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The Lives and Times of William King

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THE LIVES AND TIMES OF

WILLIAM KING

A SUCCESSFUL MERCHANT AND SAVANNAH SPOKESMAN

HISTORY 450
RESEARCH PAPER
DR. WARLICK

WRITTEN BY:

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Note: Pages 6 and 7 are one one sheet.

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ABSTRACT

Mr. William King was a man whom the city of Savannah could not do without from the time of his birth in 1806 to the time of his death by 1892. Mr. King was actually born on St. Simons Island but at that time the Golden Isles were merely an extension of Savannah which was the key center of trade for the region. William King quickly learned from his father, Roswell, that civic participation was a must if one intended to acquire Southern wealth during the 1800's. Mr. King voiced his opinions well 1st as Foreman of the First Panel of the Chatham County Grand Jury, 2nd as the staunch leader of the Temperance Movement in Savannah, and 3rd as a firm supporter of Southern rights and grievances during the Civil War. Mr. William King was, in fact, the unchallenged spokesman for Savannah during the 19th Century.

FAMILY HISTORY

Mr. William King was born in the year 1806 to Roswell King and his wife, Catherine Barrington, on the Hampton Plantation of Major Thomas Butler that was situated on the Georgian isle of St. Simons.¹

Mr. Roswell King was the son of Timothy and Sarah King of Windsor, Connecticut; and his father was best known as the Commander of the U.S. brig Defiance during the American Revolution.² Roswell, himself, served Glynn and McIntosh counties as a justice of the peace, and member of the Georgia House of Representatives.³ In 1788 Mr. King moved to Darien, Ga. and married Catherine at San Sevilla Bluff on April 14th, 1792.⁴ From this point Roswell assumed the position as plantation manager at the aforementioned estate.⁵

The childhood of Mr. William King must have been interesting indeed as he grew up on the plantation, and in the town of Darien. From his parents, William King must have learned the ins and outs of civic responsibility as well as the procedures by which to run a successful business. One thing he definitely shared with them was the desire to raise a big family; and the city of Savannah is where he decided to do so.

No mention is made of William King in Chatham County censuses until that of 1850 which reads as such:

William King	Merchant	Age 44
S.E.	40,	Female
McLeod	22,	Clerk
William	19,	None
Francis	17,	None
Anna C.	14	
Mary M.	12	
Roswell	10	
Sarah E.	7 or 9	
Barrington	3,	

Time moved on and the children began to leave the nest which the Savannah City Directory of 1859 lists as 24 Harris Street. On October 14th, 1851 William King, Jr. married Augusta Clayton, the daughter of a well known retired Judge.⁶ Not wishing to be outdone, his daughter, Mary McLeod, married the Reverend F.H. Bowman of the Savannah Independent Presbyterian Church on November 10th, 1857.⁷

Mr. William King must have been estatic that his children kept alive the family tradition of marrying wealth and/or religion. It is no secret that the King Family placed great emphasis on civic participation as well as financial responsibility.

MERCANTILE LIFE

William King began his life as a merchant alongside his brother Ralph under the business name of R & W King.⁸ There William and Ralph engaged in the traffic of cotton and slaves to and from the Golden Isles; and also up the Savannah River to Augusta where their main client was Isaac Peace Hazard.⁹ Business was good as cotton was fast becoming the "King of the South"; yet on March 30th, 1841 their rewarding copartnership was terminated.¹⁰ Not one to waste time, William immediately formed a new partnership with a gentleman named I.P. Way under the auspice of Way & King. The nature of the business was the same as in the previous until it, too, was dissolved on November 1st, 1854.¹¹

Mr. King did not rely only on these copartnerships for his livelihood as he was for many years the Savannah insurance agent for the Southern Mutual Insurance Company.¹² On January 15th, 1853 his office was located at the corner of Bay and Drayton streets; and his authority extended over all policies concerned with Marine, River, Fire, and Life Insurances. One company ad found in the Daily Georgian newspaper of 1854 stated the following:

Life Insurance

Southern Mutual Insurance Company

The rates of this company are lower than those charged by Northern Companies for residents of the South. One-Fourth

of the 1st premium is entirely remitted. After the 1st year this fourth may be paid by a note when the Policy is for the whole life. For 1 or 5 year policies the company offers great advantages. All of the funds of the company are invested in state bonds or in 1st mortgages on real estate, worth 4 times the amount of loan. Applications for insurance recieved by

W. King¹³

It is important to note that either the insurance company was bought out or changed its name, or Mr. King transferred to another one as the Savannah Morning News Abstract of 1859 lists him as an agent for the Continental Insurance Company of New York with capitol and surplus worth over \$700,00.¹⁴

If William King could be asked which business endeavor made him the proudest, one would almost certainly hear the words 'William King & Sons' as the response. On April 9th, 1855 Mr. King applied for a Commission Merchant License for such; and it was to be located on 94 Bay Street.¹⁵ Involving first his son McLeod and later William, Jr., this enterprise was truly a family business. Syrup was one of the 1st items they offered for sale come the Christmas holiday season of 1856 as the Savannah Morning News Abstract of 1856 testifies.¹⁶ The Savannah City Directory of 1859 lists the address of the business to be on 99 and 100 Bay Street. The last mention of William King & Sons is made upon the application for a Brokerage business license on

November 8th, 1859.¹⁷ One cannot help but feel that the realization of the oncoming Civil War between the states payed a major role in this disappearance of an otherwise successful operation.

