

EDWARD HARDEN PEEPLES

Planter of St. Peter's Parish,  
Beaufort District, South Carolina

By

Rev. Robert E. H. Peeples

1962





Edward Harden Peeples  
Born: Prince William Parish 9 Oct. 1811  
Died: St. Peter's Parish 24 Nov. 1892  
and his wife,  
Charlotte Esther Lawton  
Born: St. Peter's Parish 2 Nov. 1813  
Died: Glen Springs, S. C. 16 Aug. 1886

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Family Background

The Peeples family of South Carolina descends from David Peebles, a Gentleman-in-Waiting to King Charles I of England, who as a royalist officer was condemned to the block by Cromwell but escaped to the Colony of Virginia where he patented 833 acres in July 1650 in what is now Prince George County. He rose to the rank of Captain in the Virginia Militia, was Vestryman in Westover Parish and died in 1657. David Peebles was accompanied to Virginia by his son, William, born at Fife, Scotland in 1635; in 1670 he patented an additional 873 acres 10 miles south of his father's grant, on the headwaters of the same creek. William's will was proved 3 June 1695; he left at least three sons: William II, David and Henry. William II left at least six sons all born in Virginia: Abraham, William III, Thomas, John, Peter and Joseph. Abraham, a loyalist during the Revolutionary War period, moved from Prince George County, Virginia to South Carolina, leaving six known sons: David, William, Isham, Lewis, Henry and Reuben.

The last named William Peebles, moved from Prince George County, Virginia to Brunswick County and thence to Pitt County, North Carolina. In 1765 300 acres in Richland County, S. C. which had been patented to his brother, David, were taxed to him. He left four sons: Henry, John, Isham and William, all of whom spelled their name Peeples.

John Peeples of Cheraw District, S. C. enlisted as a Private in the 1st S. C. Regt. in 1775, married in 1776 Catherine, dau. of Alexander McBride at McBride's Ford, S. C., their son, Jr., being born in 1777. He was promoted to Corporal 19 Apr. 1778, discharged 14 July 1778. General Sumpter wrote that John Peeples served 10 months as private

(over)

and "received one grown Negro as pay and bounty." In <sup>1781</sup> 1779 a dau., Mary, was born. <sup>Also</sup> In 1781 John served 60 days in the Revolutionary army. In 1782 he served 34 days as 1st Lt. in Gen. Francis Marion's Brigade. A dau., Nancy Ann, was born in 1784, a son, Jesse, in 1786. In 1787 John made claim for his pay as Lt. through Andrew Hunter as agent; he was appointed Commissioner of Roads in Cheraw District. In 1789 John bought farm equipment and four negroes in Winton (present Barnwell) County and in 1790 was settled in Prince William's Parish when the Census was taken; a son, William H., was born in 1790. John's brother, William, "late a soldier in the 5th S. C. Reg't." died in 1793 and John, as brother and heir, transferred his right of Administration of the estate to Capt. William Standard of Darlington County, Cheraw District on 29 May. In 1792 John Peeples received grants of 942 and 615 acres in Beaufort District, in 1797 a grant of 447 acres, in 1801 995 acres, in 1803 780 acres; he appeared with his family in the 1800 Census in Prince William's Parish but died before 1810 and was buried in an unmarked grave in the Peeples Cemetery near present Sand Hill Church wherein many members of the family of his uncle, Isham Peeples, are also buried; this is near present Varnville, S. C.

Jesse Peeples (c.1786-1813) was the second son of John Peeples and his wife, Catherine McBride; he married on <sup>22 Feb. 1808, the licensed dated</sup> 13 Feb. 1808, in Savannah, Georgia, Gertrude Elizabeth McCoy (7 Oct. 1788 - 24 Dec. 1860), dau. of Henry McCoy and his wife, Esther Oberon. Family tradition says that Henry McCoy (McKoy) emigrated from Ireland to Virginia and travelled <sup>Capt. Henry McKoy fought in the Battle of Wiggins Hill;</sup> on horseback to Savannah, Ga.; his Will was recorded in Chatham County 8 August 1821. Annals of Ga. Vol. I, p. 181, 21 July 1789 refers to the service of Henry McCoy to the State of Georgia in the Quartermaster's Department. Jesse Peeples seems to have been involved in business in Savannah although he owned extensive lands in Prince William's Parish where he was killed by being thrown from his horse while

