

Notes on Red Hill Farm

Red Hill Farm at Pedlar Mills, Amherst County, Va., is noteworthy from several viewpoints: it is one of the area's oldest upland farms, having been in continuous operation since 1754; it boasts one of the finest early brick mansions in the Piedmont section of Va., located in a setting of imposing natural beauty; and it is the ancestral home of the Ellis family, who contributed much to the early history of Va. and the nation. In addition to the foregoing features, the existing records and letters of the Ellis family and other historical publications provide a documentation of the early life and times at Red Hill that may be unique in the area, and is seldom equalled elsewhere.

Capt. Charles Ellis, born at Tuckahoe (Creek) in 1719, settled at Red Hill in 1754 on a grant from George II of England. The 1000 acre grant probably was a reward for war services to the Crown and ~~Capt.~~ Ellis continued to serve as Capt. of the Albemarle Militia, under Col. Peter Jefferson, presumably the father of Thomas Jefferson.

Dead at the age of 40 (his will is in the Courthouse at Albemarle), Ellis left two minor sons and eight daughters. Both of these sons served in the Revolutionary War from Amherst but eventually son Charles emigrated to Missouri and Major Josiah Ellis succeeded to the home farm at Red Hill. The widow of Charles Ellis, Susannah Harding Ellis, in 1767 married John Bickley. John Bickley's son Charles saw action at King's Mountain as a private, and thus, added to the two Ellis sons, he became the third soldier of the Revolution from Red Hill Farm.

Major Josiah Ellis married Jane Shelton of Amherst County and it was they and their children who put the Ellis family and Red Hill Farm, as the family seat, to the

forefront in the area and State. Their youngest son, Powhatan, born at Red Hill, served as a lieutenant in the War of 1812 and attracted the attention of General Andrew Jackson, Later President. With encouragement from Jackson, he emigrated to Mississippi in 1817 and served in the Convention for Statehood for Miss., as territorial judge, and then Representative and Senator from Mississippi. He also served as Minister to Mexico, on appointment by Pres. Jackson.

Charles Ellis, Josiah's oldest son and also born at Red Hill, was partner with John Allen in Ellis and Allen, Merchants, of Richmond. It was Allen who was the foster-father of Edgar Allen Poe and the Ellis and Allen papers in the Library of Congress are a source of information on the early Poe life. The young Poe was a summer and holiday guest at Red Hill, then in the ownership of Richard Shelton Ellis, another son of Josiah. Richard Shelton Ellis and his family are the subject of special comment by Bishop Meade in his volumes "Old Churches and Families of Va.," mainly because of Ellis' activities in support of the early Episcopal Church in Va. Richard Shelton E. also expanded the family farms and, with his brother John, the first Postmaster at Pedlar Mills in 1804, carried on a mercantile business, which eventually failed because of loose credit policies to friends and customers. After the death of Richard Shelton Ellis, ~~during the war between the States~~, both of his sons served the Confederacy, and Charles Thomas Ellis, married to Miss Millie Garland, was killed, a Captain under Pickett, in the ill-fated charge at Gettysburg.

~~However, after~~ ^{also at} the death of Richard S. Ellis, the mansion house tract of the farm was lost to the family, after 96 years of ownership. However, the heirs of Joshua Ellis, another son of Josiah, continued to hold the Round Top Tract until after World War I. About 1900 Mr. John Ellis ~~had~~ repurchased the Red Hill estate but lost it a decade

later when he suffered business reverses. Under Mr. John Ellis and his wife Mary Loving Ellis, Red Hill served again as a social center for the families of the area.

~~However,~~ ^{and} from the beginning, the Ellis home had served as the center of a multi-faceted family enterprise in farming and commerce. The Church at Pedlar Mills, the old tavern and inn, the sites of the old mills were all different facades of the Ellis complex. And the log house at Round Top, once used as a home for the Ellis overseer, and later as the home of the Joshua Ellis family, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~, may well be one of the very earliest homes in the County, possibly older than Red Hill. (It is now near ruins.)

However, it is not the purpose of these notes to recite the history at Red Hill but ~~to~~ only to point out that the story and place do still exist. On the record, Red Hill has been home to a Capt. of the French and Indian Wars, home to three soldiers of the Revolution, home to an officer of the War of 1812, and to at least two officers of the War Between the States. This alone would make Red Hill noteworthy, and perhaps even unique.