

The Lawton Family  
Of  
Robertville, S. C.

by

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South Caroliniana Library

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Annotated by

Rev. Robert E.H. Peeples

When the Rev. Robert Peebles extended me the invitation to speak at the Lawton Family Reunion on the approximately 1,300 manuscripts in the Lawton Family Papers in the South Caroliniana Library, I accepted the task dutifully, but with the reluctance that my modesty naturally compels. I knew generally the scope and size of this collection which had come to our Library through the good service of Thomas O. Lawton, Jr., (Note 1) of Allendale, and Jess Ives, of Jacksonville, Florida. Had I been fully aware at the time of the invitation that our Library already had another 1,300 or more Lawton Papers, and could have foreseen the perils of a task left to the eleventh hour for completion, my sense of duty would have been abandoned and modesty would have prevailed.

Upon a casual perusal of these two groups of papers, the researcher might first assume that the collection had been mislabelled, and he might conclude that they were instead a miscellaneous collection of papers of about a dozen or so other unrelated families of old Beaufort District. Upon a closer look he would find that there is, however, a Lawton, who as a central character, moves throughout most of the time-span of the collection, a man whose presence is more often only felt by his endorsement on the back of documents that came into his hands as executor and guardian rather than by letters to and from him. This gentleman was Alexander James Lawton (Note 2)--hereinafter referred to as Colonel--a planter, lawyer, legislator and surveyor of Robertville, St. Peter's Parish, Beaufort District, born in 1790, who at his death in 1876, relinquished his custody of the papers to his descendants.

To put Col. Lawton in his proper genealogical setting, one must turn to "Cousin Annie's" book--a book appropriately titled *Our Family Circle* (Note 3)--for I must confess to feeling a little dizzy now and then--through no fault, of course, of the author, Annie Elizabeth Miller--as I turned to it as an indispensable guide to a study of the collection. In it the researcher will find the families of Robert, Fickling, Maner, Jaudon, Polhill, Audebert, Tison, Stafford, Barksdale and Lawton, to cite but a few of the approximately sixty families whose names appear in our Lawton Family Papers, most of whom really do belong to a family circle (or circles) related by blood and marriage, some of them tracing their ancestry in common to three of Carolina's illustrious pioneers: Landgrave Thomas Smith (Note 4), the Huguenot minister, Pierre Robert (Note 5) and Bonum Sams (Note 6). The lines of these three gentlemen crossed with that of a family of Welsh Dissenters, Lawton by name, early in the history of our state.

Although I can claim one recent Lawton inlaw, I am still an outsider, and the genealogical connections between the various families featured in the Lawton Papers naturally staggered me. I have the greatest admiration for "Cousin Annie" for her boldness and success in delineating a family history which contains such unusual situations as three sisters of one family marrying three brothers of another (Note 7), and a progenitor (Note 8), a Baptist minister at that, who had at least nineteen children in two marriages.

An insider, Benjamin Spicer Stafford (Note 9), a Lawton relative, in his unpublished autobiography, recalled the hard times of Reconstruction which forced his family to move to the West, and wrote affectionately of his early life at Robertville: "Nearly everyone in the country was born and reared there.... So many people were called cousin and uncles and aunts who were no kin or who could only trace their connections generations back." Stafford added that the woods were full of Lawtons, reminiscent of an 1821 statement by another Robertville resident referring to the "old lady, Mrs. Lawton (undoubtedly Sarah Robert (Note 10), wife of Joseph Lawton (Note 11), formerly of Edisto Island), who is the mother of half a dozen heads of families here."

I was delighted to have the opportunity of studying in the Lawton Papers a splendid example of an early American social pattern characteristic of the gentry of other communities in low country Carolina. Slow increase in white population, restrictions of class, geography and travel sometimes forced the scions of these societies to select their helpmeets from among their relatives. Often the alternatives to this were either to leave home in search of a mate or to marry beneath ones social and economic station. On the other hand, family intermarriages might lead to concentration of considerable wealth, especially in land and slaves, typical examples of which can be found in the Lawton Papers. They could also produce genealogical mazes when sufficient family data were available, an example of which is before me. You will therefore forgive me if, in my all too superficial analysis of the Papers, I tend to lose my way or mention now and then a person who is not really one of your ancestors.

The Lawton Family Papers are indeed a significant addition to our Library's manuscript collection, which now comprises more than one million manuscript items. Important, of course, for the genealogical data they supply, but more so because the official and many of the non-official records of this region were the casualty of a War. Most of the Lawton Papers fall chiefly into the period between 1800 and 1860, the heyday of this corner of old Beaufort District in its development as a prosperous plantation community, and are similar to the kind you would expect to find among some of the county court records--bills, receipts, wills, inventories, bills of sale for slaves, deeds and plats, some tracing titles as far back as 1733, almost all of which came into Col. Lawton's hands and retained as his record as executor of the estates of deceased relatives. They were preserved, not with the view of the needs of today's historian or genealogist, but as legal proof of his just stewardship as administrator and guardian.

Col. Lawton is undoubtedly the central figure in this collection and Robertville, South Carolina, the center of his stage. Unlike the Colonel, whose personal papers are apparently gone forever, the existence of this little village on the edge of Black Swamp, its economic pulse and flux, is very much in evidence in the wealth of details to be found in his records of the estates of men and women who lived around him. One might even suppose that by feeding the data

on each business transaction recorded in the Lawton collection into a modern electronic computer, we could get back a day by day, perhaps an hourly, record of what transpired in the Robertville community. To me, as Director of the South Caroliniana Library--and I hasten to add as a member of a family other than the Lawton connections--this picture of Robertville economy is the chief fascination and value of the collection. But I might also add: What else was Robertville but the Lawtons and their relations?

