MRS. CAROLINE C. OVERSTREET
1802 - 1876

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HISTORY 300
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Caroline C. Overstreet was born in 1802, the oldest child of Adam and Mary Cope. She lived for most of her seventy-three years in the city of Savannah, Georgia. She was married to a young merchant who died tragically, leaving her to bring up their two small children alone. She lost her only son to scarlet fever shortly after, and so lived until her death in 1876 with only the company of her daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren.
Mrs. Caroline C. Overstreet was a member of theCOPE family which first arrived in Savannah, Georgia in 1755. Her grandfather Lewis Cope, was the first to settle in the area when he came that year from Hastings, in Sussex County, England. He purchased four hundred acres of land, set himself up as a cattleman and butcher. He also served as an assistant purchasing agent for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. He was married to his wife Roseanna in 1773. They were together for thirty-six years, during which time she gave him several children. Their oldest child was Caroline’s father, Adam Cope. Roseanna died on April 12, 1809, twenty-two years after her husband’s death on March 27, 1787.

Adam Cope was born in 1775, and he and his brother George, grew up to become prominent Savannah citizens. Adam was active in city politics, serving as an alderman for four terms, in 1804-6, 1808-1810, 1818-9, and 1834-5. Adam married his first wife, the widow Mary Ruppert Burney on February 1, 1802. Caroline Catherine was their first child, born on October 17, 1802. There were five other daughters and two sons, of which three died in infancy. John, Maria, and Mary all died in their first year. The other son Charles died at age 16, leaving only Sarah, Anna Rosa, Elizabeth, and Caroline who lived to maturity.

Caroline’s mother Mary only lived to the age of thirty-nine, dying of a fever on November 5, 1815. Only five months after his wife’s death, Adam Cope remarried, this time to a young woman from New Jersey, Sarah Nutman. They were married for twenty-five years,
and she gave him two daughters, Henrietta and Cornelia.\textsuperscript{10} Sarah
died of consumption in 1841 at the age of fifty. Adam lived on
for four more years until his death at age seventy on January 29,
1845.\textsuperscript{11}

Adam Cope left an estate valued at close to ten thousand
dollars, including fifteen slaves, over fifteen hundred acres of
land, and his house and improvements on lots eleven and twelve
on Hull Street in Elbert Ward. He did not however leave a written
will. By the consent of a majority of his heirs, Charles P.
Mills and Abraham Harmon were named as the executors of his estate
and from their division of his estate, Caroline received $490.\textsuperscript{12}

Many years earlier, Caroline had married a young Savannah merchant,
William Overstreet. She was twenty-one and he was twenty-
eight when they exchanged wedding vows on May 1, 1822, in
Christ Church under the direction of Reverend Walter Cranston.
The event was noted locally as:

\begin{quote}
Married- On Wednesday evening last, by
Reverend Walter Cranston, Mr. William
Overstreet, to Miss Caroline Cope, eldest
daughter of Adam Cope, all of this city.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

William Overstreet had been a partner in the firm of Brown
and Overstreet for seven years at that time, marketing goods in
Savannah and Charleston since 1815. By 1825, their business had
expanded from a lumberyard into a varied enterprise, as noted:
Brown and Overstreet have this day declined the lumber factorage for the future, they will not receive lumber of any kind on consignment, but will purchase all description of lumber by the raft or wholesale and for which cash will be paid, their subsequent commission business will be devoted to the sales of produce exclusively, and for which they will shortly provide themselves with a counting room and fireproof stores in some central part of the city. They have made arrangements with extensive grocers and importers of dry goods both in this city and in Charleston, to supply their customers with all necessary articles on accommodating terms.15

Caroline and William had two children during their early married years. Their son Marion was born in March of 1823, but he was stricken by scarlet fever of which he died in March of 1836; at thirteen years of age.16 Their daughter Mary E. was born in South Carolina, perhaps while Caroline was on one of her frequent steamboat excursions to Charleston.17 They had been married for only five years when William died a strange and mysterious death. He lost his life in Augusta, Georgia on July 21, 1827, as noted:

We regret to state that on Tuesday night last, Mr. William Overstreet, one of the late
owners of Brown and Overstreet of this city, and that of William Overstreet and Company of Charleston, in a fit of derangement, fell from one of the windows of the Mansion House, Augusta, and was killed by a fracture of the head.18

There was no explanation given for that bizarre "accident", but a slight indication of his situation might be the fact that he terminated his business partnership with William Brown, only six months earlier.19 He left no will in Chatham County, nor is there record of a death certificate available locally. It is difficult to ascertain exactly what became of his wife and two children following his death. At a much later date, his body was interred next to that of his wife, in Bonaventure Cemetery.20

