humane, he has exerted a wide and powerful influence over the interest of this and other sections of the State. Montgomery owes much to him.

"Heaven kindly granted him 'length of days' and good health. Age brought as few infirmities as could be consistent with its nearness to the grave. His pathway to the tomb was gently smoothed; and the ties of life were unloosed by the same tender hand, which had guided his trusting feet for seventy-five years.

"A devoted friend, a noble citizen, a true philanthropist, a sincere christian, he has left a memory to be hallowed, a character to be appreciated in the warmest sentiments of our being, a life to be studied and imitated.

"All the offices and shops of the Rail Road have been closed today as a tribute of respect to his worth; and as we write, numbers of our leading citizens are leaving the city to attend his funeral this afternoon."

He is buried in the family cemetery at McGehee's Switch. A monument marks his grave and bears the following inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of Abner McGehee
Who died Feb., 19, 1855 -Aged seventy six

"- years and one day. His rare enterprise, energy, and industry, united with integrity made him a model man in all the relations of life; and insured him great wealth which he distributed cheerfully and with noble hearted liberality for the glory of God and the good of man. A Christian in heart and life, he lived and died in the communion of the Methodist Protestant Church. He departed in great peace and comfort of soul and sleeps in Jesus."

When Abner McGehee had crossed the stream of life, he right proudly might have looked back upon a life whose powerful influence was not soon to die. Indeed, it would seem that he so set the mighty waves in motion, that rather than recede after his death, in truth they have swept forward with an ever increasing power.

Hundreds of people each day unconsciously are reaping benefits from the mighty efforts of this one man. Thousands of Bibles have been distributed at the the Bible House. Who can say how many persons have been benefited because of the work of this institution? Tens of thousands of busy persons each year now ride in speed and comfort between Georgia and Alabama. Hundreds of thousands, since Abner McGehee and General Scott first broke ground nearly a century ago, have unconsciously been grateful to the chief promoter and first president of this important link in a great transportation system, which binds more closely the South and East.

Shall we now say with Abner McGehee's contemporaries, "He has left...a life to be studied and imitated?"

APPENDIX

The descendants of Abner McGehee are eligible to Colonial Dames, Daughters of the American Revolution, and to the Daughters of Huguenots in America, for the following reasons:

I. Colonial Dames:

1. Captain James Scott (see record below).
2. Captain John Collier (father of Frances Collier Scott, the mother of Ann Scott McGehee, the mother of Abner) was a captain in the Infantry of King and Queen County, Virginia, June 12, 1707, (see Virginia Colonial Militia, by Crozier, p. 97, Crozier's authority being Henning's Statutes).
3. Francis Morgan, the great-great-great-great-grandfather of Abner was one of the earliest Virginia Burgesses. (See Francis Morgan, by Mrs. Annie Noble Sims for complete records.) The line of descent from Francis Morgan is contained elsewhere in this appendix.
4. Colonel Thomas Scott, Abner McGehee's great-grandfather as mentioned in Chapter two was a vestrymen in Petsworth Parish, and at one time held the office of Proportioner of Land for the Third Precinct. (See Sims, p. 37.)

II. Daughters of the American Revolution.

1. Captain James Scott. (See record below.)
2. Micajah McGehee. (See record below.)

III. Daughters of Huguenots in America.

1. John DeJarnette. Abner's great-grandfather was
John DeJarnette.

For the convenience of the female descendants of Abner McGehee who may wish to trace in more detail their eligibility to membership in these organizations, the following tables have been prepared.

I. The McGehee Line.

1. Abner McGehee, son of
2. Micajah McGehee, (Revolutionary Soldier), son of
3. Thomas Mack Gehee, son of
4. Edward Mack Gehee, the immigrant from Scotland who changed his name from James MacGregor, son of
5. Patrick MacGregor, Chief of Clan MacGregor.

II. The Scott Line.

1. Abner McGehee, son of
2. Ann (also recorded Nancy) Collier Scott McGehee, daughter of
3. Captain James Scott, (Revolutionary Soldier), son of
4. Colonel Thomas Scott, (Col. Off.), son of
5. _____ Scott, the immigrant from Cumberlandshire, England.

