



# Journal

February 2014

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**Dear Aiken County Historical Society Member:**

Thank you very much to Mr. Bob Harrington for being our guest speaker at our meeting in September. He had some great memories from his more than 60 years of being associated with Aiken Prep School. Thanks also to Kitty Gordon for her assistance with the meeting and allowing us to use the beautiful auditorium at Mead Hall Episcopal School (the Old Prep School). I must also mention the Mead Hall students who gave the tours of the school after the meeting. They are wonderful young men and ladies who were great ambassadors for their school.

Thanks for all who have paid their 2014 membership dues. Your support means so much to our organization. For those that would like to become members, there is a membership form in the journal. Please note starting this past January 1st, the ACHS has done away with single (\$15) and family (\$20) memberships. The minimum membership is now \$25.

**The Aiken County Historical Society is seeking several new Board members. Please call me at 649-6050. The Board only meets 2 or 3 times a year, so your time commitment is minimal.**

Please make plans to attend our general meeting on Sunday, February 16, at the Aiken County Historical Museum. At 2:30 the 92 year old Ms. Helga Hulse will perform "incidental" music until 3:00 pm when Dr. Jim Farmer will discuss William Gregg, Southern Industrialist, and his Aiken plantation home, Kalmia. After Jim's talk we will unveil an official State historical marker for Kalmia, our 20th historical marker since 1999.

Also later, we plan to unveil a historical marker for the Pine Lawn Cemetery (formerly known as the Aiken Colored Cemetery) on Hampton Avenue. The Historic Aiken Foundation paid for one-half of that marker. We will let you know those details.

Allen Riddick  
*President*  
Aiken County Historical Society

# **Gregg's House is Long Gone, But its Site is Among Our Most Historic**

**By Jim Farmer**

Anyone who has been given a strict time limit, say five minutes, to deal with a topic that one could easily take up an hour, can imagine my frustration when confronting the Twitter-like word limit imposed by South Carolina's historical marker program. Actually, my limit, in writing the text of the "Kalmia" marker, was 432 characters, much more generous than Twitter's 140 per tweet. But I had so much more to say!

The results of my struggle, with editorial amendments by Tracy Power of the state archives, will be unveiled at the ACHS meeting on February 16. Allen Riddick invited me to expand on that brief summation by talking about William Gregg and his home at the meeting. He also asked me to provide some not-too-redundant comments here.

So let's step back a bit. One theme that I picked up on early in my study of the history of Aiken County is the impact on our county of an impressive number of "come heres," and on the range of receptions they got from the "been heres". Immigrants from near and far have found their way here, some alone and others in large groups, and although they generally acclimated themselves to the existing way of life, they were not always welcomed by residents who had arrived earlier and were content with the status quo. Yet whether welcomed or not, some of these first generation residents have impacted our area to an amazing degree.

One example that immediately comes to mind for most readers of this Newsletter, I suspect, is the "bomb plant" construction worker (35,000 of them) and DuPont invasion of the early 1950s. Ask an old-timer about how their arrival affected life here during that decade! By 1960 the plant's operating force exceeded 7000, and the number would ultimately approach 20,000. Few communities in the country have experienced the challenges, and benefits, of so large an influx. Other examples include the mid-to-late 19th century health resort era and the subsequent Winter Colony era, but those involved visitors who stayed no more than half a year at a time, and kept apart from the community.

Stepping back another generation, to the 1840s, we arrive at a pivotal chapter in Aiken's history, following the building of the South Carolina Railroad line from Charleston to Hamburg and the laying out of the town at the highest elevation along that line, Aiken, in the mid-1830s. This chapter tells of the first large cotton mill erected in the southern states, the brainchild of a man who hoped to provide a model for the future of the southern economy. Surprisingly perhaps, his vision was not appreciated by many, even if they admired his ability to realize his personal dream. Our central character, William Gregg, a native of Virginia, actually came to this area for the first time before the railroad, to court and marry Marina Jones, whose family lived in Ridge Spring, in 1829. After accumulating a tidy fortune as a silversmith, watchmaker and merchant in Columbia, he retired while in his late thirties, in 1837, and bought the small, struggling cotton mill at Vaucluse. Built in the late 1820s, it had a good location near the headwaters of the fast running Horse Creek, but its owners were barely able to keep it running and were heavily in debt until Gregg turned things around in less than a year. (More on Gregg's early life and on Vaucluse in my talk at the meeting)

