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SECTION TWO

Merritt And Moore Families Have Occupied Stately Old Home For More Than A Century

FEW CHANGES MADE IN HOUSE DURING YEARS

BY ELIZABETH REED

A stately drive of elms and oaks leads to the century old Merritt home on the Bethesda road near Rock Hill. For more than 100 years members of the Merritt and Moore families have lived in the spacious old home and have had charge of farming the fertile acres of land nearby.

Mrs. Clarence Merritt is the present owner of the 230 acre farm and lives in the lovely old home with her 88-year-old mother-in-law, Mrs. B. F. Merritt.

An interesting thing about the two-storied house with its wings at either end, is that the house has been changed very little in exterior appearance within the memory of those now living.

Early History

The exact date of the construction of the home is unknown. However, Dr. W. M. Patrick of Oakland avenue, well-known retired Rock Hill dentist, believes that the home was built before 1829 by his great grandfather, Dr. W. S. Moore.

Mrs. Merritt's deed to the estate gives an affidavit by John H. Steele that members of the Moore family owned the property before 1858. Dr. Moore moved from York to the Bethesda section to establish his practice.

Dr. Moore was married to Miss Harriett Springs. The couple had three sons: Baxter Moore, a Charlotte lawyer; Capt. W. S. Moore, Lt. Fred Moore, who was killed in the War Between the States and one daughter, Miss Harriett Springs Moore.

Capt. W. S. Moore lived in the home until after the death of his wife. He then moved to Rock Hill to make his home with his daughter, Mrs. J. B. Patrick after the death of Dr. J. B. Patrick. Both the late Dr. J. B. Patrick and Dr. W. M. Patrick were born in the lovely old home.

The Merritt Home



The lovely old home in the Bethesda community owes much of its beauty to the wide avenue of elms and oaks that leads from the highway to the house. Doors from the rooms forming wings originally opened on a portico.—Herald Staff Photo.

Dr. W. M. Patrick remembers visiting the home as a boy. He recalls the huge plantation of approximately 1000 acres, the large smokehouse where meat was cured for the many hired hands, and the spacious avenue of elms and oaks leading in a graceful curve to the home. He recalls the gin where cotton was processed and the number of farm animals, notably the goats.

The Merritt Family

Mrs. B. F. Merritt and the late Mr. Merritt moved to the home from Mecklenburg county, N. C., on Thanksgiving Day in 1894. Living with the family was Miss Mae Armstrong, a niece of Mrs. Merritt, now Mrs. E. R. Shannon. Mr. and Mrs. Merritt's only daughter is now Mrs. J. S. Wilkerson of Hickory Grove. Their only son, Clarence Merritt died nine years ago and Mrs. Clarence Merritt now carries on the work of managing the place. B. F. Merritt died 35 years ago.

The House

The house is in a remarkable state of preservation. The two rooms at either end of the home formerly had small porches with doors leading from the interior to them.

A part of the original farm of 1000 acres remained in the possession of Mrs. Jennie Moore until about 1906 when it was sold to J. H. Milling. That section of the farm is now known as the Milling farm.

Dr. Patrick remembers that in his boyhood Dr. Moore's office stood about 30 yards from the house and a little to the side. Although, he does not remember his great grandfather, he has heard his grandfather, Capt. W. S. Moore tell of the skeleton of a youth that Dr. Moore kept in an upstairs room. Dr. Moore used to dangle the skeleton from an upstairs window to tease the small fry among the Negro slaves on the plantation. He also remembers hearing that on one occasion, Dr. Moore amputated the hand of a Negro slave after it had been mangled in the cotton gin. When Dr. Moore threw the hand into a group

of small white and Negro boys playing outside the office window, he frightened them considerably.

Another interesting thing about the Patrick family is that there were four Dr. J. B. Patrick's in direct succession. Dr. J. B. Patrick, first, had seven sons; all became dentists, Dr. J. B. Patrick, fourth (the last Dr. J. B. Patrick) is now dead and his widow lives on Hampton street.

Capt. Moore also planted the graceful avenue of oaks and elms that leads to the home. The late B. F. Merritt planted the two huge water oaks in the back yard.

What was originally the kitchen (not separated from the house, however) has been pushed back from the house and is now used as a dairy.

Bannisters for the upstairs porch and ornamentation for the porch on the first floor, are hand carved and of a graceful design. The front door is surmounted by a glass panel.

A striking feature of the home is the graceful stairway with its hand carved scroll work. The balustrade ends in a most unusual circular scroll, still in perfect condition.

The home is finished inside with smooth, wide boards, the rooms now have wall paper above the wainscoting. The floors, ceilings, doors and even the hardware, in most cases, are the original. Locks for the doors are about twice the size of present day hardware. The front door hinge of hand forged iron extends the full width of the door.

The two mantels in the main rooms are exquisite. They are similar, though different in design, and have delicate hand carving and a central medallion.

Many lovely pieces of old furniture are in the home today. One is a large secretary, more than 150 years old that originally belonged to Mrs. Merritt's ancestors, the McMullens.

Although York county abounds in homes of the period of the War Between the States or older, few are to be found of a more pleasing appearance or in a more graceful setting. Few can be found today in the same perfect condition.

(This is one of a series of articles on old York county homes.)