



Majestic avenue of oaks that once lead to the Lawton house.

(Photo by Bill Dibbie)

THE LAWTON LOOK

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The proliferations of the surname Lawton on Hilton Head Island, e.g. Lawton Creek, Lawton Wood, Lawton Fields, Lawton Ditch, Lawton Pond, Lawton Road (realigned former Lawton Avenue which originally paralleled on Pope Avenue), Lawton Villas and Lawton Plantation, have aroused the curiosity of Island lovers. Why is the name Lawton spread across the southern part of the maps of Hilton Head produced during the federal occupation years 1861-1868?

Well, *cherchez la femme!*

The lady was an Island-born beauty, a brunette of Irish and English extraction. Her father, militia Captain James Stoney, a life-long Episcopalian, had been settled at Otterburn Plantation on the west bank of Broad Creek since his 1793 marriage to his first love, Elizabeth Mosse. They had a town house in Beaufort, a summer retreat from Otterburn.

Of their fifteen children they raised only two! The first, a son born in 1795, became the stalwart Dr. George Mosse Stoney who would inherit Otterburn in 1827 and about whom we know a great deal.

A daughter, born 24 Feb. 1807, is our heroine, *Martha Sarah*, named for her two youngest Mosse aunts.

When Martha's brother George Mosse Stoney received his M.D. degree in 1815

and married Catherine Adams Jenkins of Jenkins Island Plantation, she was pleased to have a sister. Their three babies, born 1817, 1819 and 1821, were the source of still more delight to her. So when handsome and wealthy planter Thomas Henry Barksdale, although twelve years her senior and an Episcopalian, proposed marriage, she readily accepted. They began keeping house in his recently completed Scull Creek Plantation House. Thomas Henry had a double avenue of *Magnolia Trees* planted from the house to its Scull Creek landing just to please Martha.

As a planter of sea island cotton Thomas Henry Barksdale was a great success, quickly adding 290-acre Baldwin Plantation in 1826 to his 2600-acre Scull Creek Plantation with its 80 slaves. Martha's inheritance was 1820-acre Calibogia Plantation with its 156 slaves, needed for its extensive rice fields. Calibogia Plantation, now part of Sea Pines, was composed of Lots 40 through 44 as shown on Dr. Mosse's 1783 survey of Landgrave Bayley's 1698 Barony. In 1832 it stretched from Stoney's Braddock's Point Plantation to Pope's Point Comfort Plantation, from the Atlantic to Broad Creek, including Calibogue Cay, then simply named Long Island.

Since Thomas and Martha (Stoney) Barksdale had no children, they informally adopted Josephine Barksdale Pol-

hill, infant orphan of one of Thomas' relatives. Thomas has been described by a somewhat less than objective writer as "a worldly young man." His estate inventory included "three liquor cases, a thermometer, one sword cane, one silk umbrella and a microscope." plus \$4,410.00 in cash when he died intestate in August 1832 when only 36 years old. Three of his Barksdale relatives immediately sued Martha and won substantial court-ordered settlements in cash which were far beyond even the vast estate's ability to pay.

The beleaguered young widow named her uncle, Col. Alexander Lawton, executor of her deceased husband's estate, and with her foster daughter, took up residence at her Aunt, Martha's Mulberry Grove Plantation near Robertville. A Lawton cousin, Elias Gabriel Jaudon, Jr., of French Huguenot extraction, was sent as Overseer of Martha's Calibogia Plantation where an estate livestock inventory, still extant in *The Lawton Papers* in the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, showed 63 cows, 33 sheep, 31 hogs and 10 goats on hand in November 1833.

Col. Lawton on 12 Dec. 1832 ordered 2600-acre Scull Creek Plantation sold to satisfy the court order. On Thursday, 17 Jan. 1833, his first cousin, planter William Seabrook of Edisto Island, who had entertained the Marquis de Lafay-

ette at his Mansion House there in 1825, bought 1600 acres which he renamed Seabrook Plantation, now included in Hilton Head Plantation. Squire Pope bought the remaining 1000 acres with its great Scull Creek House, which he renamed Cotton Hope Plantation. Martha brought in all the Scull Creek House furnishings and moved them to Robertville. She also had Col. Lawton draw up her will in which she provided \$1,000 to support a "ministry at the Hilton Head Baptist Church" and \$600 for Beaufort Baptist Church. In 1835 she helped support a missionary to Negroes on Hilton Head, the Rev. Mr. Moody.

Martha also visited her Aunt Phoebe and her husband, the Rev. Joseph James Lawton, at their plantation on the headwaters of the Coosawhatchie River in Barnwell District. There she began to take an interest in the work as well as the person of her young cousin, Rev. Joseph Alexander Lawton. Born in December 1811 on the banks of the Mississippi River near Natchez, he had graduated from Madison University in New York and had been ordained to the ministry in Black Swamp Baptist Church.