LAND & PROPERTY HOLDINGS

Mr. William King's first possession of land in Savannah occurred in 1828 when his father, Roswell, sold him a suitable plot of land to live on.¹⁸ The Index to Deeds Book 4 1825-1837 also reveals that William bought and sold numerous parcels of land during this time period; yet most of the land acquired was a result of individuals settling their debts with R & W King, the business he partnered with Ralph.¹⁹ According to his wealth, one may assume that Mr. King was likely to have owned the family residence at 24 Harris Street. The success of his business endeavors was well reflected upon his home life as on May 6th, 1882, William King sold to a Mr. Henry Roberts a plot of land known as "Springfield Tract" that was in fact a plantation with numerous buildings, gardens, and stable yards.²⁰

Mr. King was not limited to land as his only possession as it was well known that he supported the Southern rights for the continuation of slavery as he, himself, owned many slaves. Grantor Book 2R reveals that William, on one occasion, sold his slaves Caroline and her children, Mille &

George, to a Mr. Michael Dillon in July of 1831.²¹ Mr. William King was a staunch supporter of what he saw as Southern rights for one must remember that the preservation of slavery insured that his wealth may continue to grow.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION-

Should there be anyone in Savannah during the 1800's who assumed the role as spokesman for that fair city, Mr. William King would be an ideal candidate. Beginning first as the stout leader of the Temperance Movement and ending as th avid petitioner for Savannah's salvation from General Sherman's army, William King served his fellow citizens well indeed.

Mr. King's initial role as a leader in civic awareness began when he was chosen to be Foreman of the 1st panel of the Chatham County Grand Jury.²² Utilizing his legal skills, William persuaded the Grand Jury to recommend laws banning the selling of liquor to slaves, and prohibited the opening of barrooms and drinking houses on the Sabbath Day through legislation proposed on January 28th, 1853.²³ The county's citizens were so impressed by Mr. King's fortitude that they appointed him as the representing delegate for Chatham County in an Anti-Liquor Traffic Convention which was held in Atlanta on January 29th, 1853.²⁴

The extent of Mr. William King's power of persuasion is well symbolized in a near duel confrontation with Savannah Mayor - elect Dr. Richard Wayne in the year 1844.²⁵ It is revealed that this was the 1st time the citizens,

themselves, voted directly for the mayor; and that Mr. King had been arousing contempt for those of foreign birth. It is not known what caused the confrontation, yet Mayor Wayne spoke:

It was our common misfortune that King's peculiar position precluded him from the ordinary means of redress.

To which Mr. William King responded:

He has gained his office. I have saved my character. If he has a clear conscience and is satisfied, so am I. Let us add no greater insult to the public by annoying it with our communications.

Needless to say, avoiding a duel in the 1800's was quite rare when one felt that they were not given the proper respect. Mr. King was quite adaptable.

William King must have utilized his art of eloquence once again when, in 1864, Savannah Mayor R.D. Arnold called for a meeting of citizens which adopted resolutions favoring submission to the U.S. authority, and requested that Governor Brown call a citizens convention which would decide if Georgia should remain active in the Confederacy.²⁶ It was Mr. King whom the Savannah citizens requested inform General Sherman of the matter; and in an October 27th, 1864 letter to the general he fulfilled their request.²⁷ General Sherman later responded to these overtures of peace by sparing Savannah from the same fiery fate as that of Atlanta and Darien.

Two things could have made the choice of Mr. William King as spokesman disastrous. First was the fact that he had joined the Vigilance Association for Preservation of Southern Rights on December 22nd, 1859.²⁸ That may have been commonplace in the South; yet the worst reason for his selection was not.

Mr. William King was the brother of Barrington King who owned the Roswell Ivy Woolen Mill which made the uniforms for the Confederate Army.²⁹ Mr. Barrington KING attempted to trick Sherman's forces by transferring the title to a French employee, Theophile Roche, who proceeded to fly the French flag in hopes of deterring.³⁰ The Union troops were so angry that they burned it to the ground; and proceeded to arrest all the owners and employees, including the women. They were all charged with treason, marched to Marietta, and sent North by train to stand trial.³¹ Had Gen. Sherman made the family connection between the two King's, the city of Savannah and her citizens may have met the same fate.

William King continued as a voice for the citizens of Savannah throughout the Union occupation; and on August 23rd, 1865 expanded his role as he made a journey North to inform the Yanks of Georgia's suffering and misery in the tracks of Shermans army.³² Many from the North responded by sending blankets and food. Had not someone made the pleas for mercy, the death and poverty tolls of Georgia would have been magnified many times over.