A casual examination of the abundant economic detail in the papers might lead one to agree with the Yankee school teacher, Charlotte Verstillle, who concluded shortly after her arrival in 1821, that Robertville people were "very worldly minded, and...appear to think more of the rise and fall of cotton than of the rise and progress of religion." Her brother, Tristram, in 1813, shortly after his arrival at Robertville from Connecticut to begin a clerkship in Mr. Brooks' store, had pronounced the town a good place for business, being situated at the junction of four public roads which were very much travelled. Was it worldly-mindedness, as well as hard work and ambition, which in a few years after his arrival put Tristram in business for himself?

The economic growth of this community during the remaining decades of the ante-bellum period can be detected in a comparison of the following descriptions: Charlotte Verstillle wrote her sister in 1821:

"This splendid village contains but six houses, a Church, an Academy, two stores and a black-smith's shop. But there are a number of houses situated at unequal distance around it, and inhabited by wealthy planters. These buildings can boast neither of a cellar nor an upper story--all the rooms being on the surface of the ground. Glass windows are quite a rare luxury, light being usually admitted by throwing open a wooden door swung on hinges where the windows should be. When found necessary to guard against the cold, the light is sure to be excluded. It is surprising how many comforts these people of wealth will voluntarily deny themselves. I have been in no house which appears as well as Tristem's. It has two sitting and six bed rooms, one of which will, as soon as he finds time to attend to it, be furnished with glass windows....Our situation too is pleasantest, being at the union of the Savannah, Augusta and Charleston roads, with a green in front of which stand the Church and Academy.... Our table is plentifully supplied with variety...the grand staple eatable here is bacon--bacon and collards (a sort of cabbage) you will find on every table at every season...."

In 1879, an old-time resident of Robertville reported for the Hampton Guardian that just before the Civil War:

"...the people around this place, with very few exceptions, were in easy circumstances, many owning plantations, with from fifty to two hundred slaves, and several as many as five hundred. Some planters numbered as

many as twenty thousand acres of land in their domain. Their sons and daughters were educated at the best Southern and Northern colleges and seminaries. Our village then contained one small neat Episcopal church and a baptist church...said by those who knew, to have been the best proportioned and finest country church in the State."

Like Tristram Verstelle, the Lawtons, too, were hard working, ambitious and had a part in the economic growth of this community. Some of the younger members of the family now and then found it necessary to serve as overseers on relatives plantations or to move westward and to Florida to seek their fortunes, but most of those who stayed at home seem to have prospered. Joseph Lawton, of the second American generation and the first in Robertville, had begun as early as 1774 the acquisition of the several tracts which became Mulberry Grove Plantation, the Lawton's ancestral home in St. Peter's Parish. Part of his wealth may have been acquired as a result of his 1791 contract for hiring eight of the field slaves of his mother, Mrs. Mary Sams Grimbball Lawton Fickling. Appraisal of his estate after his death in 1815 amounted to nearly \$10,000, exclusive of his lands and money. By 1827, the estate of his eldest son, William Henry, who died that year, was appraised at nearly \$90,000, exclusive of land and money. Of this amount, more than \$42,000 was assigned to the value of his slaves and \$10,000 to bank stock. I do not believe it necessary to call your attention to the difference between the value of the dollar then and now.

Increase in possession of worldly goods in the third generation, in Joseph's younger son, the Colonel, can be partially traced in the Lawton Papers relating to his acquisition of land, and hiring, buying and inheriting slaves. In 1815, in his twenty-fifth year, the Colonel sold twenty-six bales of cotton valued at \$2,036, for himself and his father's estate. In 1819, he formed a partnership with his brother, William Henry, for the operation of a store at Robertville, under the firm name of Alexander J. Lawton & Co. Later in 1833, a few years after William's death, he joined his cousin, J. B. Jaudon, in partnership for the operation of a short-lived mercantile firm of J. B. Jaudon & Co. in Savannah. The Colonel could not leave his Robertville interests; his chief duty for the firm, other than the initial investment, was promotion of business by procuring "additional and new customers," for which he was to receive one fourth of the profits. This partnership dissolved upon Jaudon's death in 1834. In 1850, the Colonel was one of a committee sent to study the cotton mills at Graniteville "preparatory to establishing one in" the Robertville area, a fact which strongly suggests he had considerable capital for investment. In 1852, his business interests expanded with the addition of a steam engine "with gearing for a grist mill and constructed to run a saw mill," the purchase and installation of which cost him \$1,600. The Lawton collection contains an undated manuscript map of a portion of Robertville probably drawn by the Colonel in connection with a plan for an insurance business. The map shows the junction of the Charleston-Augusta road with the Robertville-Savannah road, the location of the Colonel's home, his store and gin house, the homes of his nephew, Joseph Maner Lawton, and Ben-

jamin Jaudon, and Peter Jaudon's sadler's shop. The Colonel's appointment as Deputy Surveyor had undoubtedly placed him in a position for acquiring good lands for himself, and a number of plats in the collection drawn by him are not only exceptionally neat, but show a draftsmanship which approaches the artistic.