In April 1836 Martha became a *Lawton* when she and the Rev. Joseph were united in marriage, a marriage which lasted 44 years. The Rev. Joseph had a small house built next to his father's home and there they lived until after their son was born in 1838. He was given a distinctly non-Lawton but Biblical name of Samuel. A second son was born 31 August 1841 and received another non-Lawton name, Paul.

In 1837 the Rev. Joseph authorized his cousin Elias Jaudon, Overseer at Calibogia Plantation, "to let the negroes go to town (i.e., Savannah) for their Christmas." They probably traveled on the steamer *William Seabrook* aboard which in 1838 were shipped the 44 bales of fine sea island cotton produced at Calibogia that year. After drayage, portage, weighing, storing and factor's commission, the firm of Taylor & Lawton (another of Uncle Alec's ventures) remitted a net of \$4,440.37. Tobacco and rice were also grown commercially, marketed in Savannah.

The Rev. Joseph had 10,362 board feet of lumber shipped to Calibogia and there built a substantial dwelling facing Lawton Creek at the site of present Six Oaks Cemetery. It was surrounded by the usual slave cottages, barns, smokehouses, stables and a Baptist church. In the last he was a regular preacher, often assisted by his uncle, the Rev. Winborn Asa Lawton. He also served Baptist churches on Daufuskie Island

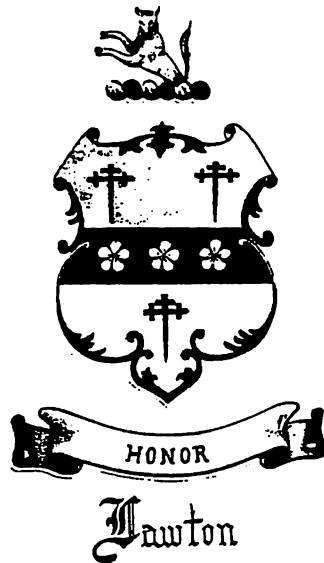
and Smyrna, Mount Arnon, Philadelphia, Allendale and Corcord in lower Barnwell District.

Using funds generated by Calibogia Plantation, the Rev. Joseph and Martha bought 1205 acres adjoining property he had inherited near present Allendale. There they built a handsome country seat felicitously named Rose Lawn Plantation. Its high ceilings, walls covered with ancestral portraits, wide verandahs shading the tall, floor-length windows, and massive mahogany furnishings bear witness still to its unbroken history. There in September 1849, their son, Paul Stoney Lawton, died shortly after his eighteenth birthday. Typhoid was a fearsome killer in those days.

The War began. When Col. Judson Kilpatrick's Yankee cavalry overwhelmed the area in February 1865, they ruthlessly burned a neighboring home despite the fact that it was bulging with women and children refugees from Beaufort District. These were forcibly removed and restrained from salvaging food, clothes and furnishings during the conflagration.

But Rose Lawn survived. Its prematurely white-haired and white-bearded (he was then only 53) master stood midway the wide entrance stairs to the piazza, dramatically bared his chest and declaimed:

"I am but a preacher of the Gospel with a wife and child to provide for. This is our home. Spare it! Shoot me, if you must, but spare my home!"



Perhaps it was his oft-practiced pulpit oratory which persuaded the Yankee bummers. But Rose Lawn was saved and is still the home of Lawton descendants.

Calibogia Plantation on Hilton Head, by then known locally as "Lawton's," did not fare so well. It fell into Federal

hands on 7 Nov. 1861 and was redeemed with difficulty by its owners, Samuel George Lawton and his foster sister Josephine Barksdale Polhill Lawton, under the Redemption Act of 1874. Their difficulty was in borrowing the money to pay the accumulated taxes and redemption fees. But after they reacquired it, "Lawton's" could no longer be made to yield a profit.

An era and a race of giants were dying. Martha's Uncle Alec Lawton died in 1876, Dr. Ben Lawton in 1879, Martha herself on 12 April 1880, buried in Smyrna Churchyard, an exile from her native Hilton Head Island. Her widow and Martha's beloved foster-daughter Josephine decided to share each other's closing years and were married.

In 1889 "Lawton's" 1820 acres were sold at public auction to satisfy their mortgage holder. Mrs. Harriett Brook Lawton, who was still unwilling to let Calibogia pass from Lawton ownership, bought it. But it still could not be worked profitably. The end had come. Will Clyde's offer to buy "Lawton's" included a small profit and Hattie too. it.

Josephine Barnsdale Polhill Lawton wept copiously as she signed the quit claim deed, but the Lawton name remains an indelible part of the Hilton Head Island story to this day.