

## CHAPTER I.

## A GENERAL STATEMENT AND SOME PARTICULARS.

My purpose in this sketch is to give, in some detail, a record of the Brabham family and others more or less closely related to us, as well as that of other families of the community of my birth and my rearing; also to write of matters relating directly and indirectly to the community itself. And in conclusion to give a brief account of my life and work as a Methodist preacher.

Buford's Bridge community is located towards the eastern part of what was Barnwell District-called county after the reconstruction period-but now Bamberg County. The community got its name from the bridge over the Big Salkehatchie at this point; the bridge itself being called after its builder, a Mr. Buford, who may have been the first settler, certainly among the first, of this part of the country.

At this point where the bridge spans the stream, and on its northeastern side is where the little village of Buford's Bridge stood. Some three miles northeast from where the latter stood is where my father, Robert Cornelius Brabham, had his home, and here I was born October 15, 1848.

My great grandfather, Joseph Brabham, Sr., the founder of the Brabham family in South Carolina, was a scotchman who, with his Scottish wife, Flora McPhail Brabham, came to America probably about the middle of the eighteenth century. He doubtless came by way of Virginia, and his first home in South Carolina was on the Santee River.

The only other family in this State of which we have any knowledge, whose name is nearly like that of Brabham, is the Bradham family of Clarendon County. About 1892 or '93, I met in Manning, this State, a Major Bradham, a prominent official of his county, and a one-armed Confederate veteran. On inquiry, I learned that his family were Irish people, and he thought, of no relation to the Brabham family. This seemingly, should settle the question. However, my grandfather, whom I shall designate as Joseph Brabham, Jr., or 'the second Joseph Brabham, from whom I learned much of what I know of the first Joseph Brabham, said that his father came to Barnwell District from "over the Santee"; and as Clarendon County borders on that river, it may be that the two families were, at the beginning one. This question was brought up between the families many years ago. James M. Brabham, second son of Joseph Brabham, Jr., told me once that when he was quite a young man, two members of the Bradham family rode horseback from Clarendon District to Barnwell

District to see the Brabham's and to try to trace up a relationship between the families, but were unable to come to any certain understanding about the matter. However, my Uncle James, in relating the circumstance to me, jocularly added, that in his opinion the two families were related, as the two visitors, like some of the Brabhams, "were fond of whiskey and dancing" - doubtless then common characteristics of the times.

The original Joseph Brabham, was a Revolutionary soldier in Gen. Francis Marion's Army, and was twice wounded in that conflict, once at Briar Creek, in Georgia, and once at Dorchester near Charleston. A fellow soldier with Joseph Brabham Sr., was his brother-in-law, a Mr. McPhail, who, in the battle at Dorchester received a saber cut on the head and was left on the field for dead. The fight was hand to hand with heavy sabres, and on horseback. Before Mr. McPhail himself was wounded, he cut off a British soldier's head, which, as he afterwards said in relating the story "rolled down the hill like a round snuff box". While McPhail recovered from his supposedly fatal wound, and was fond of relating his experiences in the battle, yet he never fully recovered the normal use of his mind.

Another incident of the Revolutionary experiences of our ancestors as related to me by my grandfather, Joseph Brabham, Jr., was that on one occasion a number of Tories who had been on a raiding expedition to the upper part of the State, were returning with a lot of plunder, robbed from the Whig settlers, and had stopped for the night, making their camp near a stream over which they had crossed on a bridge. Some scouts from among Marion's men had followed them, and when they discovered their camp, went back and reported. Arrangements were made for an immediate attack, and to avoid making a noise in crossing the bridge, the soldiers were ordered to dismount, to fold their blankets and lay them as a pathway on the bridge, then gently to lead their horses over this path of blankets. Reaching the opposite side, they gathered up their blankets, remounted and soon were charging down on the campers, who were eating their supper. Surprised and panic stricken there was quite a scattering of the feasting Tories. Some were shot down, some were captured, while some escaped into the neighboring swamps. Among the plunder here captured were some barrels of rum, the heads of which, by order of General Marion, were knocked out, and the rum was thus removed from the use of his own men,— avoiding in this way a possible drunken carousal on the part of any who might have been addicted to drunkenness.

As to whether Joseph Brabham, Sr., moved from "over on Santee" before or after the Revolutionary War is uncertain. But as Joseph Jr. said the reason that his father moved to Barnwell District was for the benefit of the fine grazing lands found

there, it may have been that he first observed these lands while a soldier, following the "Swamp Fox" and after peace came moved over and settled there.

With regard to cattle and grazing lands at the time of the settlement of the original Joseph Brabham in Barnwell District, my grandfather said that on account of the absence of undergrowth among the pines—tall, long leaved, yellow pines— as was the case at that time, there was heavy growth of "woods grass", intermingled with what they called "highland fern"—probably the beggar weed—besides cane in the swamps. This combination made excellent range for stock; so much so that the cattle were raised at practically no expense, it being necessary only to watch them sufficiently to keep them from going astray. At certain seasons on account of their good condition and free range, it was not safe for the women and the children unprotected, to come into contact with the herd. Grandfather said that he, as a boy, had, on occasion, climbed trees to escape their attacks. An important part of the food of these early settlers consisted of milk from their cattle; and grandfather—Joseph Brabham Jr., who lived to be more than ninety years old, never lost his fondness for milk.

