

FORT MILL TIMES

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A.B. Springs in the winter of 1867 – '68

Editor's note: This is the second installment of a two-part series on the experiences of A.B. Springs during a segment of his life spanning 1867-'68.

By Louise Pettus Fort Mill Times

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Andrew Baxter Springs carried on an extensive correspondence with business associates (he had stocks in Graniteville Mills and in several railroads and banks) his father John Springs III had dealt with before his death in 1853. The younger Springs also had business associates that he had known while a student in South Carolina College or when studying law under Thomas J. Withers in Camden. Springs had never practiced law but found it useful in his business dealings and as a member of the state legislature.

Many people sought his advice. A businessman wrote that he was aware that he owed Springs but had no idea how much. His account books had been burned by Sherman's troops. He had hoped to receive dividends from his railroad stock but the shares had been burned with the account books – some had been purchased with Confederate money, some with U.S. money. "How, pray, does one deal with such? I wonder if the good old times of peace and security will once more return to us!" he wrote.

In the hard winter of 1867-'68 many were convinced that Northern radicals would seek revenge for the war. Another friend wrote Baxter that the "state lines of the Southern states will be obliterated and from the Potomac to the Rio Grande we will become territories." Another wrote that he could not live under the 14th Amendment.

His 15-year-old son Eli, who was off at school in Bingham Military Academy, wrote that he was hungry, so please send food and lamp wicks. How could he study without lamp wicks?

On March 26, 1867, Baxter received a letter from S.C. Governor James L. Orr appointing him as his York County deputy to distribute 200 bushels of corn. York County's share came from a large shipment donated to South Carolina as a gift of the Southern Relief Commission of the City of New York. On April 26, J.M. Cline wrote Baxter Springs, "There are some families below Rock Hill who are almost at the point of starvation." Cline headed a Rock Hill group that had written Charleston, New York and Baltimore for aid. He informed Springs that the corn had arrived at the Rock Hill depot with most of the sacks burst open and the freight agent demanded \$20 shipping charges. Cline asked if they could sell enough of the corn to pay the freight. Springs asked Col. Cadwallader Jones, owner of Mount Gallant plantation, to take care of the corn for the people on the west side of the river and said he would take care of the Fort Mill people (presumably out of his own holdings). A second shipping of 100 sacks of corn arrived along with a freight bill of \$30.

There were other problems. Governor Orr had asked the York County Clerk of Court and the Sheriff to select four men from each battalion to be managers and registrars at the polls. But only two men, Robert Ferguson and Thomas Spencer, agreed to take an oath that included their swearing to uphold the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. Col. Jones reported to Baxter Springs that there were "no suitable persons to be poll managers." Gov. Orr wrote back that "if no will agree, then strangers will be appointed." Oct. 14, 1867, Uncle Richard Clark Springs, a deaf mute, wrote from Spartanburg, "We are desperate. We have no meat or flour and no money since August." Baxter Springs got together enough food to sustain his uncle and his family for a few more months.

Springs, already miserable with carbuncles, must have believed that he was living in the worst of times.

Louise Pettus is a renowned local historian. "Fort Mill History" is sponsored each month by the Fort Mill Downtown Association. Check them out on the Web at www.fortmilledowntown.com.