The hundreds of bills, receipts and accounts for household goods and furnishings, for plantation supplies, equipment and Negro goods, for transportation and tolls, and accounts for sales of rice and cotton, show Robertville business oriented in the direction of Savannah, Georgia, and the importance of Purrysburg as a Savannah River depot. Among the dozens of Charleston, Robertville and Savannah mercantile establishments represented by these business papers, the firms of Lawton & Behre, Polhill & Lawton, Lawton & Willingham, Taylor, Lawton & Co., Lawton & Norton, Jaudon & Huguenin, reveal the extensive business connections of the family. A favorite among the invoices is from the firm of C. Jaudon & Son, dated 1859, with "Robertville, S. C." printed in bold type, and in small type the boast, "We can and will sell at Retail as low as can be bought in Savannah."

Numerous letters from prominent South Carolina lawyers at Coosawhatchie, such as Franklin H. Elmore, James L. Pettigru, Henry Bailey and R. J. Davant (Note 12), submitted advice to the Colonel on estate settlements, and show the importance of that town as the seat of government for Beaufort District.

There are a surprising number of Beaufort District doctors represented by bills and accounts in the Lawton Papers--Doctors Jeremiah Fickling, A. R. Norton (Note 13), T. E. Lawton, Thomas Currell, Thomas H. Harris, Sidney Smith, Samuel Perry, F. Y. Porcher, Charles Atkins--some of these and several others appear to have been within or personal physicians to the Lawton Family circle. Among the doctor relatives of Col. Lawton were his nephews, Doctors James Stoney Lawton and Benjamin Lawton, nephew-in-law Dr. Theodore Dehon Mathews; Dr. N. F. Kirkland who married his grand-niece, Jane Maner Lawton; and his son-in-law, Joseph Thomas Robert, who forsook his medical training to become a minister and educator. An account of the sale of the estate of Dr. T. E. Lawton in 1845 shows that his medical library, drugs and supplies were purchased by Drs. Norton, Nichols and Duncan.

Of the Robertville physicians, perhaps the most interesting was Samuel Perry, who, with the Verstilles, came from Connecticut. According to Grace Fox Perry in her book, *The Moving Finger of Jasper*, he is buried in the Bostick cemetery near Robertville, with "a slight but careful apology...upon the tomb... for this sufferance." Nevertheless, he too may be said to have joined the Lawton Family circle when his widow married the Colonel's brother, a Baptist minister, Winborn Asa. Dr. Perry, judging from his subscription to help build a Methodist church on Black Swamp, was himself a Methodist. When Dr. Perry died about 1821 he had a house and lot in Robertville, and his estate was settled by the Colonel. In connection with this, Col. Lawton received a letter

in 1826 from a Savannah school master, W. W. Walsh (?), who had taught at least one of the Lawton daughters. Walsh denied liability for Dr. Perry's eight dollar charge for attending another student during an outbreak of measles at his school. The bill, Walsh felt, should be paid by the student's prosperous guardian, David M. Fitts, who "kept a house of public entertainment in Coosawhatchie." This Mr. Fitts may have been Dr. David Montague Lafitte, whose papers, incidentally, have recently come to our Library.

Among the other interesting medical items in the Lawton collection are three receipts signed with an "X" by a mysterious Mary Wall for midwifery and attending sick Negroes. Was she a free Negro, midwife and nurse, or were her talents more extensive as I am led to believe and include secret voodoo cures?

Many of the bills and accounts for medical services were for attending members of the family during their last illnesses, but most of them were for treating their slaves. Typical examples of the latter are the two dollar fee of Dr. Sidney Smith, in 1831, against the estate of William Henry Lawton for "extirpating Fungus Tumor from head of Little Negro Silloh," and the two bills of Dr. Thomas Currell for nearly two hundred dollars, in 1836, against the Barksdale estate, for attending slaves on Scullcreek and Calabogia plantations. I am certain that no part of South Carolina gave slaves more attention, physical and spiritual, than the Robertville masters, who were motivated by a strong mixture of Christian charity, as well as economic self-interest.

I am also sure that Charlotte Verstelle's early opinion on the worldly mindedness of her Robertville neighbors was soon modified to give them some credit for attention to spiritual values in religion and education. She certainly knew from the beginning of her life there that she was in the center of a Baptist stronghold, for she reported in her 1821 letter on the scarcity of Presbyterians and Methodists, and, I suppose, the non-existence then of Episcopalians, as compared to the strength of the congregation of the Black Swamp Baptist Church, which numbered then thirty white and one hundred black members. She would soon witness a period of Baptist revival there, an early result of which may have been the construction of a new church building of uncommon beauty and appointment. The agreement, dated May 13, 1824, between the Building Committee which included the brothers Joseph J. and Col. Lawton and Tristram Verstelle, and the two contractors, containing the specifications for the new church, is in the Lawton collection. It is almost impossible to believe today that this splendid structure could have been built for about four thousand dollars, including, apparently, the costs of both labor and material.

In view of its subsequent burning by Sherman's army, one cannot help but note that the plans called for extensive use of "fat lightwood." One happy thought occurs to me in this connection and that is the copy of agreement in the Lawton Papers might have been lost also if the Colonel had not settled the estate of one of the contractors, the Robertville carpenter, Erastus Swift. The

collection also contains another agreement with specifications, dated 1829, for the construction of a parsonage. With their new buildings, the Black Swamp congregation maintained a vigorous activity within the Savannah River Association throughout the rest of the ante-bellum period, with Col. Lawton, as one of its deacons, always in the forefront through contributions of his time and money.

