ROBERT MILLEDGE CHARLTON
(1807 - 1854)

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HISTORY 300
ROBERT MILLEDGE CHARLTON  
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ABSTRACT

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BIBLIOGRAPHY
Robert Milledge Charlton was born in Savannah, Georgia, on January 19, 1807, and died here on January 18, 1854, the son of Judge Thomas Usher Pulaski Charlton and Emily Walter. He married Margaret Shick on October 26, 1829, and had nine children, five who lived to be adults. The son of a lawyer and judge, he followed in his father's footsteps and became a notable lawyer and judge. He served in the Georgia House of Representatives, as Judge of the Eastern Circuit, as U.S. District attorney, as mayor of Savannah three times, and as U.S. senator from Georgia. Robert M. Charlton was also noted for his literary talent, having several books published and contributing numerous articles, stories and poems to various periodicals.
PERSONAL HISTORY:

Family

Robert Milledge Charlton was born on January 19, 1807 in Savannah, Georgia. He was the son of Judge Thomas Usher Pulaski Charlton and Emily Walter. An interesting note is that he was born on the same day that Robert E. Lee was born.

On October 24, 1827, he applied for a marriage license and on October 26, 1827, he married Margaret Shick. The marriage was performed by Reverend Stephen A. Nealy, pastor of the Lutheran Church of Savannah, Georgia. As a wedding gift from her father, they received the house on the corner of West Broad Street and Oglethorpe Avenue.

The house had been bought in 1826 by Peter Shick from Samuel J. Bryan of Newton County, Georgia, for $1750. On November 11, 1843, Robert M. Charlton bought from Harret Shaffer of Savannah a lot next to his house for $100. He lived there all his life and all his children were born in that house. The site is now occupied by Dearing Chevrolet.

There were nine children born from Charlton's marriage, five of whom lived to be adults. The following is a listing of these children:

1. Peter Shick Marshall
   - Born Dec. 19, 1830, and died Jan. 13, 1837

2. Thomas Marshall
   - Born July 15, 1832, and died Nov. 24, 1858

3. Ellen Jone St. Leger
   - Born Mar. 11, 1834, and died Sept. 23, 1839

4. Mary Marshall (Hartridge)
   - Born Oct. 19, 1835, and died in 1879
   - Had nine children
5. Roberta Margaret
   -born Feb. 19, 1838, and died Oct. 10, 1839

6. Eliza Williamson
   -born Sept. 9, 1840, and died Feb. 25, 1843

7. Robert Milledge
   -born Jan. 25, 1842, and died June 16, 1865

8. Margaret Hansell
   -born Sept. 21, 1843, and died in 1889
   -had one child

9. Walter Glasco
   -born June 5, 1851, and died in 1917
   -married Mary Watte Tolerston and had six children.

Robert Charlton died on January 13, 1854, one day shy of his forty-seventh birthday. He was buried in Laurel Grove Cemetery (Lot 443). In his will, Robert Charlton left everything to his wife. The will was issued on July 11, 1851, and republished in 1852 and 1853.

(*NOTE: There seems to be some difficulty with the will. Another will written on July 15, 1853, left everything to Julian and Mary Hartridge. The will was contested and finally settled on March 3, 1868. The settlement left 19 shares of Central Railroad stock and eight shares of Southern Western Railroad stock valued at $2700 to Julian and Mary Hartridge. Margaret Charlton Hansell received 19 shares of Central Railroad stock and eight shares of Southern Western Railroad stock valued at $2700. Walter G. Charlton received the same amount as his two sisters. This left two shares of Southern Western stock which were sold and the proceeds were split.*)

Legal and Political Career

Robert Charlton was an influential member of the

He was admitted to the bar in 1827 at the age of twenty and began practice. He was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives. He then became the U.S. District Attorney and was elected to judgeship in 1832 to the Superior Court. He resigned in 1834 to devote himself to his profession. He served two terms as city alderman from 1834 to 1836 and from 1837 to 1839.

On March 28, 1839, Robert Charlton was elected mayor of Savannah until September 9, 1839, and followed with two more successive terms (Sept. 9, 1839–Sept. 14, 1840, and Sept. 14, 1840–Sept. 13, 1841).

He was selected as U.S. senator to fill the vacancy left by John MacPherson Berrien, who had resigned. Robert Charlton served from May 31, 1852, to March 3, 1853.
In addition to his career as a lawyer and politician, Robert M. Charlton was a noted writer and orator. He published several books of poetry, a book concerning law decisions, and numerous articles in publications of the day.