As to deer hunting—there were two methods of doing this. One was to chase them with deer hounds; meantime placing a man with a gun loaded with buck shot, at selected places or "stands", to shoot the deer as it passed. It was characteristic of the deer to follow the same general run from one swamp or hiding place to another, and it was this habit that enabled the hunters to know where to stand. Another method of hunting deer in those days was what was called "fire hunting". In this method, they used a long handled frying pan, such as was used before the introduction of cooking stoves. To use this pan in hunting, the bowl was filled with short pieces of rich pine, "fat lightwood", as it was called. With this ablaze and held on the shoulder of a person who walked through the forest at night—this being the time when the deer did their grazing—followed closely by another with a loaded gun, would attract the attention of the deer, which instead of stampeding, would stop and watch the blazing torch and thus discover their own whereabouts by the shining of their eyes. Immediately the eyes were seen a halt was made, and the man with the gun fired at the eyes and thus got his victim.

As my grandfather's early taste for milk never left him, so with regard to his taste for venison; and in after years, when there were no longer deer in the country, he kept a fine flock of sheep, and in the absence of venison, there was no meat that he liked so well as mutton; and his choice piece of venison ~~or~~ mutton was what he called the "saddle"—the shoulders and ~~ribs~~ and not the hams.

As there were deer and numerous game in those early years of the settlement of the country, so also were fish quite abundant. Not only were they found in the streams, but the ponds and "bays"—thickly grown swamps inside of which was more or less of shallow water with cypress trees and water grass; with occasional "lakes"—stretches of deeper water, usually with black gum trees. Here it was that fish of various kinds abounded; there were also terrapin and alligators. Part of a very large pond of the above description stood on the land taken up by the original Brabham. On account of its size and comparative depth, it was called the "Ocean", and is still known by that name. It is probably safe to say that the name was not given by the pioneer, Joseph Brabham, for having himself crossed the Atlantic, he would hardly have dignified an inland pond swamp not exceeding a square mile in area with so great a name. Possibly some native backwoodsman, who had never had a glimpse of the sea, venturing too far in a full time, had his rickety bateau capsized, and his near-drowning experience may so have impressed him to think that the perils he endured were similar to those of the briny deep, and so, he may have named the pond, The Ocean! This idea, of course, is purely imaginary.

The site of the first cabin home of Joseph Brabham, Sr., was near the old grave yard in which his bones have lain since the year of his death, 1818. The above mentioned grave yard, now and for many years, entirely neglected, was later used as a burial place for negroes. It is in what is called grave yard field, and is part of the legacy left by James M. Brabham, Sr., to Mizpah Church. These and adjoining lands were in possession of the Brabham family for about a hundred and forty years.

For some cause, probably health conditions, Joseph Brabham Sr., moved about one mile eastward and settled on a blackjack ridge, about the very spot later occupied by the home of Aunt Betsy Kearse Brabham, to be written about later. At the time of the earliest recollection of James M. Brabham, Sr., his grandfather, Joseph Brabham Sr., lived at this last named place, but of course not in the same house. At this time this grandfather was an old man, and a class leader in the Methodist Church, he, seemingly, having been among the first to fall in with the Methodist preachers, who made their first appearance in South Carolina soon after the Revolutionary War. A few hundred yards north of the old gentleman's modest home stood his little log meeting house, which, at the time, of which my uncle spoke, had nearly rotted down.

As to the early Methodists of that day—my grandfather said they were disliked by most of the people, that some were prejudiced against the Methodist preachers and they would purposefully misdirect them, and thus confuse them as to the routes they

wished to travel. To offset this disadvantage the preachers came to an understanding among themselves, as to certain signs that they would leave along the way for the guidance of their successors in travel—broken limbs, marked trees, etc. It is gratifying to the descendants of the old pioneer, Joseph Brabham Sr., that he was friendly to these early ministers of Christ, that he was not only converted to their faith, but that he also build a house for the worship of God, and left a record of his own personal service in the cause of his Master. It is quite probable that the prayers of this old class leader and his godly wife, which were doubtless made for their children, and children's children, on down the line, have availed much for us and ours. It is certain that this writer was first brought to Christ while living on part of the original homestead of the old class leader, and while his home was directly in sight of the old grave yard where, with that of his good wife and others, his body awaits the resurrection of the just. I hereby record my gratitude to God for the knowledge of these pious ancestors.

As already noted, the wife of Joseph Brabham Sr., was Flora McPhail, a Scotch woman, and a sister of the Revolutionary here of whom mention has been made. It is also known that she had another brother, Rev. John McPhail, a Methodist local preacher, a man of deep piety and of great force of character. He baptized the children of the Methodist people of that community and time—myself being one of the said children. His religion was of an aggressive and fervent type. On some occasion while holding service at the first Mizpah Church, as a drought was prevailing, Uncle McPhail was requested to pray for rain. He prayed earnestly and fervently, and before most of the people, after being dismissed, could reach their homes, a great thunder cloud same and wet the lands and many of the people also. After it was all over, the preacher, who dined with one of the neighbors, laughingly remarked that he "reckoned the next time he was asked at the church to pray for rain, a request also would be made that the rain be staid till the people could reach their homes".