Establishment of other congregations in the area through spiritual and financial encouragement is one result of the activity of the Black Swamp congregation. The Black Swamp congregation is also said to have produced fifty white and one hundred colored ministers, but I wonder if the Lawton Family shouldn't receive most or much of the credit. As with their doctors, the Lawtons produced, married and supported Baptist ministers. Among those in the family circle were the early Black Swamp pastor, Rev. Alexander H. Scott, who married Elizabeth Robert; Col. Lawton's brother, Winborn, minister at Hilton Head; the Colonel's nephew, Rev. Joseph A. Lawton, married his son to the daughter of Rev. Iveson Brookes, a great Baptist minister within the Savannah River Association. Another famous Baptist preacher, Dr. William Henry Brisbane (Note 14), an Abolitionist, but born in Beaufort District, married the Colonel's niece, Anna Lawton. I was unable to find a family connection with the young Rev. Robert B. Brooks of Robertville, whose estate the Colonel settled in 1824. (Note 15)

Col. Lawton's brother-in-law, James Jehu Robert, was pastor and deacon at the Black Swamp church for about fifty years. Last but not least was James Jehu's son, Joseph Thomas Robert, who married the Colonel's daughter, Adeline. According to his grand-daughter-in-law, Mrs. Sarah C. Robert, who lives today in Maryland, Joseph Thomas Robert attended Columbian College in the District of Columbia; graduated from Brown University with an A. B. in 1828 and an A. M. in 1831; attended Yale Medical School from 1828 to 1830 and graduated from the South Carolina Medical College in 1831. He then studied for the ministry at Furman Theological Seminary to return to serve the Black Swamp church in the 1830's. After several brief pastorates in Kentucky, Georgia and Ohio, he became a college professor, first at Burlington University in Iowa, later at Iowa State University, returning to Burlington as President in 1869. In the 1870's as though in continuation of the Black Swamp tradition, he worked with Georgia schools devoted to the training of colored ministers; in 1879 he became President of the Atlanta Baptist Seminary.

In an 1848 subscription for the salary of the Black Swamp minister, Col. Lawton with B. R. Bostick, James J. Robert, B. Jaudon and John L. Maner, are the five largest subscribers who provided more than half of the total. In her 1832 will, Martha Stoney Barksdale (Note 16), who subsequently married the Colonel's nephew, the Rev. Joseph A. Lawton, provided one thousand dollars for support of the ministry at the Hilton Head Baptist Church and six hundred dollars for the Beaufort Baptist Church for the purchase of a library for the pastor's use. Receipts of 1833 and 1835 are for her subscriptions to the Hilton

Head and Pipe Creek congregations. In 1836, as the wife of Rev. Lawton, the former Mrs. Barksdale continued her support of the preacher at Hilton Head and paid her 1835 subscription to the Rev. Mr. Moody as Missionary to the Negroes on that island. An 1850 receipt to Col. Lawton, probably as deacon of Black Swamp, acknowledged a twenty-six dollar contribution to the Savannah River Association's "funds for Widows & Orphans of deceased Ministers of the gospel within its bounds"--an item which might prove that Black Swamp Baptists would support their ministers beyond the gates of death.

In reviewing the career of Rev. Joseph Thomas Robert, one is led to entertain a suspicion that he and his wife, Adeline Lawton, shared the abolitionist views of Rev. William Henry Brisbane. He did dispose of his slaves before taking up permanent residence in the North. In the Lawton Papers there is an 1840 bill of sale conveying his slave, Lavinia, and her three children, to his father-in-law, Col. Lawton. There is also a provision in the Colonel's will anticipating rejection by Adeline of her share of his slaves. In my opinion it should not surprise us to find in a community such as Robertville even a few members, especially ministers, whose consciences might force them to eschew slavery. The exemplary record of slave-master relations of the Robertville area and its outstanding work in the Christianization of the Negro through its Black Swamp Baptist Church, as revealed in the Lawton collection and in other sources, would in fact lead one to expect to find even more persons willing to harbor abolitionist sentiments.

In the slave conveyances in the Lawton Papers, there is evidence that great care was taken to prevent the breaking-up of families and that slaves of deceased masters may have been bought by relatives to prevent them from leaving the community. In her 1842 will, Catherine Lawton (Note 17), the Colonel's sister-in-law, devised a plan to prevent her "Negroes from being separated from each other" in an equal distribution among her heirs. In 1837, Rev. Joseph A. Lawton authorized his cousin, Elias Jaudon, overseer at his wife's Calabogia plantation, "to let the negroes go to town for their Xmas."

In the one letter in the collection from Adeline Lawton Robert, written from a distant state, one senses the affectionate regard for the race when she asks her father, the Colonel, to write her about his "crops, garden, fruit, the negroes, church, neighbors." The four words,--crops, negroes, church and neighbors--are almost an adequate summary of life in Robertville, and seem to point out the important place assigned to the slave in its society and economy. The work of the Black Swamp Baptist Church among the Negroes is illustrated by the spacious, comfortable three sided gallery for slave and free Negro communicants who far outnumbered the white. Benjamin S. Stafford, in his autobiography, has left us with a vivid personal recollection of participation by Col. Lawton's slave, the Black Swamp deacon, "Daddy Jack" in this congregation's affairs, of communion served by the Negro deacons to their Christian brothers and sisters in the gallery and of numerous baptisms of Negroes by white preachers in the waters

of Black Swamp. The Verstelle Papers provide us with a reference to an excommunication of a member of the Black Swamp Baptist Church for illegal trading with Negroes. Both the law and the church were severe on the guilty since the trade encouraged the slaves to steal from their masters.