III. The Collier Line.

1. Abner McGehee, son of
2. Ann Scott McGehee, daughter of
3. Frances Collier Scott, daughter of

1. Note that the generations are in reverse order for obvious reasons. These notes are based on Sims, Virkus and Marquis, Saunders and Stubbs, Crozier, Eck-enrode, Chalkey, Goode, etc., see Bibliography.

4. Capt. John Collier, (Colonial Officer), son of
5. _____ Collier, the immigrant from County, Kent, Eng.

IV. The Morgan Line.

1. Abner McGehee, son of
2. Ann Scott McGehee, daughter of
3. Capt. James Scott, (Revolutionary Soldier), son of
4. Ann Baytop Scott, daughter of
5. _____ Alexander Baytop, daughter of
6. Ann Morgan Alexander, daughter of
7. Francis Morgan, son of
8. Francis Morgan, (Early Virginia Burgess).

V. The DeJarnette Line.

1. Abner McGehee, son of
2. Micajah McGehee, (Rev. Soldier), son of
3. Elizabeth DeJarnette Mack Gehee, daughter of
4. John and Mary DeJarnette, the immigrants from France.

The Revolutionary Record of
Micajah McGehee.
Copy of Affidavit.

"State of Georgia,
Oglethorpe county,

Ordinary's office of said county,
Lexington, Georgia.

I, L. H. Bacon, Ordinary in and for said county, do hereby certify that the name of Micajah McGehee, appears upon the register of Land Grants, for services rendered as a soldier of the Revolutionary War, now on file in the oldest record book, in this office.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand, and affixed the seal of office. This the 29th day of March, 1915.

L. H. Bacon,
Ordinary Oglethorpe county, Georgia."

The Colonial and Revolutionary
Records of Captain James Scott.

Although over fifty years of age at the beginning of the Revolution, James Scott served the cause of American Independence as a Captain in the Revolutionary army, in Virginia, and later in South Carolina. For Captain James Scott's Revolutionary record see:

Goode, Virginia Cousins, p. 50-c;
Stub Entries to Indents for Revolutionary Claims, by A. S. Salley, p. 307;
D. A. R. record of Mrs. Tallulah Gachet Woods, Nat. No. 12473;
D. A. R. record of Mrs. Annie Noble Sims, Nat. No. 42392.

Captain James Scott was sheriff of Prince Edward county, Virginia in 1768. See Virginia Gazette for that year.

Both Captain James Scott and hi brother Thomas Scott were vestryman of Saint Patrick's Parish, Prince Edward county, Virginia. See the Vestry Book of Saint Patrick's Parish in the Theological Seminary near Alexandria, Virginia. On page four of this vestry book, among the vestryman present at a meeting held April 12, 1757, were "Thomas Scott and James Scott, gentlemen," the same entry in 1758.

Captain James Scott removed from Virginia to Abbeville district South Carolina, where he died after the Revolution.

Captain John Collier's Record as
a Colonial Official.

Captain John Collier, father of Frances Collier, the wife of Captain James Scott, was a Captain in the Infantry of King and Queen county, Virginia, June 12, 1707. See Crozier, Virginia Colonial Militia, p. 97.