hunting with other members of his family in 1813; he was buried beside his father and a handsome stone bears the legend: "Killed by fall from horse - 1813". on 9 Oct. 1811 Jesse and Gertrude Elizabeth became the parents of their first child, EDWARD HARDEN PEEPLES, subject of this paper. He was named for Maj. Edward Harden whose wife, Jane Reid, was a sister of Robert Reid, first husband of Nancy Ann Peeples who was Jesse' older sister. Major Harden ultimately died in Savannah, Ga. and his brother, General William Harden, under whom he had fought in the Revolutionary War, moved to Athens, Ga.

### EARLY YEARS

Edward Harden Peeples was born in Prince William's Parish 9 Oct. 1811 on land inherited by his father, Jesse Peeples, from his father, Lt. John Peeples, within two miles of the present town of Varnville, on a branch of the Coosawhatchie River. Jesse Peeples was killed in a fall from his horse while hunting in 1813 and his second son, Jesse Williamson Peeples was born posthumously the same year. Jesse's widow, Gertrude Elizabeth McCoy Peeples, married, <sup>29 June 1815</sup> Nathan Johnston <sup>of Mexico plantation, St. Peter's Parish</sup> (1793-26 June 1869) ~~a few years later~~; he was the son of Jonas Johnston (19 Oct. 1763-17 Mar. 1845) and his wife, Elizabeth Tuten (26 Apr. 1770-16 July 1837), dau. of William and Hemina Tuten. Jonas Johnston was the son of Nathan Johnston who came to South Carolina in 1768 from North Carolina. Edward Harden Peeples was moved from the east side of the Coosawhatchie River to the Johnston plantation on the old Orangeburg Stagecoach Road some seven miles north of Lawtonville; his stepfather, Nathan Johnston, became Executor of his estate and managed it until Edward reached his majority in 1831. During those years Edward acquired several half-brothers and sisters: Jonas Johnston <sup>m. Rebecca Hamilton (3 June 1826 - 7 July 1882)</sup> (who grew up and moved to Texas), William C. Johnston (1823-8 Jan. 1894), <sup>Mariah</sup> Salina Houston Johnston who grew up to marry <sup>Edward's aunt</sup> ~~Lawrence~~ Youmans, Jr., <sup>20 Feb. 1805 + 17 Mar. 1873</sup> <sup>Son of Mary Peeples (1781 + 5 Feb. 1839) and Wm Youmans (1777 + 16 Apr. 1850)</sup> <sup>23 Oct. 1833 William</sup> <sup>Cuyler</sup> <sup>buried Lawtonville</sup> <sup>18 Apr 1818 + 31 Oct. 1893</sup> (over)

Nathan Henry Johnston (1 Mar. 1828-12 Aug. 1903) who grew up to become a Doctor of Medicine, and Franklin Johnston (1835-1899). An uncle of Edward's stepfather, Amos Johnston, who served as Senator from St. Peter's Parish, donated four acres on the Orangeburg Road "for religious and educational purposes" and erected thereon a clap-board building known as the "Republican Church", a union Church which could be used by all denominations, and this is where Edward worshipped. It was in time absorbed by the Baptists and named the Lawtonville Baptist Church; Edward was baptized there when he was 16. He secured his education at a neighborhood school.

CHARLOTTE ESTHER LAWTON

It was probably at Church that Edward first saw Charlotte Esther Lawton (2 Nov. 1813-16 Aug. 1886), dau. of Benjamin Themistocles D'Ion Lawton (born 22 Dec. 1782 at Mulberry Grove Plantation, Black Swamp, St. Peter's Parish; died 18 Apr. 1846 and was buried in Albany, Georgia where he was visiting his dau., Mary Elizabeth, wife of Dr. Theodore Dehon Mathews; he was a son of Joseph Lawton (born 18 Oct. 1753 at the Edisto Island Plantation home of his father, Capt. William Lawton; died 5 Mar. 1815 at his Mulberry Grove Plantation; he was a Justice of the Peace - see Files AA 2211 et. seq. S.C. Archives Dept. - and a Revolutionary War officer - see "Memoirs of Georgia," Atlanta 1895, Vol. II, pp.396-7 and DAR No. 413638). Joseph Lawton married 18 Mar. 1773 Sarah Robert (born 6 Feb. 1755 at St. James', Santee, S.C.; died at Transpine Plantation 6 Oct. 1839; she was a dau. of Jacques de Robert and his wife, Sarah Jaudon; she was a great-granddau. of the Rev. Pierre Robert, French Huguenot Minister who fled from Basle, Switzerland to South Carolina in 1686, with his son, Pierre Robert, Jr. who was the father of Jacques Robert.)