Evidence of this church's mission in training Negro preachers is found in a document by Col. Lawton, dated 1869, identifying "Daddy Jack" as the colored preacher Jack Taylor. This remarkable document and others connected with it also illustrate the Colonel's continuing affection for his former slaves during the trying years of Reconstruction, in an attempt--which entangled him for several years in governmental red tape--to secure a federal military pension for his former slave, Isabella Graham. There are few surprises in the Lawton collection greater than this. Despite the political implications of the time which might have provoked animosity in other men, I joined the Colonel in his sympathy for poor Isabella, the "Widow of Moses Graham, a deceased Coloured Soldier of the United States, who died in the said Service," but who was also formerly the property of the Colonel's neighbor at Robertville. "Daddy Jack" had married Moses and Isabella on the Colonel's plantation in 1854. Col. Lawton offered in labor contracts to his former slaves one-half of their crops rather than the prevailing one-third rate, a fact drawn from Stafford's autobiography which amplifies our meagre knowledge of this gentleman's fine character.

Other religious and charitable activities of the Robertville Baptists are revealed in the Lawton collection. From the fragmentary records of the Union Bible Society of Beaufort District, for the period 1853-1862, we learn that Col. Lawton, his nephew John Lawton, W. J. Stafford and B. J. Jaudon served as its officers at various times during this period, that three of its annual meetings were held at Lawtonville, Grahamville and Steep Bottom in 1856, 1858 and 1861. By 1861, the Society had distributed 729 Bibles and 955 Testaments since its founding in 1825. The Robertville firm of C. Jaudon & Son served as the depository for the remaining stock of books.

"I will thankfully enter into any thing that will promote the cause of Religion, Education, &c." Thus wrote Adeline Robert to her father, the Colonel, in 1858, a sentiment I am sure shared by many of the residents of the Robertville community. Adeline's husband was then combining college teaching with half-time preaching as a Baptist minister and her oldest son, Joe, Jr., was "working hard teaching in a Female Seminary in Kansas City." Another of her sons, destined to become the celebrated army engineer, General Henry Martyn Robert (Note 18), had just graduated from West Point and would soon embark on a teaching career in that institution. "Prosperity still seems to attend Henry" she wrote her father in 1858, the only reference, I believe, to General Robert in the entire Lawton collection. It is not difficult to entertain the idea that Genl. Robert's inspiration for his great work, his Rules of Order, a world best-seller, may have really originated in an early association with the Black Swamp Baptist

Church rather than at a cantankerous Baptist Church meeting in Massachusetts.

In 1828 the Black Swamp church resolved to raise a one hundred dollar contribution to the prospective Columbian College in the District of Columbia, a school which Joseph Thomas Robert, the General's father, attended a few years later. Mrs. Sarah Lawton's twenty dollar subscription in 1839 must have been just one of many gifts to another Baptist college, the still new Furman Institute where both General Robert's father and James Tison received part of their education.

Perhaps the most interesting phase of educational activity in Robertville is found in meagre detail in the Lawton and Verstelle Papers, on the Robertville or Black Swamp Academy. As far as I could determine these are the only sources of information on this school and I will be grateful to you for pointing out others. According to the 1818 plat by Col. Lawton, the 20 x 40 foot school house was centered in a half acre lot near Robertville on the "Sister ferry" road adjacent to the Black Swamp Baptist Church. In 1820, the Academy lot, and probably the "buildings lately erected" were deeded by William Henry Lawton for five shillings to the school's "senior" trustees, Col. Lawton, his brother Joseph J., John and William S. Maner and John and James J. Robert.

Tristram Verstelle's letter of October 1819 to his sister, Charlotte, reported that a considerable number of young ladies had been taught at the school, enough apparently to lead the trustees to consider it desirable to divide the school into Male and Female Academies, independent of each other, a proposal which seems to have failed. Later, Charlotte, for her health's sake, came to live with Tristram and shortly thereafter began teaching at the Academy. Tristram's home was "within a Biscuits throw" of the school, and he may have boarded some of the students. In 1827, Charlotte reported that Samuel Howard, of Savannah, nephew of the Charleston writer and editor, Mrs. Caroline Gilman, had taken charge of the Academy with its six scholars. In 1828, Catherine Maner Lawton, widow of William Henry, the school's benefactor, paid Mr. Howard for tuition of her daughters. In 1835, the academy was probably being conducted by M. R. Soares who sent his bill for ten dollars to Mrs. Barksdale, the future Mrs. Joseph A. Lawton, for one term's tuition in Latin and three text books for her adopted daughter, Josephine Polhill (Note 19). Mrs. Barksdale's 1832 will appointed Col. Lawton as Josephine's guardian, and further provided that she "shall have a good education such as young women with her prospects should have"--a statement which may be taken as implied evidence of the excellence of the Black Swamp Academy. Here ends my knowledge of this little school; as scant as it is we are fortunate, for it is more than we know of many of South Carolina's ante-bellum academies.

There is disappointment in store for the historian who turns to the Lawton Collection for specific details on the politics of this Black Swamp area. There

is nothing here on the legislative services of Col. Lawton and his nephew, Dr. Benjamin William Lawton of Allendale. One manuscript contains the Colonel's rough tally of votes in October 1851 at the polls in St. Peter's Parish, for election of a delegate to a Southern Congress during the secession movement which resulted from the threat to the South posed by the Compromise of 1850. Lawton was one of five candidates, which also included the ardent secessionist Robert Barnwell Rhett. Rhett, won by a wide majority, Col. Lawton coming in third. The Colonel of course carried Robertville and tied Rhett at Purrysburg which might serve as evidence of the close economic ties between the two towns. In a broader application, the collection, of course, is politically significant because of the light it sheds on the economy of the area which was the foundation of its politics. In 1850 Lawton apparently opposed the immediate secession policy of Rhett and the majority of Beaufort District, but he might well have joined his nephews, Benjamin Lawton and George Rhodes, years later in the signing of the Ordinance of Secession.