Caroline's daughter Mary was twenty years old when she married John R. Johnson, a young Savannah merchant who originally came from Springfields, Frederick County, Maryland. They were married on January 15, 1845.21 He was active in the Savannah city government, serving as clerk of the market from 1849-50, as alderman from 1865-6, and as city treasurer from 1870 to 1880.23

Mary and John had eight children, four boys and four girls. Only one of them did not live to adulthood, that being Charles F. who drowned off Beach Hammock at Arkwright's Island on June 14, 1875, at the age of fifteen.25
Caroline Overstreet was considered a member of the John R. Johnson household for the purpose of census-taking in the years of 1850 and 1860. By 1851, she had a home built for her at 111 West Jones Street. She had purchased lot six of Chatham Ward from her daughter, who had bought it from the city of Savannah in June of 1850. The 60x100 lot which she built on was on the west half of lot six, and subject to a ground rent of $43.20. The lot was valued at $1,000, and the house at about $3,000, for tax purposes. Also in 1850, Caroline purchased three slaves—Thomas, age twenty-one, for $800, Cato, age twenty-one, for $675, and William, age twenty-eight for $600.28 The following July she sold all three of them for a substantial profit to John S. Cope who paid $3,000 for them.29 Caroline lived at 111 West Jones St. until May of 1875, when the property was sold to Mina Berg for $6,000. The house that Caroline had built was judged as Notable when a survey was made of the historic district in 1962.31

Caroline C. Overstreet lived on Jones Street until her death on March 7, 1876. She finally died of "general debility" at the age of seventy-three years and four months.32 Her passing was noted as:

Entered into rest early on the morning of the 7th of March, 1876,

Mrs. Caroline C. Overstreet in her 74th year. Her funeral services will be held at the residence of her son-in-law John R. Johnson, 155 Jones Street.33
She left a small estate consisting of some shares of stock, less than two hundred dollars in cash, and her Chatham Ward property, totalling slightly more than seven thousand dollars. Her will was originally administered by John W. Anderson, named to be executor and trustee for her daughter's interests. Mary inherited all her mother's worldly belongings for her separate possession and use. \(^{34}\) Caroline was originally buried in Laurel Grove Cemetery, but her body was later moved to Bonaventure Cemetery in March of 1915, as were many of her family members. \(^{35}\)

Less than four years later, her son-in-law John, died of consumption on October 23, 1880. \(^{36}\) His passing at age sixty-two was officially recognized by the city government in a resolution which expressed their "appreciation of his fidelity and valuable services". \(^{37}\)

Mary E. Johnson purchased lot six of Chatham Ward from Mina Berg in 1890, and ten years after that had a house built on the eastern half which was valued at $4,000 for tax purposes. \(^{38}\) She lived at that home with several of her sons and spinster daughters until her death from advanced senility on February 18, 1909. \(^{39}\) The estate which she left was surprisingly large, valued at close to $27,000.

As far as has been discerned, none of Caroline Overstreet's grandchildren ever married, which results in the end of her direct lineage. She is buried in Bonaventure Cemetery in a common plot with her husband, son, daughter, son-in-law, and eight grandchildren. There lies her entire family group.
The engraving on her tombstone is a wish fulfilled.  

Father I will that they also  
that thou hast given me be with  
me where I am.
NOTES


2. Goddard, pg. 164.


5. Goddard, pg 169.

6. Bonaventure Cemetery tombstone of Caroline Overstreet, lot 484-

7. Death certificate of Mary Cope dated April 2, 1814, and Maria Cope dated April 25, 1806. Chatham County Health Department.


11. Death certificate of Sarah Cope dated 10/24/1841. Chatham County Health Department.


    Chatham County Health Department.

17. The Savannah Republican 5/24/1825 pg.3 c.6, The Savannah
    Georgian 5/30/1827, Rhea Cumming Otto, 1850 Census of
    Georgia, Chatham County, (1975).

18. The Daily Georgian. 7/24/1827 pg.2 c.1.


21. Chatham County Record of Marriage Licenses 1805-1852, no.2810.

22. Bonaventure Cemetery Lots 484 and 485.


25. Death Certificate of Charles F. Johnson, dated 1875,
    Chatham County Health Department.


27. Ward Index, Berrien-Charlton-Chatham, Chatham Ward, lot 6.


31. Historic Savannah Foundation Inc., Historic Savannah.
    (1968), pg. 181.

32. Death Certificate for Caroline Overstreet dated 3/7/1876.
    Chatham County Health Department.

33. Savannah Morning News Index, 3/8/1876.
34. Will file for Caroline Overstreet, D-89, Chatham County Courthouse.


38. Ward Index. 9 Jones St. West.

39. Death Certificate of Mary E. Johnson, dated 2/18/1909, Chatham County Health Department.

40. Will file, Mary E. Johnson, J-331-50.

41. Bonaventure Cemetery Lots 484 and 485.
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J-164, J-606.