

Cousin Yates Snowden, A Letter, from ~

10th Sept. 1910

Dear Cousin Ella,

Annie & I came back from the mountains three days ago & found your post. Card of the 3^d inst, regarding Grandfather Snowden.

I wish you had told me who wanted the information. I wrote to the Registrar of Yale College, eight or ten years ago, for information; but he knew nothing of Chas. Blair Snowden except that he was a graduate of the Class of 1804.

In 1904, I was visiting with Annie – some charming Yankee friend in New London Conn. One day I ran over to New Haven, & went, of course, to Yale. I asked an intelligent looking Yankee cuss; “Is there any building hereabout that was standing in 1804?” He said, “yes,” & pointed to a red brick dormitory. “Well,” thought I, “Grandfather saw(?) that old “shack,” possibly lived there; and I am the only Snowden, probably, who has been here since he left Yale, full of high ambition and splendid air-castles.”

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To come down to the facts you want;

He was the son of Charles Snowden, Merchant, of Charleston, and Ann (Lawrence) Snowden.

He was graduated from Yale College in 1804 with five(?) other South Carolinians, including John C. Calhoun; (Bishop) Gadsden; - Felder, and others. He came back to Charleston, studied law in the office of Jno. Julius Pringle (an Oxford, or Lincoln (??) graduate, and one of the greatest lawyers in the, then, United States); he was admitted to the Bar, but, I have heard, was disappointed in the first case assigned to him, thereupon decided to take orders in the Episcopal Church. (This appears very natural to you, but very (???????????) to me, for his parents were good, “Circular Church,” Congregationalist people; -- “Dissenters,” as I am today.)

See Dalcho’s Church History, p.330 – In 1810 he was ordained as a priest in the Prot. Episcopal Church; having officiated as Layreader in the Church at Pineville in 1809.

Charles Blair Snowden was buried, as you know, at St. Stephens. His father Charles Snowden, of Charleston, merchant, is buried in the rear of the Unitarian

(formerly Congregational) Church in Archdale St. Charleston. This church, as you know, was congregational or “Independent.” After a while there was a split, and part turned Unitarian; but our great grandfather died, and was buried there, while the two churches were Trinitarian – I don’t know where Ann (Lawrence) Snowden was buried, probably at the same place, for I know (from Rev. Dr. Keith’s published works) that she was a good “Circular Church” Christian.

As to our grandfather’s mental power and character, I have, somewhere, a published tribute and biographical sketch by his friend Bishop Gadsden; but, I can’t lay my hand on it. You would probably be surprised to ~~hear~~ read what Bishop Gadsden thought of him; it is in the highest vein of admiration for a man of unusual mental power, and of one who had an almost quixotic regard for truth; who would have died rather than depart from what he regarded as absolute truth.

The truth is, my bar cousin, that Grandfather was far (intellectually) above all of the Gaillards, Porchers, Gourdins, Palmers, and other families in St. Johns & St. Stephens; - he would die, as Bishop Gadsden said, before he would depart an inch from what he believed to be true, and so he stopped preaching, and died, as many of your and some of my good friends and ~~mine~~ relatives, think, under a shadow. But the more I read & think about him, the more I admire his splendid, honest spirit. As you know, Grandmother gave me a number of his manuscript sermons; and one of them, at least, has improved me wonderfully. I wish I could have run some (?) this summer, if only for a day, but it was impossible.

I love you all, and, as I get older, the blood-tie grows stronger with me. Write me fully as to more information as to Grandfather; & tell me of cousin Wm. & Clarence & Henrietta, & John & his motherless chicks, & Ella, & Mattie.

Always your affect. cousin

Yates Snowden

~ Transcribed in early 2023, from the original letter, from collections of Keith Gourdin ~

Rev. Charles Blair Snowden, son of Charles Snowden, a merchant of Charleston, SC, and Ann Lawrence, his wife, was born in that city on 27 November 1785. He was prepared for college at the Associated Academy in Charleston. After graduation from Yale in 1804, he studied law at home in the office of John Julius Pringle and was admitted to the bar in 1808. He gave up law for the ministry of

the Protestant Episcopal Church and was ordained a deacon by Bishop White on 11 April 1811. He served as minister in the Pineville Chapel and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in St. Stephen, and in two adjoining parishes while residing in Pineville, SC. He married Maria Lois Drake, daughter of Charles C. and Lois (Lequeux) Drake, on 16 April 1812. He resigned his charge in 1817, but continued to reside there, engaged in part in teaching at the Pineville Academy, until his death, on 11 November 1825, at the age of 40. His wife died at home in Pineville in May 1885 in her 92nd year. They had nine children: Prof. Yates Snowden, of USC was a grandson and owns a miniature of his grandfather painted in his senior year.

Edited by Keith Gourdin