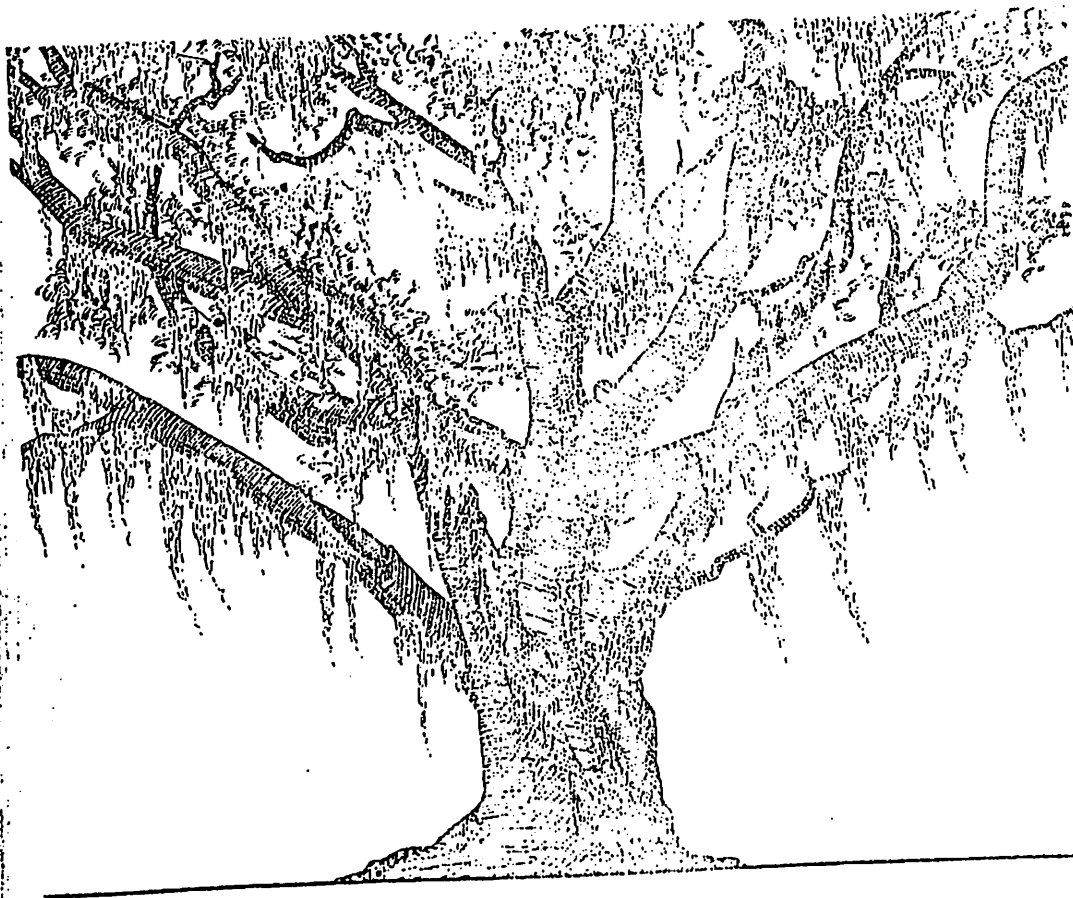


Prince William's Parish and Plantations

By JOHN R. TODD AND FRANCIS M. HUTSON

With an Introduction by A. S. Salley



GARRETT & MASSIE · RICHMOND · VIRGINIA

Landgrave Edmund Bellingin is
our forefather through the line
of Mary Elizabeth Cate Rhodes
sawter, our great-great-great-
grandmother.

Pierce Butler is described in *Documents of United States on Formation of the Union*, page 107, as being of Irish descent, born about 1747. His business is given as that of a planter. He also served in the General Assembly of South Carolina and afterwards as a United States Senator. In 1787 he was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of the United States.

Major Butler had other holdings in South Carolina, including what is now Williman's Island in this parish, which probably accounts for Brewton Plantation, gotten through his wife, not having been kept very long.

From Major Butler the plantation passed into the hands of the McPherson family. Although we know very little of the early history of this family, some anecdotes have been handed down through the generations, which allow us to look "behind the scenes" of the history of the early days in this country. We know that the first McPherson to come to this country was James,⁵ known as The Immigrant, who came from Ba-de-noch, Invernesshire, Scotland, the seat of the chief of the Clan McPherson. The Immigrant had two sons, James and Isaac. His eldest son, James, born in 1688, died in 1771 at the age of eighty-three, having achieved great fame as an Indian fighter. One of the stories told, by descendants in this country, is that during the Indian warfare his home was besieged by Indians; his wife Rachel assisted the defenders by loading the muskets and passing them to the men. During the pauses, in her excitement, she involuntarily kept passing her hand over her hair, pushing it back. Shortly afterward a son was born to her whose hair stood on end. No one knows to which of her sons this story relates, but we do know she was the grandmother of James Elliott McPherson, the first owner of Brewton.

Another interesting story is told, of Susan Miles McPherson (wife of General John McPherson of Revolutionary fame, who was the grandson of the same James McPherson). She was on her way to Laurium Plantation, in her carriage, when an Indian appeared on the road. Unable to speak English, he motioned her to follow him, which she did, and came upon an Indian woman with a new-born baby girl, a daughter of one of the Indian chiefs. Mrs.

⁵The earliest record of a McPherson in South Carolina so far located is a warrant for 500 acres of land issued to William McPherson, January 10, 1705.

The 1771 obituary of Capt. James McPhersons of Buckfield Plantation, Prince William Parish, says he was born in S.C. 1688; his father was the immigrant James McPherson from Badamsch, Invernesshire, Scotland, younger brother of the then Cluny.

McPherson had them taken to Laurium where the woman died the following day and was buried on the place in a mound. The baby was raised on the plantation, playing with the children of the McPherson family. The Indians came each year to decorate the grave and see the child, and they always brought pieces of pottery and presents for the children of the McPherson family. When the girl was old enough the Indians took her away.

The first McPherson to mention Brewton in his will was James Elliott McPherson, and, incidentally, this is the first written record we have in which the name Brewton is used in connection with the property. If the name was given the place by Mary Butler, as has been previously suggested, it probably showed on the deed of transfer from Butler to McPherson. That transfer took place after Beaufort District got a register of mesne conveyances in 1783. These records, however, were destroyed when the Beaufort County courthouse was burned several years after the Confederate War.

James Elliott McPherson was born November 27, 1769; died March 4, 1834, and is buried in the Brewton graveyard. He was the son of Isaac McPherson, born 1734; died 1787. This Isaac McPherson could not have owned the plantation, as he died during the Butler ownership. Therefore, his son James Elliott McPherson must have acquired the property from the Butlers between 1797—at which time it is shown on the above-mentioned plat as Butler property—and 1803, the date of death shown on the tomb of Isaac McPherson, born July 24, 1781; died December 5, 1803, which is the earliest McPherson grave in the Brewton graveyard.

It may safely be assumed that James Elliott McPherson was the first owner of Brewton to make the plantation his principal residence. He styled himself as of Brewton Plantation, whereas all previous owners, the Bulls, Brewtons, and Butlers apparently had their country seats on other properties owned by them at the same time. So we may surmise that the Brewton house spot has been used for the residence of an owner since approximately 1800.

As no picture can be found of the Brewton Plantation house as it appeared before the Confederate War, no description of it can be obtained. However, taking into consideration the wealth of James McPherson, according to his