Dix Fletcher

by

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Dr. Warlick
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A very versatile man, Dix Fletcher was born in Philipston, Massachusetts on September 14, 1803. He moved to Savannah around 1835 where he sold men's clothing with the firm of Fletcher and Hagar. When that firm was dissolved in 1840 he became a mechanic, carpenter, and master builder, building the house now located at 536 East State St.

After experiencing financial difficulties he moved to Marietta, Georgia in 1849 where he became the landlord of the Howard House and later the Kennesaw House. He prospered in Marietta and spent his declining years as a farmer, dying in 1886 at the age of 83.

He ran for several public offices but his liberal views may not have endeared him to his fellow Georgians in the pre- and post-war years.

His marriage to Louisa Warren of New Salem, Massachusetts produced three daughters: Georgia Caroline, Eliza H., and Louise Eastman.
Early Years

Dix Fletcher, the son of a Massachusetts-born couple, was born in Philipston, Massachusetts on September 14, 1803. His wife, Louisa Warren, was born in New Salem, Massachusetts on February 10, 1808, and, since no record of their marriage can be found in Savannah, we can assume that they married prior to moving to Savannah. Very little can be determined about their life in Massachusetts without access to Massachusetts census records.

It is a bit of a mystery to know what brought the Fletchers to Savannah. A Mrs. Martha Fletcher (1777-1831) lived in Washington Ward and may have been a relative. A history of Cobb County relates that "a visit to Savannah so impressed them with the desirability of Georgia as a place of residence that they returned to settle."4

The Savannah Years, 1835-1849

No record can be found of Dix Fletcher in Savannah before October 12, 1835 when "D. Fletcher and lady" arrived in Savannah aboard the ship Belle from New York.5 Shortly thereafter the newspaper carried notices of shipments to the firm of Fletcher and Hagar6, located at lot 6, Wilmington Tything, Derby Ward (on Whitaker St. at Bay Lane).7 Fletcher and Hagar sold:

1st quality Salem Beaver hats, 1200 pair Negro shoes slightly damaged, plain and figured gum elastic suspenders, white grass jackets, brown linen jackets, white linen and cotton shirts, cravats, stocks, bosoms, and collars, cravat stiffners
(sic), super linen gloves, super figured velvet vests, umbrellas, silk hats, boots and shoes for men and boys, Negro clothing, beaver frock coats, Kentucky Jean coats, and doeskin pants. 8

The Fletchers probably lived at the Derby Ward location as well since Dix was appointed as City Constable for Derby Ward in 1836 and as a member of the Board of Health for Derby Ward in 1838. 9

They had not lived in Savannah very long before the Georgian announced, "Mrs. Fletcher opens singing school. Applications may be made to . . . Fletcher & Mayer, Whitaker St." 10 The days of the singing school may have been cut short by the arrival of the Fletcher's first daughter, Georgia Caroline, born on August 19, 1838 and named after their adopted state. 11 Eliza H. Fletcher arrived in 1840 12 and Louise Eastman Fletcher was born on September 7, 1848. 13

By the Census of 1840 the Fletchers were living in Pulaski Ward with two servants—a black free woman and a black male slave. 14 Dix paid ground rent to the City of Savannah for lots 7 and 9 in Pulaski Ward, and, even though ground rent was not recorded for Fletcher on lot 8, it is probable that they lived in the "dwelling house & outbuildings together with a shop" located there, as described in the listing of Dix's property in 1849 shortly before he left the city. 16

See the Appendix. The City Directory of 1849 lists Dix's address as 43 Liberty St., located in Troup Ward between Price and Habersham Sts. 17 However, editions of the City Directory in the 1860's do not even list
a dwelling at 43 Liberty St. Since Dix did not list any property in Troup Ward in 1849, it is possible that they rented a house at that location but more probable that 43 was a missprint and they continued to live in Pulaski Ward in the 100 block of West Liberty St.

The eastern half of lot 7, Pulaski Ward was acquired by the foreclosure of a mortgage against a widow, Elizabeth C. Fulton, who owed Fletcher and Hagar $3000. In February of 1840 the co-partnership was dissolved and the property divided. Elisha Hagar took possession of the houses and buildings erected by the firm on Whitaker St. Dix's portion included half interest in lots 7 and 9 in Pulaski Ward.

The reason for the dissolution is unclear. The firm owed $1133 to a Boston company but this could have been settled by mortgaging some of their property. Dix assumed this debt and took out a mortgage on lot 9, Pulaski Ward, which he paid off in 1848 after he sold this property to Matthew Lufburrow.

Both Fletcher and Hagar appear to have left the clothing business for good. E. Hager was described as a grocer in the City Directory of 1849. The firm of D. Fletcher was established with Dix described at various times as a carpenter, mechanic, and master builder.

