HENRY KOLLOCK BURROUGHS

by

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History 300

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Henry Kollock Burroughs was born into a prominent Savannah family at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He married, had a large family, and led an active and distinguished life in his hometown as a physician. In 1845 he was elected mayor, an office to which he was re-elected two more times. Falling victim to consumption, he died still a relatively young man and in the prime of his life, at age forty-two.
HENRY KOLLOCK BURROUGHS

Henry Kollock Burroughs was born in 1809 to a "distinguished and opulent merchant" of Savannah, Mr. Benjamin Burroughs, and his wife, Catherine Eirick Burroughs.1 Henry was the fourth son in a family of seven children.2 His father had come to Savannah in 1796, by way of Augusta, Georgia,3 from New York where he was born March 31, 1780.4

The progenitor of the Burroughs family was John Burroughes who arrived in Salem, Massachusetts sometime in 1637 from Dorsetshire, England where he was born in 1617.5 John was an original settler and leading man of Newtown, Long Island, New York.6 James Riker, Jr. notes that John was a "skillful penman, a quite rare accomplishment in those days."7 Because of his special skill he served as clerk of the court and, until his death in 1678, as the town clerk.8

After arriving in Savannah, Benjamin Burroughs established himself as a merchant and married Miss Catherine Eirick on July 2, 1799.9 Catherine's father was Alexander Eirick, a member of the colonial parliament,10 and her mother's name was Ruth Brown.11

Benjamin became a prosperous cotton and commission merchant and formed a partnership with Oliver Sturges in a merchantile firm that handled groceries, wines and dry goods,
as well as exported cotton, rice and lumber to Europe and the West Indies. Burroughs and Sturges were also shipping agents for coastal trading vessels.12

Although the partnership was dissolved September 1, 1806, the two men apparently maintained a close relationship.13 For, in 1813, they began construction of their "mirror houses" on the southwest Trust Lot T, in Reynolds Ward, on Reynolds Square.14 Reynolds Square, laid out in 1734, was the center of colonial government and was named for Georgia's first Royal Governor, Capt. James Reynolds.15 The houses occupied the former site of the Christ Church rectory where John Wesley had lived from 1737 to 1738 and started his first Sunday school.16

The Burroughs-Sturges homes were built in the Federal style and contrasted sharply to Savannah's other buildings which, for the most part, were wooden structures.17 Each residence was valued at seven thousand dollars, an impressive amount at that time.18 In 1816, the men obtained separate titles to their homes, held jointly until this time.19

Henry no doubt lacked little in comfort and attention growing up in such a prominent and prosperous large family, and he more than likely found an active port city like Savannah to be an adventuresome place to live in the early nineteenth century. May of 1819 must have been a particularly exciting time, for the new Steam Ship Savannah was being prepared for her "epoch-making" voyage across the Atlantic—the first steamship to make such a trip.20 To compound the excitement, President James Monroe along with
Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, visited Savannah to inspect the ship before she was launched with her cargo of cotton for Liverpool.  

Interest in this venture would have been especially keen for the Burroughs, because Benjamin and Oliver Sturges, partners once again, provided financial backing for the enterprise, and plans for the trip were drawn up in the Sturges' house by the Savannah Steam Ship Company Directors. In 1820 Benjamin and Oliver each bought a third interest in the vessel, which made eight round trips between New York and Savannah before it "founndered on a sand bar off Long Island and slipped to the bottom of the sea" on November 5, 1821.

The Burroughs were also active members of the Independent Presbyterian Church, where Henry's father was an elder. Benjamin had contributed five thousand dollars in 1817 to the building of the new church, which was finished in 1819. The dedication service of the new church coincided with President Monroe's previously mentioned visit to Savannah, and the congregation of the church was privileged to have him share in this special occasion. The dedication was made by the pastor, Reverend Dr. Henry Kollock, very possibly Henry's namesake. In 1822 Benjamin Burroughs purchased a family pew (number 35) in the church, for $1130, which was transferred to his son, William H. Burroughs, May 1, 1855.