27 Dec.

Benjamin T. D'Ion Lawton in 1803 married Jane Mosse (1783-23 May

Auditor General's Account Books (Apr. 1778 - Feb. 1780), S.C. Archives, has audited pay bills for detachment of Col. Bull's Regiment for duty at Purrysburgh for Capt. Wm Stafford, Lieut. JOSEPH LAWTON, etc. Joseph received \$49-5 shillings for service 5 July - 11 July 1778 (p.91)

1857), fourth of the seven daughters of Dr. George Mosse, born in Ireland 1748 where <sup>it is said</sup> he graduated from the University of Dublin in medicine; Dr. Mosse helped organize the First Baptist Church in Savannah, Ga. on 26 Oct. 1800, serving as its first deacon; he organized the old Savannah Medical College and was a charter member of the first medical society in Georgia; he died on 17 Feb. 1808 at his Black Swamp Plantation which he had bought in 1806; he <sup>is said to</sup> have served as Surgeon to the Continental Army and <sup>later</sup> as Port Physician in Savannah. In May 1781 he <sup>at the Battle of Camden where he served as Surgeon</sup> was captured by the British and placed aboard the prison ships, <sup>"Pack Horse" and "Torbay"</sup> in Charleston Harbor from whence he escaped; see Charleston "TIMES" 4 Apr. 1808 for his Obituary; also see N.C. Records Vol. 17, p. 1046, G.G. Smith's "History of Georgia and Georgia People", pp. 591-627, and DAR No. 56186. Dr. Mosse married Dorothy Phoebe Norton (born 10 Nov. 1751 St. Helena's Island, baptized St. Helena's Episcopal Church, Beaufort by the Rev. Mr. Peasely 30 Mar. 1752), dau. of Jonathan Norton, Vestryman of St. Helena's Parish, born 14 July 1705, died 28 Apr. 1774, and his wife, Mary Ann Chaplin (1716-10 Jan. 1764) whom he married in St. Helena's Church 16 May 1732. Mary Ann Chaplin Norton was the dau. of John Chaplin (1682-5 Jan. 1752) and his wife, Phoebe Ladson (1691-1764), dau. of John Ladson who died on John's Island <sup>1 Sept.</sup> ~~in~~ 1698 and his wife, Mary Stanyarne Ladson (1667-8 Dec. 1707).

When Charlotte Esther Lawton fell in love with Edward Harden Peeples at age 16, her parents threatened to disinherit her if she married him. Nevertheless the couple were married <sup>20 April (Bible record)</sup> ~~in 1820~~ and the 19 year old Edward began planting his lands which he was not able to take legal possession of until 1831 when he reached his majority. He had inherited only three slaves and his wife had come to him without dowry in accordance with her parents' threat. Their first child, <sup>Wilmington</sup> Thomas W. was born 10 July 1832 and <sup>family tradition says that</sup> shortly after that her mother

relented and sent her six slaves, including her former personal maid. Their second child, William Brisbane was born 9 Nov. 1833; he later married Susan Catherine McLaughlin and died 5 Apr. 1892, leaving seven children.

In 1833 Edward Harden Peeples signed a release for Wathan Johnston who had served as Administrator of the Estate of Jesse Peeples on behalf of Edward Harden and his brother, Jesse Williamson Peeples, certifying that he had had full possession and use of his estate for the past three years. The instrument was signed 20 Jan. 1833, witnessed by Thomas Willingham and R. T. Lawton, and is in the possession of the writer at this present. It was executed in St. Peter's Parish but notes that the estate involved is in Prince William's Parish. However, Edward and Charlotte lived in St. Peter's Parish and eventually disposed of their property in Prince William's Parish.