In 1842 he was paid $79.45 for materials and improvements to Johnson Square. In 1843 the newspaper tells us that he was the agent for the Pig Island Mill Co. which had purchased a planing machine and circular saw. In spite of these successes, Dix was experiencing financial problems as he was forced to mortgage lots 7, 8, and 9 in Pulaski Ward.
Before or during 1845 Dix built houses for John Dorsett and Henry Sagure on the southwest half and north half, respectively, on lot 21, Crawford Ward and neither man was able to pay his bill. The Historic Savannah survey book claims that the Dorsett house was the one moved to 536 East State St., but further research may need to be done to know which house was moved.

1845 was a year of litigation for Fletcher. In addition to placing liens on the houses of Dorsett and Sagure, he also placed a lien on a house that he built for Francis M. Stone on lot 26, Crawford Ward. Meanwhile, Patrick K. Shiels filed suit claiming that Dix owed him money for lumber purchased in 1843. Joseph Ribero and John S. Sturtivant cosigned his note to guarantee payment.

Nevertheless, Dix continued with plans for expanding his business, petitioning City Council for permission to erect a brick workshop on lots 63 and 64, Crawford Ward. This was the two story brick building and adjoining brick engine house, "the two buildings being used as a machine shop" and containing a steam engine, planing machine, and joiner's establishment. Dix was never able to pay the brick mason, James M. Buckner, for his work.

Newspapers recall happier moments: Dix called a meeting of the Chatham Mutual Fire Insurance Co., served on the committee of the Oglethorpe Benevolent Temperance Society, and on a committee for an Odd Fellows celebration.
We get a glimpse of Dix's relations with his fellow Savannahians in 1842 when he ran for the post of city alderman but received the least number of votes. The week after the election someone broke into his stable and poisoned his horses. Dix offered a $100 reward, which he could ill afford, for the conviction of the criminal.

His affairs in a hopeless muddle, Dix's property was transferred in 1849 to Frederick W. Greenleaf and Joseph Bancroft and sold by the sheriff. See the Appendix for a detailed listing of his assets.

The Marietta Years, 1849-86

The Fletchers moved to the summer resort city of Marietta, Georgia in 1849, and, once again, relatives may have played a role—there was a John Fletcher living in the district in 1851. Dix became the landlord of one of the city's leading hotels, the Howard House. Census record of 1850 report that Fletcher, his wife, three daughters, and eight boarders were living at the hotel. One of those boarders was a 28 year old painter, William Fletcher, who was born in Pennsylvania but may have been a relative. This may be the same W. F. Fletcher who served in the Cobb Mountaineers during the Civil War.

After the Howard House burned in 1857, he became the "gentlemanly proprietor" of the Kennesaw House which the Macon Telegraph described as "crowded with the elite from the principal cities of Georgia and other states" in the late 1860's.

Fletcher acquired an air of respectability and prosperity in Marietta. Dix was a delegate to the Winfield Scott Convention in Macon in 1852. After Sherman captured Marietta in July, 1864, the Tribune correspondent mentioned that Dix was "one of the influential
men, the men of 'property and standing' in town" and owned one of
the best estates.43

In the aftermath of the war, General Pope, the military commander
of the district, removed the judge of the Inferior Court of Cobb County
for opposing reconstruction and replaced him with Dix Fletcher44, whose
only previous judicial experience seems to have been as a litigant.
Dix served from 1867-68. In 1871 Dix, described by the Marietta
Journal as a "white radical" was defeated in a race for the Board of
Education.45

Neither Dix or his wife left a will46, and obituaries cannot be
found47. Our knowledge of the Fletcher's life in Marietta comes from
census records and Temple's very detailed history of Cobb County. In
1870 Dix had become a farmer owning $200 worth of real estate.48
Louisa Warren Fletcher died on January 24, 1884, Dix Fletcher died on
July 13, 1886, and both are buried in the Cole family lot in the
National Cemetery in Marietta.49

The eldest daughter, Georgia, was married in August, 1859 in St.
James Church, Marietta, to Henry Greene Cole, a native of Chenango
County, New York, who came to south Georgia to build the railroad.50
Cole was 23 years older than his bride but the marriage produced five
children: Mary W. (b. 1860), Webster (b. 1863), Naud H. (b. 1866),
Henry G. (b. 1869), and Dewitt C. (b. 1871).51 After the war Cole
donated the land for the National Cemetery in Marietta where over
10,000 Union soldiers are buried. The Coles bought a white-columned
house on Washington Ave. across from the cemetery and this house
was still in the possession of the Fletcher family in 1935.52
Coles and one son are also buried in the Cole family lot.

The second daughter, Eliza H. could not be located as the 1860 Census records for Cobb County are partially illegible and by the 1870 census she had either married or moved away from home.

