

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Easter in the South

There could not be a more delightful experience given to anyone during this Easter holiday than we have enjoyed these past few days. To begin with we attended Good Friday services in St. Augustine, the oldest city in the United States, worshipping in Trinity Episcopal Church which was begun in 1825 and is the oldest Episcopal Church in Florida.

On Easter Saturday we motored through Georgia where at Midway we visited one of Georgia's historical landmarks the Midway Congregational Church in St John's Parish. This church of colonial architecture was built in 1792 The old slave gallery and high pulpit remain unchanged. The pews are enclosed with aisle doors upon which are name plates but none of the names are now legible.

A grove of great live oaks, older probably than the church or its little cemetery across the road, surround the clapboard building. Several colored men who were preparing the church for Sunday services told us that the building had been moved within the past six weeks from its old location next to the cemetery site to the present site in order to put the new highway through where the state engineers wished it to be. Just another example of ruining history and beauty in order to create more speed for the motorist.

From the congregation of this lovely old church, which never numbered more than 150 at any time, have come two signers of the Declaration of Independence, two revolutionary generals, and a U.S. senator. It is also said that Gen. Sherman and his men camped on the grounds during the War Between the States.

Among early pastors of the church were Abel Holmes, father of Olive Wendell Holmes, and Jedidiah Morse, father of Samuel Morse, and an ancestor of our Samuel F. B. Morse of Pebble Beach. The congregation of the old church has given 86 ministers and seven foreign missionaries to the Congregational Church.

On Saturday afternoon we arrived in Charleston, one of America's oldest and most historic cities, built between the Ashley and Cooper rivers. Sunday morning, we attended Easter Services in Old St. Andrews Episcopal Church, which dates **(missing words)** of South Carolina. An act of Assembly of 1704 provided for 10 parishes,

among them St. Andrew's. Erection of the church was begun in 1706. It is the oldest architecture of the Episcopal establishment in South Carolina. Here also are the original old pews with the doors and name plates.

On the right-hand wall as the worshipper enters St. Andrew's parish there is a large marble plaque, placed there in memory of the Rev. John Grimke-Drayton, the builder of the church and the creator of Magnolia Gardens," his neighboring home and now famous gardens. Upon his death, he was interred in the family underground vault which is marked with a beautiful torch surrounded by huge trees and many azaleas.

For over 275 years, the estate named "Magnolia-on-the-Ashley," but now familiarly known as "Magnolia Gardens" has continuously been owned by the Drayton family, so well-known in South Carolina history. It is from the Thomas Drayton of England who acquired a tract of land on the Ashley embracing Magnolia and several other plantations. It is from this gentleman that the Rev. John Grimke-Drayton, creator of the gardens, and his great grandson, C. Norwood Hastie, present owner of Magnolia, trace their descent. To date, nine generations of the family have been in residence since 1671.

It has been interesting to read how the Drayton name has been continued. After the death of the original Thomas Drayton, his grandson had no son to inherit the name. Therefore, it was decided that the eldest son of his eldest daughter should change his own name of Grimke for his mother's name of Drayton. This Drayton was accidentally killed and how lies buried in the private tomb in the garden. Thus, it was that the Rev. John Grimke-Drayton became master of Magnolia. He studied for the ministry but developed tuberculosis shortly after being ordained in 1830. He turned to the soil and "Magnolia-on-the-Ashley" is the result.

Never have we seen such color, such beauty and such abundance in flowers. Again, there were virtually hundreds of photographers having a field day with their cameras.

Thus, was Easter Sunday spent in South Carolina.