1820 also proved to be an eventful year that a boy of eleven, like Henry, would not likely forget. In early
January in the wee hours of the morning a fire broke out in a livery stable in Franklin Square on Jefferson Street. Winds fanned the flames, blowing "burning cinders" a long distance and setting the roofs of houses on fire. The weather had been dry for several months, and most of the houses were made of wood; both factors contributed to the devastation. As the fire spread vaults of gunpowder exploded in Market Square, and the Exchange and the market were consumed. The Great Fire of 1820 destroyed 94 lots, 321 wooden buildings, and 463 houses, with losses calculated at four million dollars. The Burroughs' home was spared, but because it came so close, it must have been a terrifying experience for Henry and his family.

On top of this catastrophe, Savannah was hit later the same year with the worst yellow fever epidemic to date. The population of Savannah by 1820 had reached 7,523. But from May until December the fever claimed between 640 and 660 of those lives, about one of every ten residents. The source of the epidemic was later blamed on the "miasma", or unwholesome elements in the atmosphere, and the "putridity" of the environment resulting from unseasonably warm temperatures the preceding winter, excessive rain during the spring, the presence of foreigners, and rapid population growth. Sanitary conditions at the time were still relatively primitive, and environmental conditions were excellent for the breeding of germs and mosquitoes. Furthermore, it was not until 1901, over eighty years later, that Walter Reed's research provided the answer to the control of the dreaded
disease. In the meantime it continued to frighten and victimize Savannah citizens and drive them from their city homes in the summertime.

One can only speculate as to Henry's childhood education. Although public schools in the South were almost non-existent in the early nineteenth century, Savannah did have a preparatory school, the Chatham Academy, which was chartered in 1788. There were also other private classes taught in churches and homes. For the wealthier citizens of Savannah it would not be unlikely that private tutors or teachers were hired to educate their children at home. Henry may also have been sent to the Northeast for his education, as was not at all unusual. He was listed as an arrival on a passenger ship from New York in 1826 and again in 1831, at which times he may have been returning home from school or from a visit with his New York relatives.

However, no speculation is necessary concerning his higher education, for The Georgian carried the announcement of his commencement from the Medical College of the State of South Carolina, in Charleston. The degree of Medical Doctor was conferred on Henry March 10, 1834. Little more than a month later the newspaper ran the following announcement:

Dr. Henry K. Burroughs

Respectfully offers his professional services to the citizens of Savannah and its vicinity. He may be found at his office, or the residence of his father, east of the Episcopal Church, where all calls will be
promptly attended to. 38

This leads one to assume that he was again living with his family in the Burroughs' home on Reynolds Square. Although Henry went immediately from school into his medical practice, he was not issued his license until December, 1835 by the Georgia State Board of Medical Examiners. 39

During his college years Henry was also satisfying his military duty as a member of the Savannah Volunteer Guards (SVG), the "oldest infantry organization in Georgia." 40 In 1802 the SVG became attached to the First Regiment, First Brigade, First Division of the Georgia Militia. 41 Henry distinguished himself by taking a gold medal for marksmanship on January 8, 1833, when the SVG paraded and fired in celebration of the Anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, fought on this date in 1815. 42 However, Henry later distinguished himself in not so honorable a fashion while in the line of military duty. He was among several other SVG soldiers who defaulted at a regimental inspection and review held in April, 1835. A Regimental Court of Inquiry was held at the Exchange about two weeks later, and Henry was fined one dollar for having a dirty gun. 43

Perhaps Henry's negligence at this time was understandable and excusable, for only a couple of months prior to the inspection he had become a married man—reason enough to divert his attention away from cleaning guns. The wedding took place at Columbia, South Carolina, the home of the bride, on February 5, 1835. The Reverend Mr. Shand married Henry and Miss Eliza Gabriella DeSaussure, the daughter of
William F. DeSaussure, Esq., a lawyer of Columbia. 44