The youngest daughter, Louise, never married, died on July 12, 1886 (the day before her father), and was buried in the Cole family lot.53
Appendix

Schedule of the assets, accounts payable, and debts of Dix Fletcher, 13 July 1849. From Deed Book 3F, 21 May 1849, pp. 600-601, Superior Court, Chatham County Courthouse, Savannah, Ga.
The text on the page appears to be a legal document or a formal letter. It contains several paragraphs of text, but the content is not clearly legible due to the quality of the image. The text seems to be discussing legal matters, possibly related to real estate or property transactions, given the use of terms like "purchases," "transfers," and "deeds." However, without clearer visibility, it's challenging to provide a detailed transcription or analysis of the document's content.
April 25, 1880

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Notes


2 Temple, p. 656.

3 Alphabetical List of Persons Buried in Colonial Park, Typewritten WPA Project, 1937, p. 21. Also, Georgia Census for 1830, Chatham County, p. 79, Microfilm.

4 Temple, p. 126.

5 Georgian (Savannah), 12 Oct. 1835, p. 2, col. 6, Microfilm.


7 Deed Book 2Y, Chatham County Superior Court, Chatham County Courthouse, Savannah, Ga., Handwritten, 23 Feb. 1840, p. 155. Also, Georgian, 13 Nov. 1835, p. 3, col. 2.


10. *Georgian*, 13 Nov. 1835, p. 3, col. 2. Fletcher and Mayer is probably meant to be Fletcher and Hagar.


12. Georgia Census for 1850, Cobb County, Marietta District, p. 93, Microfilm.

13. Temple, p. 656. There is some discrepancy over Louise's name and birthdate. Census records for 1850, 1870, and 1880 call her Lonie E., Louise E., and Louisa, respectively, but all agree that her birthdate is 1848. The definitive word should come from her tombstone, reported by Temple as "Louise Eastman Fletcher/b. Savannah, Sept. 7, 1818/a. Marietta, July 12, 1886." 1818 has to be a typographical error.

14. Georgia Census for 1840, City of Savannah, p. 46, Microfilm.

15. Ground Rent Book, Superior Court, Chatham County Courthouse, Savannah, Ga.


17. Savannah City Directory, 1849, Microcard.


22. He is described as a carpenter, 31 Habersham St., in the City Directory, 1849 and in Deed Book 3C, 6 June 1845, p. 245; as a mechanic and master builder in Deed Book 3F, 21 May 1849, p. 598.

25 Deed Book 2Z, 27 May 1841, p. 239. Deed Book 2Y, 19 May 1840,
p. 319. Deed Book 3A, 10 June 1842, p. 70. Deed Book 3C, 8 June 1845,
26 Deed Book 3C, 6 June 1845, p. 245. Deed Book 3C, 6 Mar. 1845,
p. 138.
27 Deed Book 3C, 6 Mar 1845, p. 138.
28 Judgment Record #7458, 1845, Georgia Historical Society,
Savannah, Ga., Handwritten documents.
29 City Council Minutes, 6 Mar. 1845, quoted in Crawford Ward
Book, Typewritten research, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Ga.
30 Deed Book 5B, 3 July 1849, p. 492.
31 Deed Book 3F, 28 May 1849, p. 556.
33 Daily Georgian, 17 Aug. 1842, p. 2, col. 3. Daily Georgian,
p. 60
36 Temple, p. 536. From the Tax Digest of 1851.
37 Temple, p. 126.
38 Georgia Census, 1850.
39 Temple, p. 540.
40 Temple, p. 373.
41 Quoted in Temple, p. 438.
42 Temple, p. 228.
43 Temple, p. 323.

44 Temple, p. 390. Also, p. 569.

45 Temple, p. 398.

46 Letter from Probate Court, Cobb County, 5 July 1981.


48 Georgia Census for 1870, Cobb County, Marietta District, p. 16, Microfilm.

49 Temple, p. 656.

50 Temple, p. 127.

51 Georgia Census for 1880, Cobb County, Marietta District, p. 170, Microfilm

52 Temple, p. 127.

53 Temple, p. 656.
Bibliography


Chatham County Deed Books. Superior Court, Chatham County Courthouse, Savannah, Ga. (Handwritten.)

Chatham County Judgment Record #7458. Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Ga. (Handwritten documents.)

Georgia Census Records for 1820, 1830, 1840, 1850, 1870, and 1880. Located at the Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Ga. and the Savannah Public Library. (Microfilm.)

Ground Rent Book. Superior Court, Chatham County Courthouse, Savannah, Ga. (Handwritten.)


Savannah City Directories for 1848 and 1849. Savannah Public Library. (Microcard.)


Savannah Newspapers (Georgian and Daily Georgian). Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. (Microfilm.)

Sources Consulted Which Did Not Prove Fruitful

Georgia Census for 1860. Located at the Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Ga. and the Savannah Public Library. (Microfilm.)

Marietta Journal, July 15, 1886. Consulted by the Marietta Public Library for an obituary of Dix Fletcher and his daughter, Louise. Marietta newspapers for 1884 (to find Louisa Fletcher's obituary) do not exist.

Probate Court, Cobb County, Ga. Consulted for wills for Dix Fletcher and Louisa Warren Fletcher.