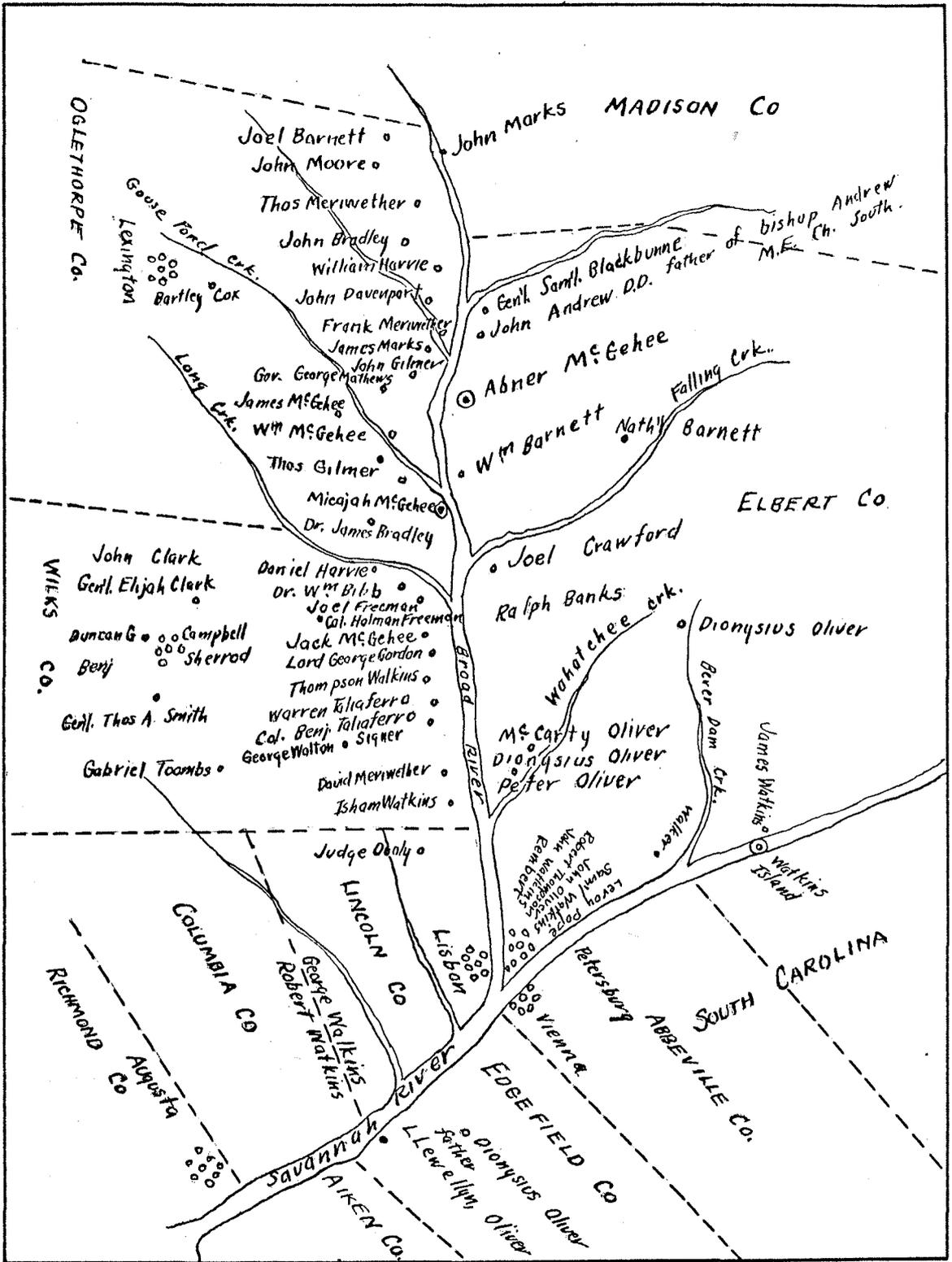
The date of the death of Captain John Collier (1735) is recorded in the old manuscript of Stratton Major Parish of King and Queen county, Virginia. This book shows him to have been a vestryman of this parish from 1729 until his death. See page eight.

Saunders and Stubbs, pages 519-528, contains a compilation with notes on the "Descendants of Thomas McGehee." It is written by George T. McGehee, the grandson of Thomas and Elizabeth McGehee. The account is dated, San Marcos Texas, October 1, 1899.

