Cherry Vale

by James Nelson Frierson, written in April, 1944
Transcribed from his handwritten notes by Dargan Frierson, Jr.
September 21, 2013

This stately plantation dwelling house has been the family headquarters of the Vaughan and Frierson families for the past one hundred fifty years. Like so many other old Southern houses it was not built as a unit at one time, but in two segments, at widely separated periods. Built in the form of a capital T, the stem of the T, facing west, is much older than the top, which faces north towards Shaw Field and paved highway no. 76, which separates the Cherry Vale grounds from Shaw Field. The family tradition is that this older part of the house was built by the Scotsman John Anderson for his daughter Margaret who married Henry Vaughan. The birth of their oldest daughter, Julia Finetta Vaughan, is recorded in the Frierson family Bible as having taken place on the 20th of April, 1796. The family tradition is that she was born in the large room on the second floor of the original house - described above as the stem of the T - and she died at Cherry Vale on April 10, 1880. Julia Finetta Vaughan married John J. Frierson of Wyboo Plantation on Santee, in Clarendon County, South Carolina, on May 1, 1817, and of this union two children were born, John N. Frierson and James J. Frierson. In the division of the lands of Henry Vaughan (husband of Margaret Anderson), Cherry Vale became the property of his son Henry Vaughan who moved out to Mississippi in 1836 and settled in the rich Yazoo Delta. Before leaving for Mississippi, Henry Vaughan sold and conveyed Cherry Vale to his brother-in-law John J. Frierson. This was in January, 1836, and ever since that date, the property has been owned and occupied by the Frierson family.

Mrs. Margaret (Anderson) Vaughan, for whom Cherry Vale was built by her father, John Anderson, died on June 24, 1832. This was nearly four years before her oldest son, Henry, sold Cherry Vale to her son-in-law John James Frierson and moved to Mississippi. She survived her father by only ten years, as his death had occurred in 1822.

John J. Frierson, the first owner of the Frierson name to occupy Cherry Vale, did not long enjoy his new home, as his death occurred in November, 1839. He had been a soldier in the war of 1812, and was such an admirer of Napolean Bonaparte that he named his oldest so John Napolean! with the result that the unfortunate namesake of the little Emperor of the French was forced throughout life to sign his name "John N. Frierson".

When he died in 1839, John J. Frierson left surviving him his widow, Julia Finetta (Vaughan) Frierson, and two children, both sons and both unmarried at the time of their father's death. The older, John N., was born on February 21, 1818, and the younger, James Julian, was born on (left blank), 1832. The father died intestate as to Cherry Vale Plantation, and his widow released and conveyed her right of dower in the lands to the older son, who, in

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1842, brought a Bill of Equity - against his brother who was a minor, to obtain a partition of the lands between them. The Commissioners appointed by the Court to make the division, fixed the value of the lands and recommended to the Court that the older brother should become the sole owner of the place after paying to the younger the value of his share. This recommendation was adopted and was made the judgement of the Court, and thus Cherry Vale became the individual property of John N. Frierson in 1842. This young man had been graduated from the South Carolina College in 1837, with first honors in his class and life seemed full of hope and promise before him. Doubtless when he became sole owner of Cherry Vale he was planning to take unto himself a wife to preside over his home, and this he did about two years later, for on May 2, 1844, he was married to Catherine Kellogg Converse, the beautiful and attractive daughter and only child of the Rector of the Episcopal Church of Stateburg, who was then less than seventeen years old. In preparation for the coming of his bride he built for her the handsome three-story addition to the house which faces north toward Shaw Field. The parents of the charming young bride were the Rev. Augustus L. Converse and Mary Ann Kellogg, who had come from the North as a young married couple, to live in Stateburg, when he was elected Rector of the Episcopal Church there in February, 1827. Mrs. John N. Frierson spent her entire married life and widowhood at Cherry Vale and died there in October, 1899.

The two decades following her marriage were exceedingly busy years in the life of this young Southern matron. The institution of slavery was in active operation in the South at this period and the very large slave population which formed a part of the community life at Cherry Vale was a heavy responsibility upon the shoulders of this young daughter of a clergyman of the Episcopal Church - a responsibility which was also felt and shared by her husband. The old "Overseer's House" is still standing (April, 1944) and is situated on the south side of highway no. 76 and opposite Shaw Field. The large village where the Negroes lived, stood on the north side of the highway and on the site of the lower part of Shaw Field - a little way east of the Overseer's House. This village was called "The Street", and consisted of three or four rows of very substantial frame houses, with a distance of about two hundred feet between the rows of buildings, thus allowing space for a garden for each house.