



Nevitt House

Built 1851

113-117 West Jones St., Savannah, Georgia

STEVEN & CAROL DAY

Birthplace of a North American family of 8 generations in Mexico, the United States and Canada

The first American Nevitt

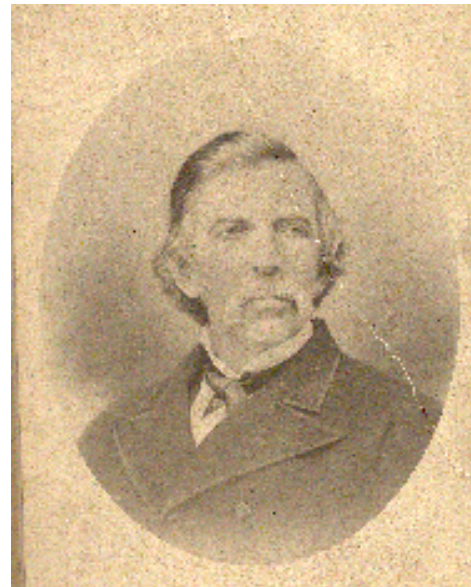
John Nevitt began construction of Nevitt House in his 81st year, in 1851 and died in 1852. Born in Ireland in 1770, he arrived in Philadelphia about 1791 and soon began a north American family that eight generations later survives having participated in the arts, sciences, literature, clergy and business and witnessing some great moments in history.

John Nevitt met 17 year old Sarah Stotesbury (1791-1817), daughter of sea captain Arthur and Margaret Stotesbury, married her November 1808, and moved to Savannah, Georgia. About two of children, Crichton, and Margarette (married 1833 to Joseph Pottle), next to nothing is known nor if children followed. Last was John Wilson Nevitt born on November 6, 1814. Mrs Sarah Nevitt died on November 17, 1817 prompting John to return to Philadelphia almost two years later and marry Sarah's younger sister, Louisa Stotesbury (1797-1890). Louisa while raising her sister's children as stepmother/aunt produced three daughters and a son who died as an infant.

John Wilson achieved success in business and prominence in Savannah, but advancing years and ill health reduced his earning ability and after building Nevitt House in 1851, the Nevitts were forced to take in boarders. One boarder, Edwin Longworth Hollis married their daughter Caroline. Upon John Nevitt's death in 1852 Louisa inherited his property in trust, which included Nevitt House, three slaves and real estate lots, all of which was valued in 1858 at \$12,000. Louisa Nevitt died in 1890 leaving Nevitt House to her two surviving daughters, Caroline Hollis and Maria Louisa Nevitt, who in turn upon their deaths left their property, including Nevitt House to charity.

John Wilson Nevitt, 1817-1888

The only child of John Nevitt known to produce heirs who in turn produced heirs was son John Wilson Nevitt by Sarah Stotesbury. John Wilson Nevitt maintained contact



John Wilson Nevitt, son of John Nevitt

with his Stotesbury cousins in Philadelphia where in due course he met Mary Elizabeth Tschudi (1826-1910) and married her in 1846. They returned to Savannah and like his father, John, John Wilson Nevitt partnered with Henry Lathrop and John S. Rogers to form a dry goods store under the name of Nevitt, Lathrop and Rogers

earning an excellent reputation for reliability and quality merchandise, with a branch in New York to sell cotton. It's not known if John and Mary Nevitt lived in Nevitt House, but as it consists of two homes, perhaps John rented from his father and then his stepmother/aunt. John and Mary moved to New Jersey (1855-57), briefly to Athens to avoid Sherman's march 1864, and permanently to Athens in 1876. John and Mary Nevitt produced eleven children (1848-1872, of which 6 survived beyond infancy.

John Jacob Nevitt (1848-1918) served in the Confederate Army, graduated from the University of Georgia and became an architect hired by the U.S. Treasury Dept to design the U.S. Post Office in Savannah, 1894-1899, on Wright's Square and since razed.