The DeSaussures of South Carolina were Huguenots, or French Calvinists, and were descended from Henry DeSaussure who arrived in Charles Town about 1730 from Lausanne, Switzerland. He settled in the Beaufort District. 45 The DeSaussure name was associated with domestic slave-trading in the Antebellum South. 46 Charleston and Savannah were both "centers of slave-auction traffic." And by the 1840's and 1850's the average price for a slave was said to be about eight hundred dollars, providing the potential for considerably high profits. 47 Henry DeSaussure's slave holding at the time of his death, in 1761, numbered thirty-nine and were valued at £6,670 of his £10,400 personal property. 48

Henry Burroughs was also a slave-holder, claiming an average of five in the tax digests for the 1840's. 49 Furthermore, the county deed records reveal that Henry sold several slaves between 1843 and 1851, although the average price he received was about $425 per slave. 50

Henry and his new bride returned to Savannah to live in the home on Reynolds Square with his parents and the family of his older brother, William, who was a cotton merchant. 51 Whereupon Henry resumed his medical practice. He was appointed to the Board of Health for Reynolds Ward, an appointment that was to continue for several years. 52 He was also an active member of the Georgia Medical Society, 53 having presented two reports to the group, one in 1840 on inflammations and the other in 1842 on the last stages of consumption. 54 The latter was an ominous topic for Henry
to be addressing at this time in his life.

Henry's medical expertise surely provided him with many rewarding experiences, but his responsibilities as a physician also entailed frequent encounters with death and suffering. This must have been especially difficult to bear when, considering the limited medical advances of the mid-nineteenth century, he could do nothing to help members of his own family. Such an occasion occurred on April 16, 1837, when Henry's father died "after a painful illness" at the age of fifty-eight. Henry and two other doctors were in attendance. 55

Benjamin Burroughs had named his sons, Joseph, William, Benjamin, and Henry, executors of his estate which was to be divided among his children, special provisions having been made for his wife. The estate included the family home, several lots and buildings in Reynolds Ward, almost 250 acres of land, ten slaves, and the family pew in the Independent Presbyterian Church. 56

The family was to have little respite from grief, for hardly more than a year later, on July 15, Eliza and Henry lost their first born and only child, Benjamin, to cholera infantine. He was only fourteen months old. 57 The notice in the Daily Georgian read, "'suffer little children to come unto me.'" 58 In the following years, though, their family grew to include Sarah, William DeSaussure, Mary Elizabeth, Catherine, and Gabriella. Two other children, Catherine and Henry K., died in infancy. 59

Henry made time in his busy life, between medical
duties and family responsibilities, for an active interest in politics. He was among fourteen contenders on the reform ticket for city alderman in 1841 and served in that capacity for one year, 1841 to 1842. Thus Henry began an eventful seven years in the political arena as an avowed member of the Whig party. The anti-Jacksonian Whig plank called for the "checking of executive tyranny by strengthening Congress" and "strict observance of the rights of the State" on the nullification issue. The Southern Whig constituency was composed mostly of slave-holders who feared federal government interference into the institution of slavery and were closely allied with South Carolina concerning nullification.

The political scene during the 1840's was characterized by inflamed confrontations between Whigs and Democrats. The editors of the two Savannah newspapers, William H. Bulloch of The Georgian and S.T. Chapman of The Republican, pursued a bitter running battle in print in 1845, over the nullification issue. Chapman backed the extreme States Rights Whigs, while Bulloch sided with the Democrats.

The municipal elections in December of that year were particularly noteworthy. Henry Burroughs was running for the office of mayor, as the Whig candidate, against the incumbent Dr. Richard Wayne, the Democratic contender. The Whig headquarters were in Lyceum Hall on the southwest corner of Broughton and Bull Streets, and Democrat headquarters were located on the southwest corner of Broughton and Barnard. Thomas Gamble relates the following concerning the campaigns:
Sallying from their respective castles for parades, the contending political elements at times crossed paths with resulting collisions that meant cracked heads and bloody noses. 66

The violence carried over through election day, "one party doubtless as guilty as the other." 67 And Dr. Wayne suffered a broken arm caused by "blows from clubs" during an attack in the courthouse from "several bitter Whigs running amuck through the building." 68

Gamble claims that Henry Burroughs was one of a "quartette of 'Before-the-War' physicians who took an active, one might truthfully say pugnacious or bellicose, part in Savannah politics." 69 In spite of their campaign tactics, Gamble concedes that the doctors did a commendable job during their tenures.