Gregg sold the Vaucluse mill at a profit and moved to Charleston where he got rich(er) making and selling jewelry and fine imported goods. Equally important, he emerged during that period as "the South's leading advocate of industrial development in the antebellum era." (Tom Downey, *Planting a Capitalist South*, 129) After a tour of cotton mills in the New England states in 1844 he returned to Charleston and wrote a series of newspaper articles that were later collected and published as *Essays on Domestic Industry*. These writings, and others he would publish in the years before the Civil War, earned Gregg the title of the great visionary of southern industrialization. The fact that it was several more decades before his vision came to fruition in the rise of the textile industry in the Carolinas and beyond is, most would say, no reflection on him. (Others would disagree. More on this in my talk).

Even before this, obviously planning ahead, in 1843 he again purchased the Vaucluse mill, in partnership with his brother-in-law James Jones, and with it 11,000 acres of land on Horse Creek, for \$25,000. [His company's land holdings would grow, eventually to include land at Aiken's western edge, including the campus of USC Aiken.]

In December, 1845, Gregg formed a small group of investors who were granted a charter from the South Carolina legislature to incorporate the Graniteville Manufacturing Company, capitalized at \$300,000. Built of granite mined near its site, the three story mill stretched more than a football field long. With state-of-the-art machinery, it began operation in 1849, and, employing mostly female workers, some as young as twelve, it was soon acknowledged as one of the most successful factories in the entire South. Housing was provided for many of the employee families in neat single-family gothic structures adjacent to the mill, several of which still stand (known as "blue row") and are on the National Register of Historic Places. Strict rules of behavior were enforced during "free time" as well as the twelve hour work days. Termination and expulsion from mill housing awaited violators. School attendance was mandatory to age twelve, a first for South Carolina, and backed by a five cent fine charged to parents of an absent-without-excuse child. Church attendance was encouraged, and Gregg became a regular at the Methodist Church in Graniteville, while he was a vestryman and benefactor of St. Thaddeus in Aiken, where his wife was a member.

The mill had to have water power, and Horse Creek provided that, but Gregg also wanted a railroad spur built to his mill. In 1847 he struck a deal with the SC Railroad, which agreed to spend up to \$2000 to bring the spur to within one mile of the mill, with the company paying the cost of shipping and receiving. Until 1868, when the spur was extended to the mill, wagons carried freight over that last mile.

Although Gregg spent much time overseeing the mill's construction and operations, he kept his family residence in Charleston for the first several years. But gradually he came to the conclusion that he should live near his "baby." In 1846 he bought from the Graniteville company a large tract about midway between the center of Aiken and Graniteville, for one dollar per acre. He named the property Kalmialand, for its profusion of *Kalmia latifolia* (Mountain Laurel). One mile long and one-half mile wide, the tract was divided into twenty four lots of thirteen or more acres, which Gregg planned to offer to Charleston friends for summer residences. Two who build houses there were Bank of Charleston president Ker Boyce, an investor in the mill, and Judge James Parsons Carroll. The latter defeated Gregg in a hotly contested state senate election in 1858, and both were members of the state's secession convention in 1860. Carroll's house, later altered, still stands on the eastern side of Gregg Avenue.