The Lawton Papers contain little or no data on the family's activities on the civilian and military fronts during the Civil War; one has to turn to other sources for this. It is especially disappointing to find so little in the collection on the family's Confederate general, Alexander R. Lawton. Georgia has a greater claim on him than South Carolina, but his papers are in a North Carolina depository. Another odd twist of fate is the fact that the other general in the family, Henry Martyn Robert, espoused the Union cause, although not a general at the time. Several documents in the collection relate to an organization originating in Robertville of the citizens of St. Peter's Parish for supplying the South Carolina soldiers in Virginia with blankets and clothing, through Dr. John Bachman of Charleston. Col. Lawton served as its Chairman and Samuel Solomans as its Secretary.

I do not wish to appear ungrateful to the donors of this collection to our Library when I speak of disappointments in my study of the Lawton Papers. I know you will appreciate my attitude when I say that the greatest disappointment of all was in the absence of the personal papers of Colonel Alexander James Lawton. Like so many of our state's "unsung heroes," he seems to me to deserve a larger place in our history than his posterity, related or unrelated, have afforded him.

Since the collection contains fewer than a dozen personal letters, there is practically nothing on Robertville's fate as the first South Carolina town to be destroyed by Sherman. The Stafford autobiography is valued for the story of his family's flight to Allendale to refuge in Dr. Benjamin Lawton's home which Stafford called "the finest in the whole country," but which nevertheless went up in flames because its owner had signed the Ordinance of Secession. Nannie Bostick DeSaussure was a witness of the total destruction of Robertville: "There were thirty buildings destroyed....There was but one fence paling to

indicate the site of our little village." Gone, of course, was the graceful building of Black Swamp Baptist Church.

Lawton strategy and foresight in this trying time is perhaps revealed in John Lawton's (Note 20) 1866 request to Mr. Hazel at Transpine plantation to send him his "Circular Saw, which my Uncle, Col. A. J. Lawton, had buried under his house to save it for me" during the recent invasion. I am sure that the saw was far more appreciated than any family silver which may have been saved for the difficult days ahead. I would join John Lawton in thanks to the Colonel for somehow managing to save the family papers too, and express gratitude to his descendants who did the same.

With the total defeat that came with Sherman, the story of Robertville fades into obscurity--and you will agree perhaps that this is a good cue for me to bring my discourse to an end.

I must say first, however, that a study of the Lawton Papers can give only a partial glimpse into the activities of Robertville's society, with what might seem to be a neglect of the contributions to the community by the Maners, Bosticks, Tisons and other families who lived there. I hope some day that some of their papers will be located and brought to the South Caroliniana Library for posterity to study.

I have enjoyed getting to know a little about some of your ancestors and I hope that we will get to know each other better through your frequent visits to the South Caroliniana Library to study the Lawton Family Papers.

Although Charlotte Verstillé's judgment of Robertville as "worldly minded" may have been correct for 1821, it may have been wrong for the years that followed, and even if she never joined the ranks of the Lawton Family Circle, I am sure she would join me now in quoting the closing lines of an 1895 letter in the Lawton Collection: "GOD BLESS YOU MUCH, AND MAKE YOU A WORTHY & PIOUS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LAWTON & ROBERT FAMILIES OF ROBERTVILLE ON BLACK SWAMP ST. PETERS PARISH BEAUFORT DIST. SO. CA."

## Notes

(Note 1) Attorney and author of Captain William Lawton, 18th Century Planter of Edisto. S. C. Historical Magazine, Vol. 60, Charleston, 1959, pp. 86-93.

(Note 2) Born 21 November, 1790, died 8 April, 1876, married 15 November, 1809, Martha Mosse, born 5 September, 1789, daughter of Dr. George Mosse (born 1742 in Ireland, died 17 February, 1808, Black Swamp, Robertville) and Dorothy Phoebe Norton (born 10 November, 1751, on St. Helena's Island, Beaufort, daughter of Jonathan Norton and Mary Ann Chaplin, Died April, 1808, at Robertville.

(Note 3) Annie Elizabeth Miller, Our Family Circle, Macon, 1931; reprinted 1957 by the Lawton Family Association.

(Note 4) Landgrave Thomas Smith, born Exeter, England, 1648, son of Thomas and Joan Atkins Smith, married (1) Barbara Atkins, by whom he had two sons, Thomas and George. With his family he immigrated to Charleston in June, 1684; he married (2) 22 March, 1867, Sabina de Vignon, widow of Jan d'Arsens, Lord van Wernhaut, who had in 1686 built Medway. By patent dated 1691 he was created Landgrave; he took office as Governor of Carolina 29 November, 1693, died 16 November, 1694, and was buried at Medway where his tomb may still be seen.

(Note 5) Rev. Pierre Robert, born St. Imier, Switzerland, 1656, son of Daniel and Marie Robert, ordained in the French Huguenot Church, Basle, Switzerland, 19 February, 1682, married in 1674, Jeanne, daughter of Jehu and Susanne Brayer of Basle, immigrated to Carolina in 1686 with his wife and son, Pierre Robert, Jr. He was the first minister of St. James' Parish, French Santee, serving until 1712; he died at Jamestown in 1715. Transactions of the Huguenot Society of S. C. No. 36, Charleston, 1931, pp. 20-28.

(Note 6) The Sams Family of South Carolina, Lula Sams Bond and Laura Sams Sanders, S. C. Historical Magazine, Vol. 64, Charleston, 1963.