The office of Mayor had only been an elective office by the people since December of 1843. 70 And since Henry was re-elected for two subsequent terms, 71 he must have performed more than satisfactorily to maintain the people's support. He served from December 8, 1845 until December 11, 1848, three one-year terms. 72

He oversaw several accomplishments during his mayoralty. The Central Railroad Line from Savannah to Atlanta was completed, and in March of 1848 Savannah acquired her first telegraph. 73 In an effort to increase the efficiency of the fire department, a new fire house was built, and a new alarm system was instituted which consisted of a system of ringing bells at various locations around town. Plans were made
to establish a marine police force which was finally organized in 1848, and sewers were constructed to improve "healthfulness" in the city.\textsuperscript{74} Furthermore, when war broke out with Mexico and the Irish Jasper Greens were sent from Savannah, Mayor Burroughs provided for the relief of any needy families the Greens members had to leave behind.\textsuperscript{75}

By the end of Henry's mayoralty, in 1848, Savannah's population had reached 13,573, an increase of 2,359 since 1840 and an increase of 8,231 since Henry's birth in 1809.\textsuperscript{76} Savannah was definitely growing. There were at this time thirty-six physicians practicing in town, and cotton was still the largest export.\textsuperscript{77}

Although Henry appears to have maintained his residence on Reynolds Square through the years, he had owned a large plantation outside Savannah. In 1837 he advertised a "valuable cotton plantation" for sale, located on the White Bluff Road, about four miles from the city. It was advertised as containing about four hundred acres of land.\textsuperscript{78} But it was not until May of 1845 that the sale was made final. Henry sold Cedar Grove Plantation to George A. Reed for $3,700. The records show the plantation as actually containing 650 acres and being bounded by the Little Ogeechee River as well as the White Bluff Road. Cattle and sheep were included in the sale.\textsuperscript{79} The area covered by Cedar Grove Plantation would have been the same area that is today covered by Berkshire West inside Windsor Forest on the south side of Savannah. Within Berkshire West there is a residential area that retains the name Cedar Grove Plantation.
But no records were discovered that revealed whether the Burroughs ever resided at Cedar Grove.

Henry obviously led a very active and full life, but unfortunately not a very long life. For on Monday, October 13, 1851, at age forty-two, he died at his home.\(^6\) The cause of death was recorded as consumption.\(^6\) The newspaper revealed that he had been in poor health for several years. His funeral was held at eleven o'clock the next morning at the family home.\(^6\) He was originally buried in Colonial Cemetery, but was later removed from the old cemetery and buried in Laural Grove on May 27, 1858, lot 1154.\(^8\) On that site is the Burroughs family vault containing Henry's immediate family members, his parents, his brother William and family, and his two sisters, Catherine Green and Elizabeth Law and their families. Sadly, as the Savannah historian, Walter Hartridge, so aptly remarked, there is "no inscription, alas!"\(^8\) Today the vault is overgrown and invaded with thick vines and appears not to have been cared for in some time.

In his will, Henry bequeathed "the whole of his estate" to his wife, Eliza, and named her executrix, to be advised by his brother, Joseph, and her father, W.F. DeSaussure. No listing or inventory of property was included in the will, and Henry's only request was that his wife wear no mourning upon his death, except in public.\(^8\)

It is difficult to determine what his immediate family did after Henry's death. They may have remained in Savannah or returned to South Carolina to live with or near the
DeSaussure family. Henry's daughter, Sarah, at age twelve, was already living with her grandfather, William DeSaussure, in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1850.86 Furthermore, two of his other daughters, Catherine (Katie) and Mary Elizabeth, married South Carolina men. Katie married Lawrence Whittaker Taylor,87 and Mary Elizabeth married Frances Holmes Trenholm in June of 1865.88