Here follows a portion which I am including because of its obvious excellence, and the light it throws on the Texas McGehees of the pioneer days:

"About 1820, grandfather and grandmother had their portraits painted. I never knew how my father fell heir to them, but he did, and with other paintings, which my mother prized very highly, they were brought to Texas in 1835. The Indians captured and destroyed all of them except those of my grandfather and grandmother. Before my Mother's death she gave them to my youngest brother, and a few weeks ago among very few articles which were saved from the burning of his residence were those old portraits. If those silent features could spring to life endowed with all those God given attributes of mind, memory, and speech, what a wonderful history they could give, of long journeys of land, across mighty rivers, through unbroken stretches of primitive forest, hasty flights from blood-thirsty savages, long weary marches of a young mother and two children, a return to a home in ruins, of death-bed scenes, of happy brides at the hymeneal altar, of a happy family separated by the cruel necessities of war, the yearning of children's love for a mother and father, the breaking up and separating of a large family, their narrow escape from the flames of a burning house. Oh! if they could only speak and tell us all that has passed before those silent eyes since the painter near eighty years ago now, 1928 - one hundred and eight years ago so faithfully transferred those splendid features to the canvas! But, alas, it can not be; it may be best that they are silent. I often wonder if we shall ever see the like of such people again!"

Issue, twelve children.



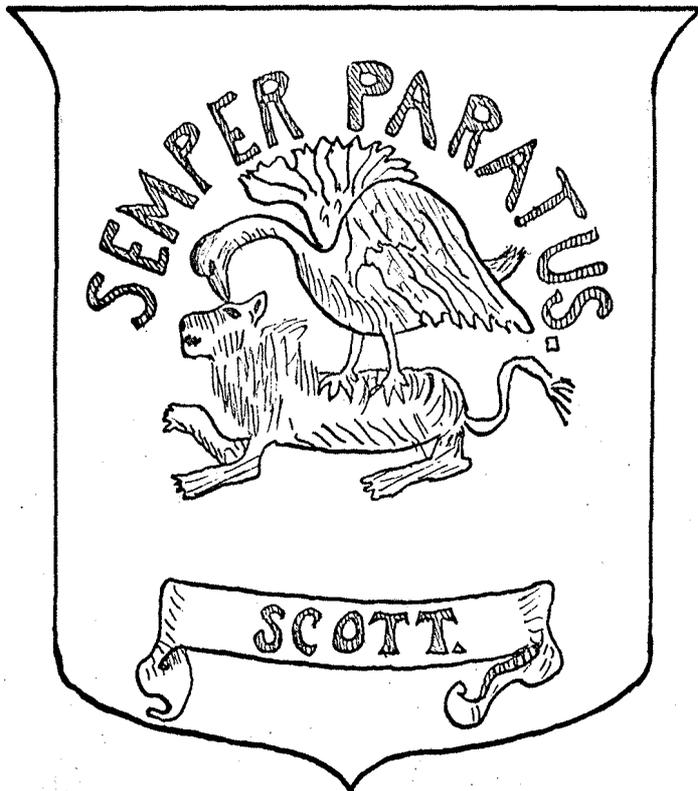
"Gov. Gilmer's Map of THE BROAD RIVER SETTLEMENT, GEORGIA, enlarged to include ELBERT COUNTY, after 1780 and also some other settlers." - Saunders and Stubbs, page 334.