General Wm Tecumseh Sherman's famous march from Atlanta to the sea ended at Savannah in December, 1864 with Sherman presenting Savannah by telegram as a "Christmas gift" to President Abraham Lincoln. Savannah, a



Mary Elizabeth Tschudi Nevitt

Sherman was given use the Green-Meldrim house next to St. John's Episcopal church by the English owner perhaps attempting to save his home from destruction. The strong willed Mary Nevitt returned to Savannah from Athens to call on Sherman in his temporary residence, and after admonishing him for not standing in the presence of lady, requested a letter from him guaranteeing safe passage for her three children to New York to attend a northern school and "learn yankee ways". Receiving the "passes" she told her children they were to continue to Canada and enroll in school. The Nevitts were acquainted with Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, and his son probably traveled north with Nevitt children. The two Nevitt boys and the Davis boy enrolled in Bishop's College in Lennoxville, Quebec and Saida was sent to Bishop's Strachan School for girls in Toronto.

Richard Barrington Nevitt (1850-1928) moved to Athens in 1866 to attend the University of Georgia but a year later returned to Toronto and graduated from Trinity College



Dr. Richard Barrington Nevitt

valuable seaport for the Union cause was spared. The Civil War or in southern parlance, the War of Secession or War of the Northern Invasion, had taken a financial and emotional toll on the Nevitts. Their eldest son, John, served in the Confederate Army and Mary Nevitt was determined her three children, Richard, 14, Harry, 10, and Sarah (Saida) 13, would leave Georgia. General Sherman helped build Fort Macleod in Alberta where he was stationed from 1874-1878. He also established one of the first hospitals in the region, but traveled a good deal in the area in the performance of his duties. When not occupied, he sketched and painted water colors of people and landscapes of the region which remain among the first images of the frontiers of western Canada. Included in those travels was a trip to Fort Walsh in 1877 with Inspector A.G. Irvine who met with Chief Sitting Bull just after the Battle of the Little Big Horn with General Custer. Dr. Nevitt drew the only sketch of the historic meeting.

A year earlier, Barrie's brother Harry joined him at Fort Macleod finding self employment as a trader. Harry's arrival perhaps mitigated some of the loneliness Barrie experienced so evident in his letters to his sweetheart, Elizabeth Beaty whom he met while visiting his sister Saida at the Bishop's school. Barrie returned in 1878 to Toronto and married Elizabeth on October 1, 1878 from which followed six children, Robert B Nevitt, 1879-1918, Mary Louise (Ryerson), 1880-?, Irving H.C. Nevitt, 1882-1963, Adena Sara (Black), 1884-1966, Richard E.A. Nevitt, 1888-1960, and Bertram Tschudi Nevitt, 1895-1916, who died in France in World War I. Dr. Nevitt, later a gynecologist, remained in Toronto, and established the Women's Medical College and became a pioneer teacher of women physicians, earning the nickname "Hen" Nevitt.

Dr. Nevitt continued to paint all his life, but viewed himself as no more than an amateur and freely gave his paintings. Adena's son, Dr. Davison Black, gave the family's collection of Barrie's letters and paintings to the Glenbow-Alberta Institute where they remain today. The institute published a book *A Winter At Fort Macleod* by R. B. Nevitt in 1974 consisting of Barrie's letters to Elizabeth and plates of his sketches and paintings.

Harry Martin Nevitt (1854-1979) after following his brother into western Canada met with an accident involving a fire at Fort Garry, Alberta and died at age 25.

Sarah (Saida) Stotesbury Nevitt Owen (1851-1923) was another of the Nevitt children whose fate was determined by the Civil War. She returned to the United States marrying Wyatt Owen of Baltimore where she is buried. The Owens had several children and their descendants continue.

Mary (Mamie) Nevitt Flanigen (1857-1921) married Cameron Douglas Flanigen of Philadelphia and had several children including Col. Barrington Flanigen, a graduate of West Point and career Army officer, Jean Flanigen of Athens who never married and like her uncle Barrie, became a well known artist. Her collected paintings are preserved in an

Athens, Georgia art museum. Mary and Douglas had two more sons, C. Douglas and John Monteith. John had several children, including Charlotte Zartman, a professional harpist graduated from the Julliard School of Music and is currently living in Tucson, Arizona but travels extensively.