Henry's only surviving son, William DeSaussure Burroughs, was involved in the Civil War, for notice of his "fall" in the "valley of Virginia" was printed in the newspaper on November 3, 1864, eulogizing, "He was a good soldier, and always found equal to any emergency."89 Unfortunately no information could be located concerning his military rank, affiliation, or his age.90

Today little is left to remind us that Henry Kollock Burroughs was, 130 years ago, an active and prominent Savannah citizen. The Burroughs' home was torn down in this century and replaced by the John Wesley Hotel.91 Cedar Grove Plantation no longer resembles a thriving cotton plantation, and the Whigs became extinct following the Compromise of 1850, the presidential victory of Franklin Pierce in 1852, and the deaths of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, who held the party together over the years.92 But Henry Burroughs was very much a part of nineteenth century Savannah, and his death at such an early age leaves one wondering what more might have filled these pages had he lived through the tumultuous years that soon followed.
EPILOGUE

It appears that Henry Burroughs' living descendants would most likely be located in South Carolina; unfortunately, this researcher ran into dead ends and out of time. Although there were some leads that provided potential for further follow-up. From the marriage of Catherine (Katie) Burroughs to Lawrence Whittaker Taylor three sons were born: William Jesse (born 1871), Lawrence, and Alfred. Of them there is record of William Jesse, a druggist, having a son, also named William Jesse, who was born in 1906.¹

In addition, Mary Elizabeth Burroughs and Frances Trenholm had a son, William DeSaussure (born 1866), who married and had children. They also had three daughters who married and had families: Helen Morgan (born 1871) married William Wilson Breneman, Lillah (born 1873) married John G. Capers, and Josephine married Hinckly Lyman.² Frances Trenholm was a planter near Columbia, South Carolina after the Civil War, then returned to his home in Charleston. In 1887 he moved to Washington.³
NOTES

1 Robert Archibald Burroughs, The Burroughs Family
     Genealogical Chart (Jacksonville, Florida, 1949), Georgia
     Historical Society; James Riker, Jr., The Annals of New-

2 Ibid.

3 The Georgian, 24 April 1837.

4 Riker, p. 385.

5 Ibid., p. 383; William Harden, A History of Savannah
     and South Georgia (Chicago & New York: Lewis Pub. Co., 1913),
     p. 1074: Harden states, "as an adherent of Charles I, he
     [John] had been one of those who fled from England at the
     time [about 1642] to escape the religious and political
     persecution after the dissolution of the long parliament of
     which he had been a member." This leads to a discrepancy
     concerning these dates; furthermore, Joseph R. Strayer and
     Hans W. Gatzke, The Mainstream of Civilization (New York:
     Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 426, give the date of
     the dissolution of the Long Parliament as 1653.

6 Riker, p. 27; Harden, A History, p. 1074.

7 Riker, p. 383.

8 Ibid.; Harden, A History, p. 1074.

9 Harden, A History, pp. 1074-1075.

10 Ibid.

11 Walter C. Hartridge, Hartridge Genealogical Collection,
     Box 8, Georgia Historical Society.

12 Harden, A History, p. 1075; The Oliver Sturges House,
(Savannah: Headquarters of the Morris Newspaper Corp.).

13 Hartridge.

14 Oliver Sturges House; Oliver Sturges House Historical Marker, Savannah, Ga.; Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc.; Historic Savannah (Savannah: Historic Savannah Foundation, 1968): this last source sets the date of construction as "about 1819."

15 Savannah News Press Magazine (1 February 1970), p. 5: this name had also been as John in other accounts.

16 Edith Inglesby, "Low Country Sketches," Islander, November 1972, p. 28; The Oliver Sturges House.

17 Frederick Spitzmiller, Kacey Jones, and Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc., Savannah: An Architectural Heritage (Savannah: Atlantic Printing Co., 1983 Calendar). An interesting and revealing side/back view of the houses can be seen in the J.L. Firmin Cerveau painting (1837) at the Georgia Historical Society.

