Major Edward White
A Biography in Savannah
presented to Dr. Warlick

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Table of Content

Table of Content page 1
Abstract page 2
Biography pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Notes page 10
Bibliography page 11
Abstract

Major Edward White was born in Brookley, Massachusetts in 1758. He came to Savannah in 1785 as a soldier in the Revolutionary Army. He married Mildred Scott Stubbs in 1792. They had three children by 1806, when Major White drew up his will.

Major White held several important social and civic positions in Savannah. He acquired real property in several counties. He died in 1812 and was interred in Colonial Cemetery.
Major Edward White

Major Edward White was born in Brooklyn, Massachusetts in 1758. He was a young man in Brooklyn at the genesis of the American Revolution. Edward White had to fight for his country like almost every young man has in the history of our nation. He served in the 8th, Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, holding the rank of Ensign and Lieutenant under Col. Michael Jackson. He was transferred to Yorktown, Virginia where he served as Lieutenant of the light Infantry in 1777. He was transferred to Savannah in 1785.¹

Edward White had a budding romance with Mildred Scott Stubbs which lead to their marriage in 1792. He was commissioned to the rank of Captain in 1793 to the Chatham County 1st Company which was headquartered at Franklin Square. Lieutenant White held this post for a year and then he turned in his resignation, but he later received an appointment to the Georgia brigade.²

In 1796 Edward White gave up the military and on July 4, of that year he was elected as the first Captain of the Savannah Watch-Guard. The duty of the watch-guard was to protect the city just as a police department does.
The first Savannah Watch - Guard was organized consisting of one captain, two sargeants, one drummer and twenty-four privates. The captain was required to instruct the men under him and turn in a complete written report each morning. The salary of the captain was $1.75 a month.  

As time transpired Major White held several important social and civic positions.

On Thursday, April 25, 1801, the Union Society of Savannah celebrated its fifty first anniversary and spent the day with the harmony that had always attended this old and charitable organization. Edward White was elected as one of the stewards for the next year.

Major White and his wife had three children when he drew up his will in 1806. The first child was Benjamin, the second was Thomas, and the third was a daughter Maria Susannah.

The major was an industrious man he invested in quite a bit of real property in Savannah and in other counties. Vincent's map shows three wooden houses on lot 29, two on the N\(^\frac{1}{2}\) and one on the s.w.\(^\frac{1}{4}\). The deeds (2861) and (2717) mention all of this property as belonging to Major Edward White. The only one that seem to have survived is the house of 519 East York Street.
Major White owned a great amount of personal property that he mentioned in his will. He owned several slaves and also property in Cincinnati, Ohio. The real property that he owned in Glynn county was purchased from a sheriff's sale.

As time progressed Major White continued to be active in civic affairs. In May, 1807, he was elected president of the New England Society of Georgia.

On July 7, 1807, Major White was elected vice president of the Savannah Independence day celebration.

The researcher cannot determine exactly when Major White was appointed Clerk of the Chatham County Court of Ordinary. However, it was prior to 1807 that Major White did receive a commission for that appointment by the Governor of Georgia.

In 1807 Edward White was removed from the office of clerk by the Justices of the Inferior Court, acting as a Court of Ordinary, and the clerk position was given to Thomas Burke Esq. The Justices ordered Edward White to turn over all of the court records, documents, and papers to Thomas Burke.

Edward White was a sharp minded man and he would not be easily taken advantage of. His belief was that Justices possessed no right or power legal or constitutional to deprive him of an office which had been secured to him by a commission from the governor, during good behavior.
Upon his refusal, the justices issued an attachment against him in the following words.

Georgia Chatham County

"To the Sheriff of the County of Chatham:"
"Whereas, it appears that Edward White, late keeper of the records, papers and documents of the Court of Ordinary of said county, hath removed a part of the said records, papers and documents, from their usual place of deposit, and to some other place to which access cannot now be obtained. And whereas, by such removal the present keeper of said records, papers and documents is prevented from taking the same into his possession, as he has been directed to do by the court. These are therefore to authorize and command you forthwith, to take and attach the body of said Edward White, and to bring him before us, that he may be dealt with for his said contempts as the law directs."

Given under our hand and seals in open court May 5, 1807.

After a long court trial Major White was reprimanded for contempt of the Inferior Court. He was discharged from his imprisonment by an order of the court. He applied for and obtained from the judge of the Superior Court a rule to show cause why a mandamus should not be issued to restore him to the office from which he had been removed by the Justices of the Inferior Court.

Cause was ordered to be shown on the first day of the ensuing term in January. In the mean time, however, the legislature interposed, and, by act of the General Assembly, restored him to office of clerk of the Court of Ordinary, and escheator of the county of Chatham, from which he had been removed by the Justices of the Inferior Court.
The rule for the mandamus being thus abandoned, the question, whether the Court of Ordinary can remove their clerks at will, not with standing his commission from the executive, remains judicially unsettled; as also, whether the legislature can review the proceedings of the court, and restore to office, under all the instances of this case; particularly, as a mandamus appears to be the clear remedy under the 7th. section of the 3rd. Article of the Constitution. 16

It is not known by the researcher just how long Major White remained Clerk of the Court of Ordinary after he was reinstated. As time progressed Major White took employment with the port of Savannah as an inspector. This is the job that he held at the time of his death in January, 1812. 17

Major Edward White died January 9, 1812 at his home. The cause of his death was apoplectic fit. He had resided in Savannah for 27 years during which time he held many important civil positions.

He left a widow and four children and a large amount of property, including several slaves. He died and was buried from his house. His funeral was attended by the Union Society and Volunteer Corps of Savannah. 18
He was interred in Savannah in the Colonial Cemetery. He was buried in lot section B. The Epitaphs read as follows.

To the memory of Major Edward White, An Officer of the Revolutionary Army who died January 9th A.D. 1812. Age 54 years.

Major White left his estate to his wife Milcey S. White, his sons Benjamin Aspinwall White and Thomas White, his daughter Maria Susannah White, his nephews Edward Seavers and Benjamin Seavers and to his niece Sucky White Seavers. The Seavers children were children of his sister Susannah Gore, wife of Samuel Gore, of Boston.

He stated in his will that should his wife marry again, his friend Mary Woodbridge or her daughter, Maria Woodbridge would become guardian of his daughter, Maria Susannah White. He mentioned his property in Savannah; the yellow house which was occupied by Mrs. Susannah Jenkins; by deed of gift of land to his son Benjamin.

Mentions land bought at Marshall's sale as estate of Hobkirt; Military lands Wabash County; patent signed by John Adams, President of the United States; half of the purchase of rum with T. M. Woodbridge, Adventure to Brem in consigned to William Woodbridge; a demand against the estate of James Carter deceased, for the amount of judgement cost.
As we can see from this Biography, Major Edward White was a strong minded and very industrious individual. By having this type of attitude, he has stamped his name in Chatham county history forever.
Notes


2. Ibid.

3. Georgia Gazette (Savannah), 15 September 1796, 2/1.


5. Edward White. Personal will. 7 documents.

6. Deed Book, 2 w 248.


9. Columbia Museum and Savannah Advertiser (Savannah) 7 July 1807 2/2.


11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.


15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Chatham County Health Department, Department of Vital Statistics.

18. Ibid.


20. Edward White, personal will. 7 documents.
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Columbia Museum and Savannah Advertiser (Savannah) 1801, 1807.

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Georgia Society Colonial Dames, Comp. Some Early Epitaphs in Georgia, 1924.


Ward Book, Franklin.