Louise (Loulie) Bartow Nevitt Oates (1861-1949) was her mother. She accompanied Dr. R.B. Nevitt's daughter the youngest and her husband, Dr. Davison Black to China. Professor surviving child of Black had been engaged by the Chinese government to John and Mary undertake archeological-historical research in Beijing in the Nevitt. She may Forbidden City. Nevitt Oates lived in the Forbidden City, have attended spoke mandarin and traveled extensively in China.



Louise Bartow Nevitt Oates

Bishop's Strachan The "black sheep" of the Oates family was John School for girls like Henry Oates a reputation earned by defying his mother and her sister, but in any seeking adventure. After attempting a stint to fight in the case, she did spend Boer War, cut short by his mother's intervention, he soon time in Toronto. joined the Canadian Royal Mounted Police as had his uncle There she met Barrie. John was known as Harry as a boy, perhaps in Edward Frederick memory of Loulie's brother Harry who died so young. But Oates (1846-1929), as an adult, he preferred John or "JH". He studied to be a and they married mining engineer in Canada and decided where to go, the U.S. June 1, 1881. They or Mexico, by the flip of coin - it came up Mexico.

produced five children, Edward Frederick Oates (1882-1974), John

Henry Oates, (1883-1956), George Barrington Oates, (1884-1972), Mary Nevitt Oates (1887-1972) and Clarence Reginald Oates, (1891-1977).

During more prosperous times before the Civil War, John Wilson and Mary Nevitt would summer in Athens, Georgia to escape the sweltering heat of Savannah. Their architect son, John Jacob, designed and built a large home for his parents in Athens which eventually became the family's permanent residence. After the Civil War, Nevitt, Lathrop & Rogers closed but John Wilson Nevitt seems to have managed well financially until his death in 1888 after which Mary Nevitt moved or spent long periods of time in Philadelphia, probably to be close to family, where she died in 1910. By this time, Nevitt descendants were living in Toronto, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Athens, Georgia. John Wilson Nevitt, described as "poor" in some of the family records, lived in their large home in Athens and Mary Nevitt left an estate valued at \$20,000.

John Nevitt's second wife who outlived her stepson/nephew, John Wilson Nevitt by two years remained in Nevitt House. Only she and her two daughters lived in Savannah after 1876. By the turn of the century, there were few or no members of the Nevitt family in Savannah.

Athens became the Nevitt family center. Jean Flanigen met the Oates siblings when her aunt Loulie returned in Chihuahua, Mexico where he met a beautiful Mexican girl to Athens in 1890. Jean commented that E.F. Oates "seemed Maria Cordova, of Spanish and Mayo Indian descent with



Oates siblings: John Henry, Nevitt, Reginald, George & Fred

By 1905, he was deep in the Sierra Madre Mountains in Chihuahua, Mexico where he met a beautiful Mexican girl of Spanish and Mayo Indian descent with



Jean Nevitt Flanigen

Zapata called on John Oates which reportedly was a friendly piano. Though doubtful of meeting. But Mexico was in turmoil and would be for many her vocal ability, she did years to come causing disruptions in John and Maria's lives. and made a recording.

Trouble for the JH Oates family came sometime Known as the "Lady of between 1914-16 with the rise of Pancho Villa. With the U.S. 6,000 songs" and herself an supporting Villa's opponent, Carranza, Villa began killing icon of Savannah, Emma Americans and invaded Columbus, NM on March 9, 1916 could transport you to any leading to Gen John "Blackjack" Pershing's Punitive moment in the 20th century Expedition into Mexico to find Villa. While traveling to the through music. It was hard to return to Savannah and know mines near Madera, Chihuahua, John Oates was captured by that Emma is gone. Everyone, including me, loved Emma. Villa to be executed. Terrified, Maria Oates, at the For over 10 years of Savannah visits, I didn't know suggestion of a neighbor, sent her eldest daughter, Louise, I had roots in Savannah, very visible at 113-117 Jones then about 7 or 8, to ask for her father's life. Only targeting Street. I knew of some family connection in Athens, a cousin Americans, Villa soon discovered John Oates was Canadian Jean Flanigen, but like so many people I paid no attention to and released him. my family history. Fortunately, my mother did and