On 23 Dec. 1834 a daughter, Elizabeth Stoney, was born; she later married her cousin, John Lawton (25 Sept. 1830-18 June 1908) and died *523 acres - "Jericho", given to her by her father for "love and regards" 2 Sept. 1851* on their Plantation near the present site of the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest on 13 Feb. 1910, leaving seven children.

An unnamed son was born 13 June 1836, dying the same day; their fifth child, Jane Lawton, was born 16 July 1837. The sixth child was Phoebe Sarah, born 23 Apr. 1839, married 24 Feb. 1853 John Shorten Oswald (14 Dec. 1830-18 Sept. 1901), died 11 Feb. 1910, leaving nine children.

The month of October 1840 was saddened by the death of their first child, Thomas, on the first day thereof, and their fifth child, Jane Lawton, on the ninth; both children were buried in Lawtonville Cemetery. A seventh child, Mariah W., born 20 Aug. 1841, lived only until 4 Nov. 1842. Ella C., the eighth child, was born 2 May 1843 and died 8 Sept. 1849.

Mary Harden, born 17 Mar. 1845, was the ninth child; she lived to



marry Dr. Jesse Miller; they had one child, Lucille, born 20 Dec. 1873, who married her first cousin, William Benjamin Oswald (16 Jan. 1858-31 Aug. 1937).

Edward Harden Peeples, Jr., their 10th child, was born 1 Dec. 1846, died 20 Sept. 1902, having married Caroline Reynolds (31 Oct. 1851-3 Mar. 1918) by whom he left three children.

An eleventh child, Anna Cordelia, who was born 16 Oct. 1848, died 24 Jan. 1891, having married Joseph Valentine Morrison (30 Sept. 1843-14 July 1924) by whom she left ten children.

Edward Harden Peeples does not appear in the 1830 Census as head of a family but his father-in-law, Benjamin T. D'Ion Lawton, is listed with 17 male slaves and 11 female slaves. When Edward Harden reported to the 1840 Census Taker in St. Peter's Parish he had 25 male and 25 female slaves; his father-in-law had apparently retired from planting since he reported only 7 male and 8 female slaves.

In his History of Lawtonville Baptist Church which was published in the 1893 Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association, W. H. Dowling wrote: "About 50 years ago the present Church was erected, Edward H. Peeples, a prominent member and Deacon, having the contract." This building apparently survived the War Between the States, walthough the historian noted that "the records are all destroyed".

The twelfth child was John Williamson, born 27 Oct. 1850, who married 8 April 1869 Eliza Jane ("Lila") Rhodes (6 Oct. 1852-28 Mar. 1915), dau. of the Hon. George Rhodes, <sup>of the Hermitage Plantation, Lawtonville</sup> Signer of the Ordinance of Secession, and Eliza Jane Robert, born 30 Jan. 1810, dau. of the Rev. James Jehu Robert (4 Nov. 1781-19 Jan. 1852, who reported 116 male and 101 female slaves in the 1830 Census) and his wife, Charlotte Anne Lawton (born 17 Sept. 1785, a sister of Benjamin T. D'Ion Lawton). Through her father, Lila Rhodes Peeples was a direct descendent of Landgrave Edmund Bellinger, of Edmund Bohun, Esq., "The Diarist", Chief Justice of

Carolina who died in the Yellow Fever epidemic in Charleston on 5 Oct. 1699, and of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Glouster, son of King Edward III of England. Through her mother Lilah Rhodes Peeples was descended from Landgrave Thomas Smith, Governor of Carolina in 1693, and his son, the Second Landgrave Thomas Smith who died at Yeamans Hall Plantation, Charleston in 1738. Governor Smith was buried in 1694 at his plantation, Medway, oldest brick house in South Carolina, built 1686.

Edward Harden and Charlotte Esther Lawton Peeples had three additional children for a total of fifteen: Dorothea Martha (25 Aug. 1853-8 Sept. 1854), Irene Jessey (31 July 1855-23 July 1856) and an unnamed still-born son, 22 July 1857.