In 1854 Gregg moved his family into an imposing house, built a few years earlier and altered to make it suitable for year-round living, near the road to Aiken, which bisected the tract. His biographer Broadus Mitchell described it as "in the prevailing Southern manner – of frame, large, and about square, with a portico in front, the round columns of which rose the height of both stories." He continued, "behind the house, to the east, Gregg had a series of curving terraces constructed, the planting upon which . . . was increasingly beautiful in his lifetime. Near the door leading from the dining room to the lawn was a small dairy, sunk five feet in the ground, with a vaulted masonry roof, sanded floor and double doors." This, one might assume, was the "Gregg buttery" or creamery, which was disassembled and rebuilt on the grounds of Banksia in 2012. Elsewhere the house is said to have been built of black cypress and to have seventeen rooms. A family of slaves lived on the property, and some of them likely helped to build the house. A rare if not unique feature for the upcountry that time was the house's gas lighting system. Another innovation of Gregg's was the commercial growing of peaches. By 1860 some 8000 trees produced peaches, most of them shipped by rail to the cities of the northeast. The mill thrived on orders from the Confederate government during the Civil War, but in the winter of 1867 the dam that controlled water flow to the mill broke, and Gregg, 67 years old, waded in up to his waist and struggled with his workers to repair it. He died a few days later. His wife would return to Charleston, but the house survived until destroyed by fire in 1921. The Aiken County Historical Society recognizes its site as the last home of a controversial but unquestionably important figure in southern history.





**The Gregg Family**  
*Approximately 1845*



**The Gregg House, Kalmia**

*Both photos courtesy of the Gregg-Graniteville Archives,  
Gregg-Graniteville Library, University of South Carolina Aiken,  
Aiken, South Carolina*



**The Granite Mill**

*Courtesy of the Gregg-Graniteville Archives,  
Gregg-Graniteville Library, University of South Carolina Aiken,  
Aiken, South Carolina*

## **2014 ACHS MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**DUES ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED.**

Anyone wishing to join the Aiken County Historical Society is cordially invited to do so.  
Please complete the application below and mail it with your dues to:

**Aiken County Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 1775**  
**Aiken, SC 29802**

Patron:	\$25	Benefactor:	\$500
Corporate:	\$50	Life:	\$1000
Donor:	\$100		

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*One Time Donation:* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

The one time donation is for those members who have already paid their dues, but would like to contribute directly toward our Historical Marker Fund. We also encourage others who may not want to become an ACHS member, but would like to make a contribution to our organization.



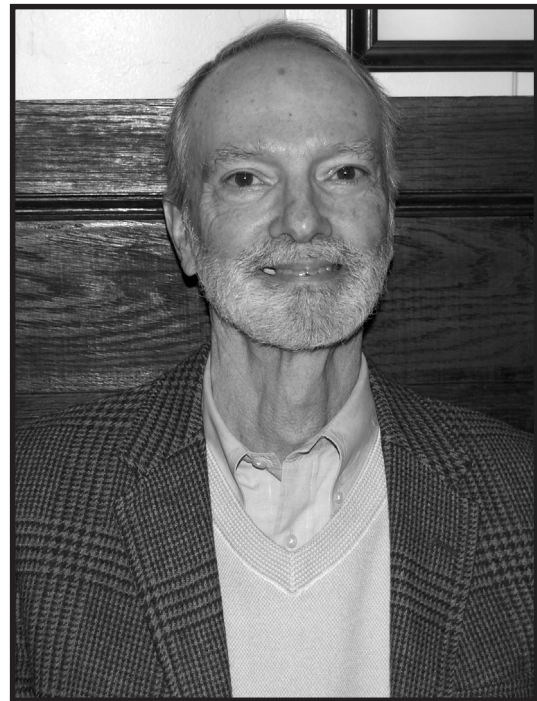
**AIKEN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
GENERAL MEETING**

**Sunday, February 16th at 2:30 pm  
AIKEN COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM**



At 2:30 PM Ms. Helga Hulse will perform “Incidental” music for your entertainment prior to the start of the General Meeting.

At 3:00 PM Dr. Jim Farmer will speak on William Gregg, southern industrialist, and his Aiken plantation home, Kalmia. After Dr. Farmer’s presentation we will unveil our 20th official State historical marker for Kalmia. A reception will follow the unveiling.