Nevitt offspring from Nevitts, Oates, Owens, Ryerson, maintained communications, saved memorabilia, wrote Flanigen, Blacks and many more, produced heirs who have family stories and preserved our family history. lived, produced more heirs, died and the generations In 1987, I noticed my mother writing another long continue, far more than can be described here and many letter to her cousin Jean Flanigen in Athens. After years of stories remain untold. No Nevitt descendants live in paying no attention to their relationship, I suggested our Savannah. But what remains as the single family icon for the family visit our cousin in Athens and visit Savannah and Nevitts and all their descendants is Nevitt House, a symbol of learn more about our ancestors, the Nevitts. That spring, the one family's endurance. four of us went to Athens and spent a few days with Jean and heard the tales of old, placing our family in the midst of

A few personal comments...

I am the great, great, great grandson of John Nevitt. America's worst war and in the times that followed. Borrowing biblical terminology, John Nevitt begat John The great historian David McCullough said if you ask Wilson Nevitt, who begat Louise Bartow Nevitt Oates, who someone about someone they knew, you touch the past in a begat John Henry Oates, who begat Louise Oates Holm, who personal way. As a child, Jean knew her grandmother, Mary begat me, Axel Christian Frederick Holm. Tschudi Nevitt, known as "Dannie" in the family. She also

Long before I knew any of this, I visited Savannah in spoke of Nevitt House in Savannah. As I listened to her, I 1971 for the first time to call on a friend. I became utterly was transported to Jones Street in the 1850s and 1860s and enchanted with the grand, historic beauty of the city. The could feel my great, great grandmother's joys and sorrows. antebellum feel of Savannah, transports one to another time Listening to cousin Jean Flanigen's stories of in American history with great realism. I returned often to Dannie's experiences, I was warmed to my great, great Savannah and met those who became the centerpiece of the grandmother's love of family and chilled to the marrow by

blonde hair and striking book, *Midnight In The Garden of Good and Evil*. blue-eyes. They soon I met the man acquitted of murder, Jim Williams, married. Taking a and the suspected con-artist, Joe Odom, but the one I came Mexican wife added to to know well as a good friend was the charming and his black sheep delightful lady, Emma Kelly who owned and operated reputation. They had Emma's bar on Bay Street. nine children. When the For the 20 years I visited Mexican Revolution Savannah until 1991, I erupted in November of closed every evening at 1910, the Oates' felt no Emma's listening to her particular danger, but piano renditions.

were in Guanajuato in Another regular southern Mexico at a "Emma's" patron was time when Emiliano composer Johnny Mercer, Zapata began rousing the who suggested to her that peasants to his cause. she sing as well as play the



Emma Kelly, 1991



**Louise Oates Holm, Corinne Holm Milton, Axel Holm,
at Nevitt House, Savannah 1987**

her fear for the safety of her youngest children, vulnerable to the horrors of the Civil War. Desperate, Mary Tschudi Nevitt sent 13 year old Saida, 14 year old Barrie and 10 year Harry perhaps alone through a horrifying war, over an enormous distance to Canada described in frightening recollections of their cousin, H.W. Stotesbury who made a similar trip from the south about the same time.

Meanwhile, Louisa Nevitt probably remained in Nevitt House throughout the war, protecting herself and her home, but no known record of her experience exists. Louisa Nevitt's grandchildren preceded her in death by the time Louisa Nevitt died in 1890. Caroline Nevitt Hollis' two children, Louisa (b. 1851), died in 1874 and Edward (b. 1854) in 1879. Upon Louisa Nevitt's death in 1890, her remaining two daughters inherited Nevitt House. The daughters, Caroline Hollis died in 1898, and Maria Nevitt, with no known children, died in 1899. They in turn did not leave Nevitt House to their half brother's children but to charity. John Wilson Nevitt's heirs did not inherit any of his father's assets but received "remembrances". Even the silverware was returned to the Stotesburys in Philadelphia.