(Note 7) Jane Mosse (27 December 1783 - 1857) married in 1803 Benjamin Themistocles D'Ion Lawton (22 December 1782 - 18 April 1846); Martha Mosse married Alexander James Lawton (Note 2); Phoebe Mosse (born 6 December, 1781) married Joseph J. Lawton (1777 - 1859).

(Note 8) Rev. James Jehu Robert (4 November, 1781 - 19 January, 1852), son of John Robert and Elizabeth Dixon (granddaughter of 2nd Landgrave Thomas Smith), married (1) his cousin, Charlotte Anne Lawton, born 17 September, 1785, by whom he had seven children; married (2) 1 October, 1817, Phoebe McKenzie (7 February, 1797 - 25 June, 1854), daughter of Revolutionary soldier Patrick McKenzie and Esther Marie Mosse (born 18 May, 1772, daughter of Dr. George Mosse), by whom he had twelve children.

(Note 9) Benjamin Spicer Stafford (21 December, 1853 - 12 December, 1943), son of William John Stafford of "The Hermitage" plantation and Mary Ellen Jaudon, daughter of Benjamin Jaudon (11 November, 1795 - 27 January, 1870) and Sarah Thirza Polhill (2 August, 1809 - 8 December, 1863), daughter of Thomas Polhill, II and Thirza E. Lawton.

(Note 10) Sarah Robert Lawton, born 6 February, 1755, at Santee, S. C., sixth child of Jacques Robert (born 3 April, 1711, son of Pierre Robert, Jr., and his 2nd wife, Judith, daughter of Jacques and Madelaine Garillonde de Bourdeaux) and Sarah Jaudon (born 24 September, 1719, daughter of Daniel and Elizabeth Jaudon); she died at Transpine plantation 6 October, 1839. Her will is among the Lawton Papers. For an account of the Huguenot family of Jaudon, see: Early Jaudon "Pauls", by Martha Bailey Burns, Transactions of the Huguenot Society of S. C., No. 68, 1963, pp. 49-52. Lawton descendants are eligible for membership in the Huguenot Society on Robert, de Bourdeaux and Jaudon lines.

(Note 11) Joseph Lawton, born Edisto Island 18 October, 1753, died at his Mulberry Grove plantation, Black Swamp 5 March, 1815, married 18 March, 1773, Sarah Robert; he served as a Lieutenant in Col. Bull's Regiment during the Revolutionary War. Proof of service in May and July 1778 appears in Auditor General's Account Book (April 1778 - February 1780) pp. 91-93, Archives, Columbia; his will is among the Lawton Papers. Lawton descendants are eligible for membership in the D.A.R., S.A.R., D.A.C., Colonial Dames, etc.



(Note 12) Col. Richard James Davant married Anna, daughter of Samuel Maner and Sarah Saunders Porcher.

(Note 13) Dr. Alexander R. Norton, later of Savannah, Ga., only son of Robert Godfrey Norton and his first cousin, Sarah Mosse (born 28 February, 1790, daughter of Dr. George Mosse and Dorothy Phoebe Norton).

(Note 14) Rev. Dr. William Henry Brisbane, born 12 October, 1806, son of Adam Fowler Brisbane and Mary Ann Mosse (10 March, 1786 - 10 May, 1854, daughter of Dr. George Mosse and Dorothy Phoebe Norton), married 28 May, 1825, his first cousin, Anna Lawton (1806-17 February, 1888, daughter of B. T. D. Lawton and Jane Mosse), died at Arena, Wis., 5 April, 1878. See: S. C. Historical Magazine Vol. 14, Charleston, 1913.

(Note 15) He apparently belonged to the family of James Carroll Brooks who married Sarah Crawford Robert, daughter of Ulysses Maner Robert and Rachel Rhodes.

(Note 16) Martha Stoney, daughter of James Stoney and Elizabeth Mosse (born 30 May, 1776, daughter of Dr. George Mosse and Dorothy Phoebe Norton) who were married 27 February, 1793, in St. Helena's, Beaufort, married (1) Thomas Henry Barksdale (1795 - 1832, son of George Barksdale and Ann Agnes Bona of Hilton Head Island), married (2) Rev. Joseph A. Lawton, son of Joseph J. Lawton and Phoebe Mosse (Note 7).

(Note 17) Catherine Maner, daughter of Capt. William Maner and Jane Aseneth May, married 31 October, 1797, William Henry Lawton (23 February, 1775 - 1 November, 1827), eldest child of Joseph Lawton and Sarah Robert.

(Note 18) Gen. Henry Martyn Robert, author of Robert's Rules of Order, born Robertville 2 May, 1837, died 11 May, 1923, was son of Joseph Thomas Robert (born 26 November, 1807) and Adeline E. Lawton (10 December, 1810 - 6 June, 1865); he married in December, 1860, Helen M. Thresher, daughter of Ebenezer Thresher and Elizabeth Fenner.

(Note 19) Josephine Barksdale Polhill, daughter of Thomas Polhill, II (born Savannah, Ga., 17 March, 1783) and his 2nd wife, Matilda Rebecca Jaudon (born 24 September, 1795, daughter of Elias Jaudon, Jr., and Mary Hyrne Dixon), married (1) in 1845 Dr. Benjamin Lawton (1822 - 1879) and (2) Rev. Joseph A. Lawton, her first husband's brother.

