

Sherman could not burn their dreams



Photos courtesy of David Lauderdale
Dr. David Lauderdale

I've often wished I could have been there to see my family arrive in Charleston to begin a new life in a new world.

I picture it as a bustling, salty place on Nov. 1, 1817.

William and Jane Milling Lauderdale had come from Belfast, a voyage of six weeks. They landed with their four children and cuttings of the Irish broom of home.

Never could they have guessed that they would be swept into the inferno of America's Civil War.



DAVID LAUDERDALE
dlauderdale@islandpacket.com
843-706-8115

They had finally answered a plea from one of Jane's uncles. He needed help with his large farm in Fairfield County, above Columbia.

William was 55 and Jane was 46, so their dream of a more fulfilling life had to be for the children.

Thomas was the oldest at 24. He would marry and have a large farm but no children. He was pious in his long life, reading the Bible through 113 times, as well as the five-volume Scott's commentary.

Mary Ann, 15, would marry well and have five children. The baby, William, was 9. He would go off to Texas.



Please see DREAMS on 4A Jane Russell Lemmon Lauderdale

ISLAND PACKET 1 MAR 2015

DREAMS

Continued from 3A

David was almost 12 when they arrived. He would study medicine in Ohio and practice in Alabama and Mississippi for 22 years before coming back home to Winnsboro.

The best I can tell, my great-great-grandfather came home for love.

THRIFT

Jane Russell was married to Montgomery Lemmon when they made their journey from Ireland to Charleston in 1844.

A week after arriving, she gave birth. That set the tone for

her remarkable life.

Montgomery established a dry goods store in Winnsboro, but five years later he died.

Soon, Dr. David Lauderdale came home. When he married Jane, he was 48 and she was 30, with children ages 8, 7 and 3.

He set up an apothecary in the store, and they changed the name of it to "D. Lauderdale."

Their house was attached to the back, and it hugged the railroad tracks in a village known for blue granite and a town clock in a building that looks like Independence Hall.

David had a cultivated mind and tenacious memory. He loved books and wrote poetry. He could recite the Bible,

Shakespeare, Byron and Milton. His library included Francis Bacon's "Essays." He invested in the South Carolina Railroad Co. and liked to attend its meetings in Charleston.

Jane enjoyed trips to New York City to buy the finest millinery for her store.

All of this surprises me because David and Jane had six children in 13 years, the last arriving when she was 44 and he was 62.

Their lives were tied to commerce, which in a rural county was often tied to the weather.

They found solace in the church, joy in the family and prosperity through Scotch-Irish thrift.

But in a single day, 150 years ago, it all came to ruin.

HOMELESS

U.S. Army Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman headed north after leaving Columbia in ashes, mere weeks before the brutal Civil War would end.

His next stop was Winnsboro.

David wrote in his family Bible:

"On Tuesday, February 21st, 1865, between 10 and 11 o'clock a.m. my dwelling house and store in Winnsboro, S.C., containing much valuable merchandise, a fine medical and general library, household and kitchen furniture as well as my

kitchen and smokehouse were burnt by the Yankee Army. The fire was communicated by cotton belonging to John McCally's house which was set on fire in his cellar. In a single hour was thus destroyed the earnest labors of years, and myself, wife and children rendered houseless and homeless."

Our family history says that Jane got her Irish up when the store was being looted. She brought a tobacco box down with all her might on the head of one of the robbers. She could easily have been killed with impunity.

Later that day she picked up kernels of corn left in the dust.

But they would regroup and

eventually rebuild. The store lived to sustain four generations, closing in the 1970s.

I told this story at the rehearsal dinner when our son got married.

It was not because I have an affection for the Lost Cause.

It was because I wanted Burke and April to know that they may get cut off at the knees in ways they could not possibly imagine on that joyf night.

But if it happens, it's not the end of the story.

Follow columnist and senior editor David Lauderdale at twitter.com/ThatsLauderdale and facebook.com/david.lauderdale.16.