

ABIGAIL'S STORY TIDES AT THE DOORSTEP

*The Mackays, LaRoches, Jenkinses, and Chisolms
of
Low Country South Carolina
1671-1897*

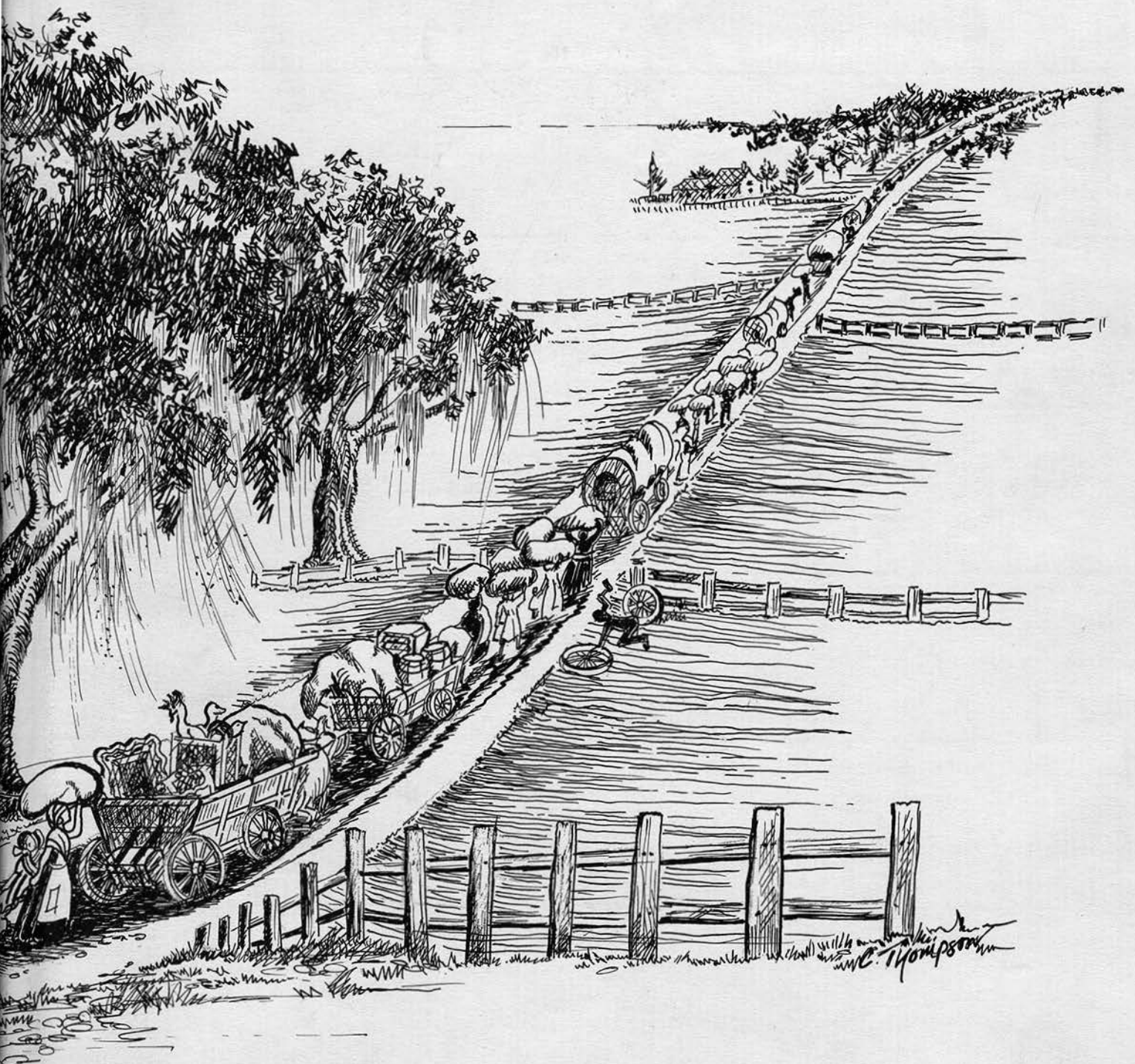
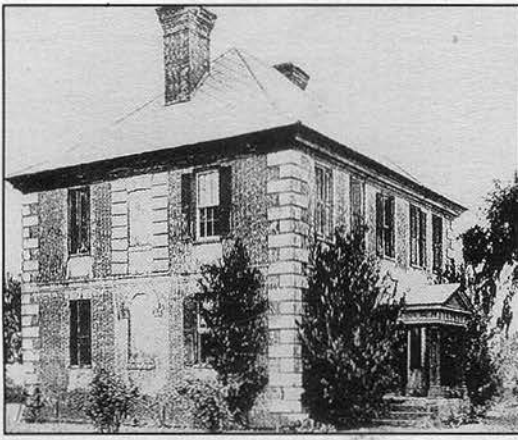