(Note 20) John Lawton (25 September, 1830 - 18 June, 1908), son of Rev. Winborn Asa Lawton (23 June, 1793 - 23 February, 1878) and his third wife, Lucinda Landrum, married his first cousin, Elizabeth Stoney Peeples (23 December, 1834 - 13 February, 1910), daughter of Edward Harden Peeples (9 October, 1811 - 24 November, 1892) and Charlotte Esther Lawton (2 November, 1813 - 16 August, 1886, daughter of B. T. D. Lawton and Jane Mosse). Elizabeth's father gave her 523-acre Jericho plantation on 2 September, 1851, for a wedding present.

## THE LAWTON FAMILY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

### First Three Generations

Compiled by the Rev. Fr. Robert E. H. Peeples

IMMIGRANT: Capt. WILLIAM LAWTON, Planter, St. John's Parish, Edisto Island, Colleton County, died 9-15 October, 1757; married (1) MARY, daughter of Jeremiah Clarke, 4 children: Josiah (died unmarried), William, Jr. (died unmarried 1758), Sarah (born 1739, died 21 October, 1798) married John Seabrook and left descendants, Jeremiah (died unmarried before 20 May, 1762); (2) 1743-4 a daughter of Thomas Winborn, Planter, Wadmalaw Island, St. John's Parish, 2 children: Winborn (born Edisto Island, 1745, died James Island September 22, 1809) married Mrs. Mary Mathews (22 August, 1749 - 10 February, 1839, daughter of Jonathan Frampton) 3 children: Winborn, Jr. (1782 - 24 March, 1861), Beulah (married 29 January, 1801, John Hughes) and William; and Mary (died unmarried); (3) Mrs. MARY SAMS, widow of Paul Grimball and daughter of William Sams (c.1685 - c.1738) and Susannah Harrison. William Sams was son of Bonham (Bonum) Sams (baptized 2 February, 1663, No. Petherton Parish, Somerset, England, arrived S. C. 1681, son of Thomas and Mary Bagge Sam) and his 1st wife, Enstis Blake. William and Mary Sams Lawton had one child, Joseph (see below) and after William's death Mary married Samuel Fickling, moved from Edisto Island to Prince William's Parish, Granville County and died in 1804.

JOSEPH LAWTON (born Edisto Island 18 October, 1753, died Mulberry Grove Plantation, Black Swamp, near Robertville, S. C. 5 March, 1815) on 18 March, 1773 married SARAH ROBERT (born 6 February, 1755 St. James Parish, Santee, died at Transpine Plantation 6 October, 1839, daughter of Jacques and Sarah Jaudon Robert, whose father, Pierre Robert, Jr., fled from Basle, Switzerland to S. C. in 1686 with his father, Rev. Pierre Robert, French Huguenot Minister); their eleven children were all born at Mulberry Grove Plantation:

1. WILLIAM HENRY LAWTON (born 23 February, 1775, died 1 November, 1827) married 31 October, 1797 Catherine Maner, daughter of Capt. William & Jane Aseneth May Maner; seven children.
2. JOSEPH J. LAWTON (born 19 August, 1777, died 1859) married Phoebe (born 6 December, 1781) daughter of Dr. George Mosse (born Ireland 1742, died Black Swamp, Robertville 17 February, 1808) & Dorothy Phoebe Norton (born St. Helena's Island 10 November, 1751, died Black Swamp 1808, daughter of Jonathan Norton & Mary Ann Chaplin, daughter of John & Phoebe Ladson Chaplin of St. Helena's Parish, Beaufort District, S. C.); eight children.
3. MARY LAWTON (born 5 May, 1778) died in infancy.

4. MARY LAWTON (born 20 September, 1781) died in infancy.
5. BENJAMIN THEMISTOCLES D'ION LAWTON (born 22 December, 1782, died and buried Albany, Georgia 1846) married in 1803 Jane Mosse (born St. Helena's 27 December, 1783, buried Lawtonville Cemetery 1857), sister of Phoebe & Martha Mosse; eleven children.
6. CHARLOTTE ANNE LAWTON (born 17 September, 1785) married her 1st cousin, Rev. James Jehu Robert (born Robertville 4 November, 1781, died 19 January, 1852, son of John Robert, born Santee 13 July, 1742, died Robertville 25 February, 1826, and Elizabeth Dixon, granddaughter of II Landgrave Thomas Smith & his 2nd wife, Mary Hyrne, born 1690, daughter of Edward Hyrne); seven children.
7. THIRZA E. LAWTON (born 17 September, 1787, died 3 December, 1811 in the vicinity of Natchez, Miss., where her husband and her two brothers, Joseph and Benjamin T. D., had immigrated that year) married 18 June, 1806 at Black Swamp, Thomas Polhill II, son of Rev. Thomas & Rachel Patton Polhill; three children.
8. MAHALI LAWTON (born 14 September, 1789) died in infancy.
9. ALEXANDER JAMES LAWTON (born 21 November, 1790, died 8 April, 1876) married 15 November, 1809 Martha Mosse, born 5 September, 1789, sister of Phoebe and Jane Mosse; twelve children.
10. WINBORN ASA LAWTON (born 23 June, 1793, died Lawtonville 23 February, 1878) married (1) Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Cater Rhodes (born 25 June, 1776, died 25 February, 1823, daughter of Thomas Cater (1751-1803) and Rachel Miles (1755-1802), daughter of Capt. Silas & Elizabeth McPherson Rachel Miles (1755-1802), daughter of Capt. Silas & Elizabeth McPherson Miles), widow of Thomas Rhodes who died 25 April, 1809; 2 children; (2) Mrs. Perry; (3) Lucinda Landrum; five children.
11. SAMUEL JOHN LAWTON (born 22 June, 1796) died in infancy.