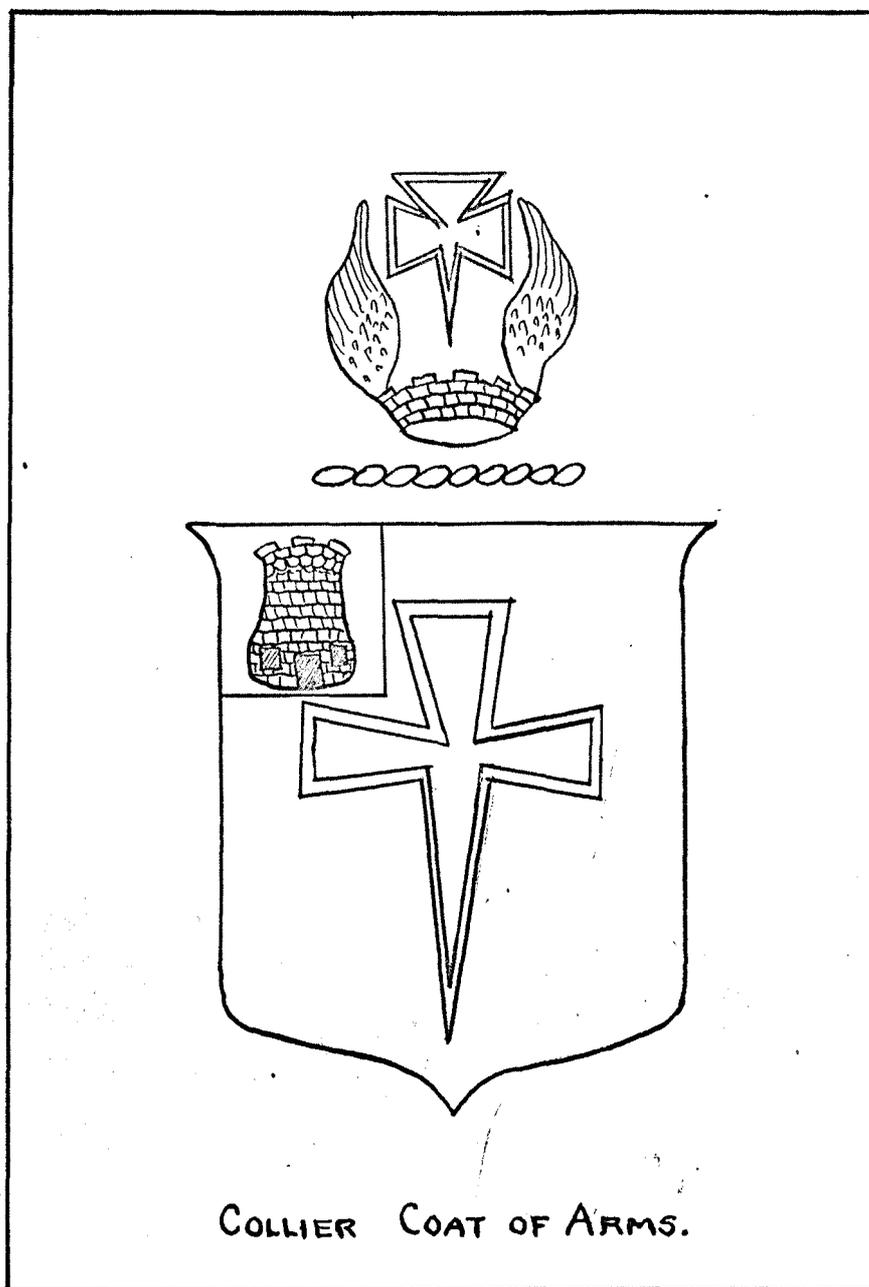
MACGREGOR

From Burke, Sir Bernard, C. B., L. L. D., Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage, p. 946.

ARMS -An oak-tree, eradicated, in bend sinister, ppr.; surmounted of a sword in bend, of the last, supporting on its point, in dexter canton, an antique crown, gu. CREST -A lion's head, ppr., crowned with an antique crown, or. SUPPORTER -Dexter, an unicorn, arg., crowned, horned, or; sinister, a deer, ppr., tyned, oz. MOTTOES -"ARD CHOILLE." (War cry meaning "High Wood"), "E'en do, and spair nocht," and "Srioghail mo dhream" (meaning "Royal is my race or tribe"). A later motto is, "MacGregor, despite them, shall flourish forever." -This from W. and A. K. Johnston, Ltd., Edinburgh, Scotland, The Scottish Clans and Their Tartans.



The crest contained on this shield, above the scroll is a copy of that on a seal owned by Col. Thomas Scott, now in the possession of his great-great-grandson, Mr. W. C. N. Scott of Colorado Springs. It had been brought from Great Britain by one of his ancestors. Sir Walter Scott is quoted as saying that William de Loraine received a crest like this from an early Scotch king, because he was the first of the barons to respond to the call of the king for service.



"The Collier family although originally French, lived for many generations in Staffordshire, England, see the 'Harlean Society's Publications' (1912), Vol. LXIII, page 53, (in the Congressional Library at Washington, D. C.). The ancestry of this family is given there... In the Coat of Arms the fact that the base of the cross, upon the shield, is sharpened to a point, indicates that at least one ancestor of the Colliers was a Knight Templar, who carried the cross of Christ ready to plant in the Holy Land." - Sims, page 41.

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