In 1839, Robert Charlton published his first book of poetry titled Poems. This book contained 48 poems by him and 22 by his brother, Dr. Thomas J. Charlton, who had died in 1835. The majority of poems concerned Robert M. Charlton's three loves: his wife, Margaret, the area around Savannah, and circuit life. The book was published in Boston and contained 174 pages.26

Three years later, Robert M. Charlton published his second book of poetry, Entitled Poems, it was a reprint of his earlier book with several additions. The additions included 17 more poems, a eulogy he had delivered before the Hibernian Society on March 17, 1839, for the late Dr. John Cumming and the address he delivered before the Georgia Historical Society on February 23, 1841, on Sgt. Jasper. The book was also published in Boston and contained 236 pages.27

His first book to be published was titled Reports of Decisions Made in the Superior Courts of the Eastern District of Georgia. Published by the Thomas Purse Company of Savannah in 1838, it was 46 pages of the various judges and their decisions of the Superior Court in the Eastern District. The judges discussed were Judges Harriett, T. U. P. Charlton, Hayne, Davies, Law, Nicoll and Robert Charlton.28

In addition to his published books, Robert Charlton contributed many articles to magazines, The Knickerbocker, the leading magazine
of its time, published works by Charlton on 13 different occasions. These ran from poems to sketches on court life, life in Georgia, to several humorous stories. Of particular note was a series of stories known as "Stray Leaves from the Port Folio of a Georgia Lawyer", which accounted his life as a lawyer and judge and contained several funny sketches.  

Robert Charlton also had works published in state and local periodicals. A listing of these include the Southern Ladies Book, the Magnolias, the Southern Post, the Augusta Mirror, Family Companion, Orion, Southern Literary Gazette, and Wheeler’s Magazine.
An example of Robert H. Charlton's writing is the poem, "To The River Ogeechee".

"To The River Ogeechee"

O wave, that glidest swiftly
On thy bright and happy way,
From the morning until evening,
And from twilight until day,
Why leapest thou so joyously
Whilst coldly on thy shore,
Sleeps the noble and the gallant heart
For aye and evermore?

Or dost thou weep, O river,
And is this bounding wave,
But the tear thy bosom sheddest
As a tribute o'er his grave?
And when, in midnight's darkness,
The winds above thee moan,
Are they mourning our sorrows,
Do they sigh for him that's gone?

Keep back thy tears, then, river,
Or, if they must be shed,
Let them flow but for the living:
They are needless for the dead
His soul shall dwell in glory,
Where bounds a brighter wave,
But our pleasures, with his troubles
Are buried in the grave.

(1835)
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ROBERT M. CHARLTON’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE "KNICKERBOCKER":

JUNE 1838
DECEMBER 1838
JUNE 1839
AUGUST 1839
NOVEMBER 1839
MARCH 1840
APRIL 1840
MARCH 1841
DECEMBER 1841
MARCH 1842
OCTOBER 1842
MARCH 1843
NOVEMBER 1852
Burial plot in Laurel Grove Cemetery

Epitaph on headstone:

My Husband
Robert M. Charlton
Born January 19th, 1807
Died January 18th, 1854

Green be the turf above thee
Friend of our happier days
None knew thee but to love thee
None names thee but to praise
ENDNOTES

3. *Probate Court, Chatham Co. Courthouse Index to Marriages (1806-1851)*, pg. 33-34.
4. *Probate Court, Chatham Co. Courthouse Index to Marriages (1806-1851)*, pg. 33-34.
5. Hartridge Collection, Robert M. Charlton files, Georgia Historical Society.
6. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society.
7. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society.
8. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society.
9. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society.
11. Laurel Grove Cemetery vol. 1 a-f.
16. Census of the City of Savannah, Bancroft, Joseph.
22. Biographical Directory of the American Congress (1774-1949)
31st Congress-2nd Session Harrison, James Ed.
Pg. 968

23. History of Municipal Government of Savannah, Gamble, Thomas
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24. History of the Municipal Government of Savannah, Gamble, Thomas
Pg. 5

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Harrison, James Ed. Pg. 968

26. Poems, Charlton, Robert M. and Thomas J., Boston, 1842

27. Poems, Charlton, Robert M. and Thomas J., Boston, 1842

28. Reports of Decisions Made in the Superior Court of the Eastern District of Georgia, Charlton, Robert M.

29. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society

30. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society

31. Poems, Charlton, Robert M. Pg. 72-73

32. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society

33. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society

34. Hartridge Collection, Georgia Historical Society

35. Laurel Grove Cemetery, Plot #443
1. History of Savannah and South Georgia. Hardin, William Lewis Publishing 1915


5. The Federal Census of 1830 of Georgia

6. The Federal Census of 1840 of Georgia

7. The Federal Census of 1850 of Georgia

8. Poems. Charlton, Robert M. & Thomas J. Boston 1859


10. Reports of Decisions Made in the Superior Courts of the Eastern District of Georgia. Charlton, Robert M. Savannah 1858


12. 1848 Census of the City of Savannah. Bancroft, Joseph Savannah 1848


14. Probate Court, Chatham Co. Courthouse, Savannah, Georgia.