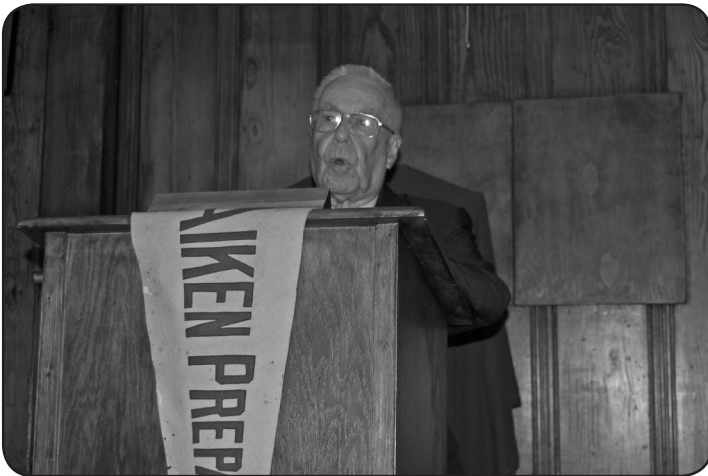
\*\*\* The Kalmia historical marker will be placed at the corner of Gregg Avenue and Richland Avenue after the reception.

# Aiken County Historical Society General Meeting

## September 2013



The Crowd



Mr. Bob Harrington was the guest speaker. He has been associated with APS for 60+ years.



Mr. Bob Harrington poses with Hannah Crump and Madison Oswalt after the meeting. Hannah and Madison were two of the wonderful Mead Hall students who gave guided tours of the school.

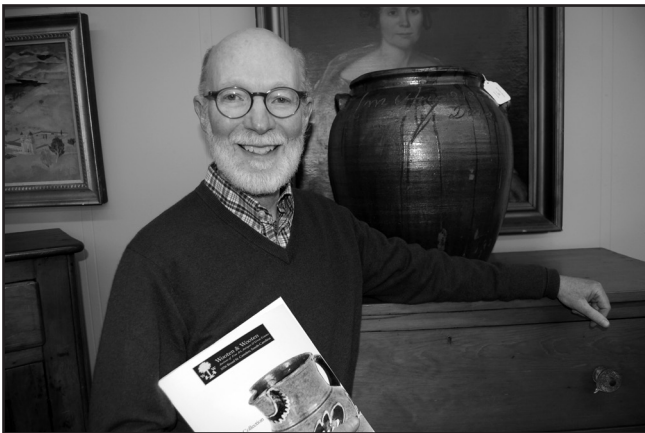


Ms. Kitty Gordon, Mead Hall's Head of School, and Mr. Bob Harrington, former APS Head Master, unveil the Aiken Prep School historical marker as Allen Riddick looks on.

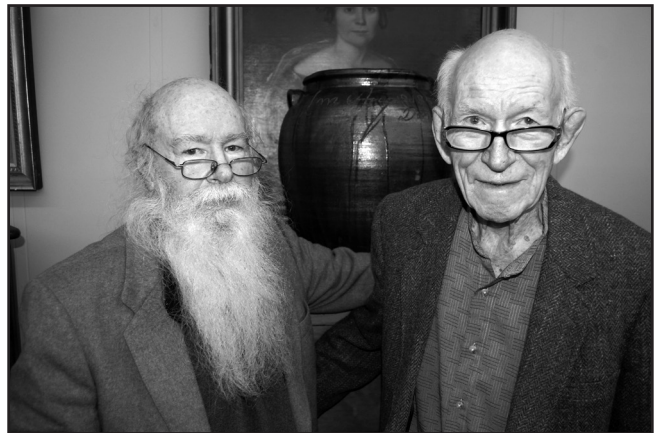


Mr. Bob Harrington and Ms. Kitty Gordon pose with the APS historical marker which is now located in front of the old school, now Mead Hall School.

Aiken County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1775  
Aiken, South Carolina 29802-1775



Leonard Todd,  
author of *Carolina Clay: The Life  
and Legend of the Slave Potter, Dave*



Stephen and Terry Ferrell,  
Collectors of Edgefield Pottery for 50+ years

These two photos were taken by Allen Riddick on January 25th, 2014  
in Camden, South Carolina, at the Ferrell Collection Auction of Edgefield Pottery.