

FORT MILL TIMES

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In 1892 Fort Mill hosts a huge wedding

Fort Mill Histor

By Louise Pettus Fort Mill Times

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"Cards are out announcing the marriage, on December 28th, of Miss Grace Allison White, of Fort Mill, to Colonel Leroy Springs of this place [Lancaster]. Miss White is the only daughter of Capt. Samuel E. White, the wealthiest and most prominent citizen of Fort Mill..."

The year was 1892. The groom was 31 years old, and the bride 19. Leroy Springs was president of the Bank of Lancaster, senior partner of the firm of Heath, Springs & Co., the largest cotton buyers and merchants of upcountry South Carolina. Three years later he would be president of the Lancaster Cotton Mills. Grace's father was the founder of the Fort Mill Manufacturing Co.

Their wedding would be a major social event of three counties: York and Lancaster, and Mecklenburg, N.C.

There was a number of pre-wedding festivities, the most interesting one hosted by Eli Springs of Charlotte and Brevard Springs of Fort Mill, Leroy's brothers, along with their mother, Mrs. A.B. Springs. A Charlotte newspaper article, entitled "Picnic at the Old Springs Place," told about Eli Springs hiring a train to transport 130 Charlotteans 17 miles to the old Springs homestead, built in 1790. Eli Springs made special arrangements with the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta Railroad to leave the train at the bridge near Springfield.

The reporter described the afternoon festivities: "The young people gathered in the beautiful garden in front of the old mansion and amused themselves in true picnic style, some by target shooting or playing whist, while others tripped the fantastic toe to the sweet strains of music furnished by the famous Italian band of Charlotte."

A rich dinner was served at six and "then promenading and love making was indulged in until eight o'clock, when the dancing commenced..." The dance lasted until midnight. Another dinner was served and the dancing began again, with the band playing until 2 a.m. The train was boarded by a tired and happy Charlotte group at 3 a.m. for the return trip.

On Dec. 29, 1892, the *Charlotte Observer* described the wedding in a lengthy account. The frontpage headlines were: "A Red and White Marriage - Historic Blending of Colors." The subheading continued: "The Houses of York and Lancaster join Hands and Hearts - A Scene of Magnificence Attends the Fulfillment of Love's Dream - A Brilliant Assemblage of Gallant Men and Beautiful Women."

According to the account, Samuel Elliott White provided the wedding guests with every courtesy possible. Those who arrived by train at the Fort Mill depot found that, to prevent their evening wear and dancing slippers from being soiled, a carpeted wooden sidewalk stretched from the depot to White's home (now the Guest House of Springs Industries) two blocks away. The approach to the house was hung with lighted Japanese lanterns and fairy lights. The Italian

band was again holding forth.

The wedding was at 8 p.m. The bride wore a rich white Ondine silk dress, court train and Duchesse lace; the bridal veil was held in place by a crescent of diamonds. The "fair daughter of York" descended the stairs on her father's arm. White placed his daughter's hand on the arm "of her betrothed in the nuptial archway, from which hung two hearts of white and red roses, emblematic of the houses of 'York and Lancaster,' united, and tied with red and white ribbons."

The red and white theme was carried out in the color scheme of the reception. As was traditional at all White family weddings, the cakes were crescent-shaped and piled in pyramids. The table was in the shape of a four-leaf clover, or, as the article pointed out, "a pretty suggestion of Kismet."

The couple left on the midnight train for a honeymoon in Florida and Cuba.

- *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.*