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BRICK HOUSE
EDISTO ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THIS HOUSE WAS BORN ABIGAIL MARTHA JENKINS and here on January 15, 1829 she was married to George Chisolm Mackay, Esquire. This book covers more than one hundred years of the life and times of this remarkable Low Country family, centered on Abigail and George, who was also born on the island in the early years of the nineteenth century. The Mackays of Mackay's Point, and the connected LaRoche, Jenkins, and Chisolm families, "represented all that was best of their times and the plantation culture of South Carolina." Although their way of life perished in 1862 when they were driven from their home by a water-borne Federal force debarked on Mackay's Point, this close-knit, gentle, and loving family survived the devastation of War and Reconstruction and preserved for future generations the aristocratic virtues of their culture.

The central documents which tell the story of the Mackay family include "The Tribute," a memoir containing personal recollections of Abigail Jenkins Mackay recorded by her daughter-in-law Kate Devereux

Mackay; the Reminiscences of Abigail's son Joseph Jenkins Mackay, a document long thought to be hopelessly lost but recently recovered; a series of letters written from 1822 to 1893 by the Mackays and their Chisolm cousins; and the Diary of Episcopal cleric John Hamilton Cornish, who married into the Jenkins family. These first-person accounts of the life and times of the nineteenth-century Mackays are linked by a narrative structure and footnotes which identify, explain, and amplify the information contained in the letters and recollections. A genealogical appendix traces the descendants of the Mackays to the present day.

After an introduction and the series of letters and narratives featuring the generation of George and Abigail and the "halcyon days" of the ante-bellum South, the book turns to the War Between the States and the generation represented by George and Abigail's sixteen children. Presented in the larger context of the war, the drama and tragedy of the five Mackay sons and the five sons-in-law, and numerous Jenkins and LaRoche nephews, are brought into sharp focus with the death of son Georgie at Spotsylvania's Bloody Angle and that of nephew General Micah Jenkins six days earlier at the Battle of the Wilderness. The aftermath of war brought another grievous loss to the family when in 1867 the oldest son, Edward Robert Mackay, was murdered and robbed while crossing St. Helena's Sound.

By this time George Chisolm Mackay, Sr., had died; Abigail had lost three children as infants, her oldest daughter had died in childbirth at age twenty-three, and two sons had been killed. She lived for more than thirty-five years as a widow, presiding over a family of children and grandchildren who had, among others, the surnames Drayton, Gantt, Hutson, Johnson, LaRoche, Salley, and Mackay. After Reconstruction Abigail became a "traveler nonpareil," visiting her numerous progeny all over the South until her death in 1897. In the eyes of her descendants she remains, as daughter-in-law Kate Devereux Mackay described her, "one of the most beautiful characters I have ever known, whose long life is a record not only of remarkable ability and untiring usefulness in her day and generation, but also of most patient and cheerful acceptance of more and sharper vicissitudes than are often met in this changing life." This collection of personal and historical facts, observations, and anecdotes tells her story in a way that is informative, entertaining, moving, and always interesting.