RESTING PLACE UNKNOWN

A thorough search through the Index to Estates A-Z 1742 Thru 1955 conveys that neither an exact death date for Mr. William King nor his wife, Sarah, is locally evident. Their son, McLeod, applied to be the administrator of both estates on April 11, 1892 in the case of his mother, and on April 19th, 1892 in the case of his father.³³ No year of death is given for William but that of Sarah is listed as 1891. Both estate claims were stated to be for the refunding of Direct War Tax; and in the case of Sarah all of the children, McLeod, William Jr., Francis King, Anna C. Norwood, Mary Bowman, Roswell King, and Sarah E. are mentioned as the estate heirs. Perhaps Mr. William King had taken his wife up to the town of Roswell, Ga. which his father founded in 1835.³⁴ Another possible scenario is that they moved to the town of Midway, Ga., and are buried alongside his brother, Roswell, Jr. and his wife, Julia Rebecca.³⁵ For those who wish to explore these options and/or others, an epilogue pointing to possible revelations has been included.

EPILOGUE

The King Family Register and biographical sketches by
Julia King, Midway Ga. Museum

Barrington King Collection, Ga. State Archives, Atlanta

Any McIntosh, Glynn, and Cobb County records for the
time period 1805- 1892.

Any books dealing with the history of Roswell,
Georgia.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Dictionary of Georgia Biography Vol.II k-Z pp.580
- 2 Julia King Papers Folder #2 & 3 Manuscript # 1070
- 3 Dictionary . pp. 579
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Savannah Newspaper Digest 1851 pp. 114
- 7 Savannah Newspaper Digest 1857 pp. 136
- 8 Daily Georgian 1841. Index to Newspapers on Microfilm
Microfilm # 990261 3/30 pp. 3 column 1
- 9 Isaac Peace Hazard Papers Item #1 Manuscript # 376
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Daily Georgian 1854. Index to Newspapers on Microfilm
Microfilm # 990282 3/30 pp. 3 column 4
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Savannah Newspapers 1859 pp.110
- 15 Ibid, 1855 pp.10
- 16 Daily Georgian 1856 pp.13
- 17 Savannah Newspaper 1859 pp.9
- 18 Index to Deeds Book 4 1825-1837 Book PP 1828 Folio 153
- 19 Daily Georgian 1841. 3/30 pp.3 column 1.
- 20 Grantor Book 5H May 6,1882
- 21 Grantor Book 2R July 1831
- 22 Savannah Newspaper 1853 pp. 146
- 23 Ibid.

- 24 Ibid, pp.346
- 25 Gamble, Thomas. Savannah Duels and Duellists
1733-1877 pp.234
- 26 Confederate Military History Vol. VII Georgia pp. 234
- 27 Savannah Newspapers 1864, pp.163
- 28]bid, 1859 pp.212
- 29 Rowland, Arthur A Bibliography of the Writings
on Georgia History pp.343
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Dictionary of Georgia.. pp. 391
- 32 Savannah Newspapers 1865 pp. 479
- 33 Index to Estates A-Z 1742 Thru 1955 #'s 26 & 184
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- 35 Dictionary of Georgia.. pp. 243

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Gamble, Thomas. Savannah Duels & Duellists 1733-1877, Review Publishing Company, Savannah, Ga. 1923 Armstrong Library Minis Room

Grantor Book 2R Records of ~~Supreme~~ Court Chatham County Courthouse

Grantor Book 5H Records Of ~~Supreme~~ Court Chatham County Courthouse

Index to Deeds Book 4 1825-1837 Book PP 1828 Folio 153 Records of Supreme Court Chatham County Courthouse

Index to Estates A-Z 1742 Thru 1955 #26 William King Administration 1819 Court of Ordinary Chatham County

Index to Estates A-Z 1742 Thru 1955 #184 Sarah E. King Administration 1892 Court of Ordinary Chatham County

Isaac Peace Hazard Papers Item #1 Manuscript # 376

Georgia Historical Society

Julia King Papers Folders #2 & 3 Manuscript # 1070

Georgia Historical Society

Rowland, Arthur. A Bibliography Of The Writings on Ga. History, The Reprint Co., South Carolina 1978 Armstrong Library

Savannah City Directory 1848-1860 Georgia Historical Society

Savannah Newspaper Digests 1850-1860 Works Project Administration Project # 3724 Ga. Historical Society

ADDITIONAL WORKS CONSULTED

INDEX TO MARRIAGE RECORDS 1806 - present Probate
Court Chatham County Courthouse.

Laurel Grove Cemetary, Savannah , Georgia, General
Index to Keepers' Record Books, 1852-1938 Ga. Hist. Soc.

Bonaventure Cemetary, Savannah, Ga, General Index to
Keepers's Record Books, 1850-1938 Georgia Historical Soc.

The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia Ga.
Historical Society

Edwards, Lawrence M. Georgia Family and Church Cemeteries
Ga. Historical Society