

Biography - Daniel Heyward (1720 – 1777)

Excerpt from *Heyward* (The Red Book) by James Barnwell Heyward II, published 1925

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...while it seems evident that each generation comfortably filled its own era of activity in a country, the climate of which was certainly a tribulation yet the sterling initiative spirit that was inherent qualification of the stock cannot be said to have forged its way to the front until Daniel Heyward of "Old House" and his next younger brother Thomas of "Pocataligo" had got in their quota, after which, the deck was cleared for that later culture and eminence that nothing but a bloody and useless revolution could mar.

According to recitals, ...Daniel Heyward as soon as he obtained his majority, took leave of the family homestead on James Island and together with two negro slaves inherited from his father he worked his way in an open vessel by the inland water route some 75 or more miles westward and settled in the unclear forest of old Granville County, later on Beaufort, and in more recent years Jasper County, South Carolina; the immediate stop being near the upper landing on the creek still called Okatie. A section of the country then and many years later called "Indian Land".

Exactly how much of his later prosperity was strictly the result of actual cultivation of the soil is debatable, as Daniel Heyward was an adventurous speculator in land. He not only took out grant after grant himself, as page after page of the land-grant books of the State to be found at Columbia, recording grants to him alone, establish; but he was a shrewd judge of land in its wild state, therefore, he only retained possession of just that kind as has proven a century late to be the very best for his far seeing purposes.

So much is that true, that of all the some 25,000 acres of land devised by his son Captain Nathaniel Heyward (who himself only inherited about 4,000 acres) the ownership retained by the descendants of the said Nathaniel Heyward for any length of time after the emancipation of their negro slaves, were a certain 15,000 selected by Daniel Heyward. The said land being that devised respectively to the eldest son of each wife, viz: Thomas and James; which land is located on the western bank of the Cuckolds Creek; a stream in Colleton County that empties into the Combahee river about midway of its fresh tide water section. How he came to call the said five different tracts, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Copenhagen, Hamburg and Rotterdam has puzzled quite a number of his descendants.

Daniel Heyward was one of the first of those men interested in the cultivation of rice, who undertook to reclaim that kind of swamp upon the idea of utilizing the tidal overflow in the irrigation of the plant, besides which the wonderful success that followed the use of the seven days multiple flow--a concomitant benefit possible out of the tidal flow--was said to be largely attributable to his perceptiveness and study of botany.

In accordance with the custom of the day, Daniel Heyward did not state in his Will how many negro slaves he had owned, but the tradition on the subject was that he expected to own an even thousand before he died. The reckoning by his Executors however only shows a list calling for 999; which, when taken together with the 15,746 and five sixths acres of land that he divided among his heirs, establishes that Daniel Heyward accumulated during his 35 years of active life about as much of that kind of property as any other individual of his generation within the Province of South Carolina had been able to do.

The amazing part of his activity as an individual is established by the fact that he did not buy land just because it joined his own, as some people have done, but at his death he devised some 7,000 acres located at least 15 miles to the North of his front gate; then next came those valuable tracts of rice fields in Colleton County which were all twenty five miles to the east; and thirdly, those Sea Island Plantations, one on Port Royal and the other being Callawassie, which is just off Spring Island, neither being nearer than 15 miles even by water; and lastly, came the Vernezovre tract on Savannah river, which is fully twenty miles up to the Southwest. All of which widely separated operation had to be visited not less than twice a week either on horse-back or in an old time two wheeled gig.

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...many circumstances connected with his life events [evince (?)] that he was not of a Military turn of mind; neither would he, as he says himself in his letter to his son Thomas, "Deal in politics" as on a certain occasion when he had been elected Warden of the Parish Church (an office which in that day carried with it the duty of supervisor of elections) he declined to serve; whereupon he was fined by the Council of the Province in the sum of ten pounds.

His election as Colonel of the Militia however was an entirely different proposition, as necessity required that all white men be organized as a precaution against not only uprising by the Indians but among the negroes.

Even up to 1860, all public roads throughout every sea-coast County in the State of South Carolina were regularly patrolled every night by squads of militia; no negro being allowed to be upon one after nightfall without a written pass from either his owner or plantation overseer; which explains the willingness by Daniel Heyward to hold official rank when it came to the regulation of the patrol system.

He certainly was not in sympathy, however with the revolt by the Province of South Carolina against the English Government. Proud of what his father and he himself had accomplished in the American wilderness and without any Puritanical animosity to a monarchical form of government but attached by reason of his Cavalier tradition to the person of the King; he would have much preferred to see both business and politics righted without a complete severance from the Mother country.

As soon as his eldest son Thomas Heyward jun'r decided to take up the practice of law as his profession of course he was dispatched to London as being the proper place for him to read Blackston; and the young man did learn quite a lot about the practice of law, but he also learned only too well that a Colonial citizen was welcome to accumulate all the wealth possible in the pursuit of agriculture or trade, but any political preferment was only to be expected by the way of appointment from London; which so exasperated our Thomas jun'r that he together with quite a clique of other young bloods of his vent of mind came back home absolute separatists; and they gradually but surely had their way.

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That Daniel Heyward himself ever enjoyed any Collegiate course is not probable; but that he received a good grammar school education is established by the letter [printed in TRB]...and it surely is a queer writing in which a father undertakes to lecture a member of Congress, even though he was his own son, as to the deference supposed to be due those superior in authority.

That Daniel Heyward was full of enterprise even late in life is evinced by his having undertaken to operate a cotton factory, which certainly was among, if not the very first movement of its kind in America as the earliest one elsewhere was at Boston, and it only began operating in 1778; whereas, Daniel Heyward in February 1777 writes his son about his 'Manufactory' which most probably was on his plantation in the country.

For such to be a virtue, Daniel Heyward seems to have been a close economical man; as even long after he had become a wealthy man, when the family had finished their reading at night, if they neglected to do so, he himself would get up from his seat and snuff out all candles not needed for light by which to move around.

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Colonel Daniel Heyward owned a fully furnished residence in the city of Charles Town and [it] probably follows that it was the summer home of his whole family. His presence there in February, as his letter to his son Thomas discloses was only to partake of the social life that was then and has ever since been at its height in the city of Charleston during the month of February, when the horse racing, and the respective balls, such as the St. Cecelia and Jockey Club came to the front later on take place.

These festivities being over, the planter element hied themselves back to their country homes, where they remained up to the first of May. As soon as that date came along however, they sought refuge from malaria on their low-land plantations by either resorting to some pineland settlement or, if they could afford it, by going to the city of Charleston whereby a continued life during the summer, they imagined that immunity from Yellow fever was secured. That Colonel Daniel Heyward was one of the latter kind is somewhat evidenced by his having bought a pew in St. Michael's Church...."