In 1857 Edward Harden completed and occupied the finest home in the Lawtonville-Peeplesville area, located approximately two miles north of Lawtonville Church but on the opposite side of the road. Lila Rhodes Peeples, in describing her father-in-law's home many years afterwards recalled that its drawing room and parlors boasted matching gilt pier mirrors which had been made to order in Philadelphia and brought up the River from Savannah at a cost of \$1000 each. It ~~was apparently not the custom to give names to the~~ <sup>has been impossible to discover the old names of most of the</sup> plantations in the Lawtonville-Peeplesville area although the names of many ~~similar~~ <sup>similar</sup> establishments in the Robertville area are still recalled.

During the War Edward Harden accepted a Commission as Captain of the men over fifty years of age; he also served as Chairman of the Soldiers' Relief Fund. In later years he was always affectionately referred to by everyone as "Captain Meddie". Dowling says that both Edward Harden Peeples and the Hon. George Rhodes "refugeed before Sherman, but before the end of 1865 each had returned". He further wrote:

"Captain Edward Harden Peeples, one of the four who served the Church so zealously in their day, died at the age of 84. He was a

worker in the field and a worker in the Church, and no community ever had a more obliging neighbor, nor any Church a more zealous member. After the War he returned home and found only the ashes of an elegant home, and the destruction of a princely estate. But he toiled on and made life easier for many who still cherish his memory."

Dowling further notes that Mrs. E. H. Peeples was president of the Female Missionary Society of the Church "for years, and now the mantle of the mother falls on the shoulders of the daughter, Mrs. John Lawton." Charlotte Esther Lawton<sup>Peeples</sup> died while spending the summer at Glen Springs, South Carolina, a cool watering place in the foothills, 16 Aug. 1886.

After the death of Charlotte Esther, Edward Harden married her sister, Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Lawton, widow of Dr. Theodore Dehon Matthews who had died in 1860; she survived her second husband also, dying 31 May 1906. Edward was at least 76 years old when this marriage took place. After his great mansion was burned by Sherman in 1865 he had built a small house on the same site but later had moved to a more substantial two-story house with a broad piazza across the front, which he built on a plantation about one-half mile south of Lawtonville <sup>a house later known as "The Parsonage".</sup> Church. The widow of Frank Johnston, younger half-brother of Edward, told this story of Edward:

"A small fire broke out in the press of his cotton gin and quickly the flames spread to the shingle roof. Although he was an octogenarian, "Neddie" sprang upon a nearby horse and rode swiftly to the ginhouse, shouting for one of the men to climb to the roof and tear out the burning shingles. No one would take the risk, so "Neddie" climbed up quite agilely and pulled out the blazing shingles, thus saving the ginhouse and all the valuable cotton and machinery there."

Something of the disastrous quality of the damage inflicted by Sherman's army and the effects of the legalized federal robbing of the planters in freeing their slaves without just recompense is indicated

by the Census of 1860 showing Edward Harden with Real Estate valued at \$80,000 and a Personal Estate of \$96,000, the 1870 Census showing \$12,000 and \$4,000 for these same items.

It should not be supposed, however, that the War put a stop to Edward's business activities. Beaufort County records indicate that on 3 Nov. 1866 Edward bought 810 acres on Black Creek, a branch of Coosawhatchie Swamp, from Shadrach J. Fitts for \$1284; this addition joined property he already held. Three years later on 30 Sept. 1869 he sold 403 acres in Lawton Township to William McNeel for \$1269.

Edward's generosity to his children was prodigious, as exemplified by his gift "for love and esteem to my daughter Anna Cordelia Morrison and \$1 paid by Joseph Valentine Morrison" of 504 acres "bounded north by Gillisonville Road, south by lands of Wm. and Allen Causey, east by Grassey Road and lands of Mrs. Sanders, west by lands of George Rhodes" on 30 Sept. 1869. To the Lawtonville School Committee he also deeded the lot on which the school building stood on 7 Dec. 1872 "to be used exclusively for the education of white children".

A photograph of Edward Harden and Charlotte Esther Lawton Peeples taken shortly before her death is in the possession of the writer; an oil painting of their dau., Elizabeth Peeples Lawton, is in the possession of Mrs. C. Montague Clarke, Estill, S. C.; likenesses of John Williamson Peeples and others of their children may be found in other homes in the community. Captain Neddie's desk is presently owned by a great-great-grandson, Dr. Paul W. Peeples. His poster bed, made in 1821, which he subsequently gave to his daughter Elizabeth in 1851, is owned by the author.