Uncle McPhail's good wife was in full sympathy with him, both in his spirit and ministerial work. They lived and worked on their farm near Swallow Savannah Church of the Allendale circuit. In those days the cattle lived on the range, and were driven up each evening for milking. This was done seven days a week; and it so happened on a Sunday evening, or late afternoon, that "Uncle Mac" and his wife—himself in the saddle and she behind him on the same horse—when suddenly the rapid beating of the feet of running horses on the nearby race track were heard, (horse racing was common in those days).

Spying the riders, the old preacher gave his horse the whip and immediately he and his good wife found themselves speeding along the race track in the vain effort to discover the identity of the offenders that they might be brought to justice. Failing in this, the old preacher decided on another plan, and next day took his horse and plow and dismantled, as best he could, the well-smoothed race track.

Soon after this at a Quarterly Conference, when the presiding elder asked the usual question, "Are there any complaints?" the pastor arose and with a solemn face replied that there was a complaint against Brother McPhail. Of course all were surprised at this, for Uncle McPhail was thought by saint and sinner to be, like Caesar's wife—above suspicion. When the pastor saw the interest was at its height, he said, that it had been reported to him that Brother McPhail had been "straining his horse on the race track". As it didn't occur to those not in the secret, that there was more than one way to to "strain" a horse on a race track, they were checked at the suggestion that "Uncle Mac" had been racing on the sly! As soon, however, as the pastor had had his fun, he explained to the Conference that Brother McPhail had strained his horse in the effort to spoil the race track with his plow.

Mr. McPhail and his wife, having no children of their own, adopted a little girl, who afterwards became the wife of a Mr. Henry Priestor, who, with his then old wife, and two unmarried daughters, Misses Annie and Nina, lived near Allendale when I was pastor of that charge, 1832-3-4. At the home of the family, who were members of the Swallow Savannah Church, I was shown the old leather-bound Bible which had belonged to Uncle McPhail, and which had been damaged from being hidden out at the time of General Sherman's raid, February, 1865.

Uncle McPhail died in 1850, at quite an advanced age. This we know from the record of an old quarterly Conference Journal, which stated that at a Quarterly Conference held in 1831, "Brother McPhail resigned from being steward because of old age". He and his wife were buried at Swallow Savannah Church, about one and a half miles south of Allendale, and quite near his old home place. His lands later became the property of Mr. Lawrence Williams of Allendale, who died some years ago; and it is probable that they are still owned by his children or grandchildren.

## CHAPTER II

## THE BRABHAM FAMILY.

To Joseph Brabham and his wife, Flora McPhail Brabham, the founders of the Brabham family in South Carolina, were born five sons and six daughters that grew up and married—there may have been others who died in childhood or youth. The names of these sons and daughters, and the parties to whom they were severally married, are as follows:

Reuben, name of wife not known to me.

John, married Martha Meye.

\* Joseph, married Sarah Kirkland.

James, married Mary Graham.

Archibald, married Rebecca Grimes.

Sarah, married Willis Knight.

*Handwritten:* Nancy, married Jacob Kearse. *Handwritten:* Born. Dau.: Olive Brabham Kearse

*Handwritten:* Flora, married William Kearse. 7 Sep 1803-13 Jan 1886

Mary, married George Cass Grimes. m. 25 Oct 1821

Cynthia, married George Kirkland. Jacob Folk (1802-1881)

Elizabeth, married first a Froxton, afterward married S. Richardson.

The record of each of these, as far as I can do so, will be given in detail.

Reuben married and went to Alabama. Some years ago I got in communication with a young Methodist preacher in Texas by the name of Thomas N. Brabham. He said his parents were from Alabama, and he gave names of some members of the family which led me to know that they were descendants of the South Carolina Brabhams. I am unable to find the letters of this young preacher, but I feel assured that his antecedents were from either Reuben Brabham or his brother, Archibald, both of whom died in Alabama, each leaving a number of children.

John Brabham married Martha Meye, sister of Matthew Meye. He was born October 26, 1772, and died May 25, 1836. John Brabham and his wife, affectionately known as "Uncle John and Aunt Patsy", had their home about one mile westward of the original Brabham home, which was by the old grave yard already described. They were the parents of Hampton, John Meye, and Cynthia.

Hampton Brabham married first, a Miss Wright—Jane I believe was her given name. She was the mother of John Fletcher Brabham. At her death, Uncle John and Aunt Patsy took Fletcher and brought him up, or at least kept him until their death. After the death of his first wife, Hampton Brabham married Miss Harriet Kirkland, daughter of Robert Cornelius Kirkland and his first wife, who was a Miss Williams. To Hampton and Harriet Kirkland Brabham were born: Mary, Carrie, Caroline Martha,