18 Oliver Sturges House.

19 Ibid.

20 Harden, A History, p. 1075.

21 Oliver Sturges House.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Harden, A History, p. 1075.

25 Oliver Sturges House.

26 Harden, A History, p. 287.

27 Independent Presbyterian Church Pew Rents (Savannah: Independent Presbyterian Church, 1803-1822, 1820-1890).
29 Ibid., pp. 289-90.
30 James J. Waring, Epidemic at Savannah (Savannah: Morning News Steam Printing House, 1879), pp. 18, 117.
31 Ibid., pp. 145-46.
34 Joseph Waring, p. 63.
36 Georgian, 14 October 1826; 31 October 1831.
37 Ibid., 11 March 1834.
38 Ibid., 24 April 1834.
41 Ibid.
42 Georgian, 9 January 1833.
43 Ibid., 27 May 1835.
44 Ibid., 26 February 1835; South Carolina Census, 1850, Richland County, p. 028, (William DeSaussure).
46 Peter d'A. Jones, The U.S.A.: A History of its People
and Society to 1877 (Homewood, Il.: The Dorsey Press, 1976), p. 220

47 Ibid.

48 Hirsch, p. 178.

49 Tax Digests, 1845-1850, Savannah, Ga., Georgia Historical Society.


52 Georgian, 11 May 1837; 4 May 1838; 22 May 1841.

53 Georgia Medical Society Record Book, Georgia Historical Society, 24 January 1837, p. 18; Georgian, 17 April 1837.

54 Georgia Medical Society Papers, Georgia Historical Society, 5 December 1840; 1 December 1842.


56 Benjamin Burroughs, Last Will and Testament, #223, Chatham County Courthouse, Probate Court, Savannah, Ga.; Estates Book, Chatham County Courthouse, Probate Court, Savannah, Ga.

57 Chatham County Bureau of Vital Statistics, Death Records, 1838.

58 Georgian, 28 July 1838.
59 Robert A. Burroughs: no dates could be located.


64 Ibid., p. 234.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., p. 235.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.: The other members of the quartette were Drs. Wayne, Arnold, and Daniell. Gamble notes that, "between them they held the mayoralty sixteen years."


71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., pp. 193, 195.

74 Ibid., pp. 197-98.

75 Ibid., pp. 202-03.

Robert A. Burroughs: no dates could be located.


Ibid., p. 234.

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Ibid.: The other members of the quartette were Drs. Wayne, Arnold, and Daniell. Gamble notes that, "between them they held the mayoralty sixteen years."


Ibid.

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Ibid., pp. 193, 195.

Ibid., pp. 197-98.

Ibid., pp. 202-03.

Bancroft, pp. 12, 37.

Georgian, 7 February 1837.

Deed Records, Chatham County Courthouse, Savannah, Ga., Book CCC (1844-45), pp. 205-06.

Savannah Morning News, 14 October 1851.

Chatham County Bureau of Vital Statistics, Death Records, 1851: records date of death as 14 October 1851, but the funeral was held the morning of the 14th.

Savannah Morning News, 14 October 1851.


Hartridge.

Henry Kollock Burroughs, Last Will and Testament and codicil, #275, Chatham County Courthouse, Probate Court, Savannah, Ga.

South Carolina Census, 1850, Richland County, p. 028, (William DeSaussure).

South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine 8 (1907), p. 115.

Ibid., 16 (1915), pp. 158-59.

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Claud Estes, List of Field Officers, Regiments, and Battalions in the Confederate States Army (Macon, Ga.: J.W. Burke, 1912)

91 Oliver Sturges House.

92 Gruver, p. 457.
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1 South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine 8 (1907), p. 115.
2 Ibid., 16 (1915), pp. 158-59, 163.
3 Ibid., p. 159.
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*Savannah Morning News*, 14 October 1851; 3 November 1864.
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AAA (1842-43), p. 544; CCC (1844-45), pp. 205-206, 330;
HHH (1850-51), pp. 337, 343, 408.

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