That was the end of the Nevitt line from Louisa Stotesbury Nevitt and John Nevitt. Nevitt House in 1899 went to charity not to the John Wilson Nevitt heirs. Why? Was there friction between the half siblings? Did the pressures of the Civil War cause strains within the family?

Was it because the first John Nevitt married his first wife's younger sister? Probably not, but at the time, it was something of a scandal. Enough of a scandal, that the senior John Nevitt (builder of Nevitt House), was reportedly kicked out of a special Savannah fraternal organization, the Society of Friends. Most likely, by the time their step grandmother, Louisa, died, the other Nevitts had long since moved to Athens, Philadelphia and Canada. They were all leading

different lives and may have grown distant. Given the financial pressures on Mary Tschudi Nevitt and some of her children, inheriting Nevitt House would have been very welcome.

Nevitt House left the Nevitt family at the end of the 19th century and was never again owned by a member of the family. And with little value placed on historic buildings until the 1950s, Nevitt House was probably not much appreciated. But it survived.

The preservation and restoration movement that began in Savannah in 1955, much earlier than other cities, did little to improve the condition of Nevitt House. When I first saw it in 1987, externally it appeared good, but a few peaks inside revealed a mess. Another look in 1991 and it wasn't any better.

Between 1991 and 2007, I acquired an MA in International Relations from the University of Arizona, adopted a son, Richard Christian Frederick Holm, and began active volunteer work in Arizona history. For 6 years, I was President of our local Pimeria Alta Historical Society and am now Executive Director. I serve on the Tucson board of the Arizona Historical Society and on the state of Arizona board that governs the Arizona Historical Society statewide. In these few years, researching the genealogy of others, I have come to appreciate the value of family history in giving succeeding generations self understanding and self worth.

Our family, in all its' branches, achieved neither fame nor fortune. Some became well-to-do with financial successes, but nothing substantial. Some have had



**Walter Holm, Jr., Louise Oates Holm, Corinne H. Milton
at Nevitt plot, Laurel Grove Cemetery, Savannah, 1987
Louise Holm sits on tomb of Sarah S. Nevitt**

appreciable successes in the arts (eg., R.B Nevitt, Jean Flanigen, Charlotte Flanigen Zartman and my mother Louise Holm), the sciences, specifically medicine, the law, business and quite a few have served and died in the military from the

Civil War through World War II. I had an uncle serve under who became very wealthy. His wife Eva was rather showy, General George Patton in Europe and another died in the riding in a Rolls-Royce landaulet with her dog wearing a Phillipines under General MacArthur. And, of course, the diamond studded collar. Their home, Whitmarsh, featured incredible story of grandmother "Dannie" (Mary Tschudi *nouveau riche* excesses like gold door knobs and bathroom fixtures. Eva's daughter by a previous husband was the first Nevitt) taking on General Sherman.

We Nevitt descendants are fortunate that several wife of General Douglas MacArthur whom he divorced, members of our family preserved our history. Cousin Jean finding their lifestyle unacceptable. In spite of their Flanigen maintained the Nevitt family history. Uncle excesses, they easily survived the Great Depression, but Reginald Oates and later Mary Oates Davis maintained the today neither the fortune nor heirs remain. Whitmarsh Oates history. My mother kept our Holm and Oates histories. mansion was razed in 1980 "erasing" the Stotesburys. But These were the "keepers of the family flames". Quite a few Nevitt House survives.

records survive including manuscripts, photos, home movies Prominent people more readily can leave landmarks and videos. My mother left a 160 page manuscript of her that gives them a *raison d'être*. But most families have no youth in Mexico and Pancho Villa and 18 hours of recorded such good fortune. It takes great wealth or lots of luck to tape. She left a book in the making. preserve a large home and keep it for a century and a half, as buildings have relatively short lives, often less than a human life span.

Although oblivious to my family's story, I was very distant English cousin, Captain Lawrence Edward Grace Oates of the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons who accompanied first time since 1991, I was stunned to see it restored. I Robert Scott to be first to the south pole in 1912. Instead, discovered the owners and contacted Carol Day, introduced Scott and his party, including Oates froze to death. Oates, too myself and hoped I might someday see the house. To my ill to continue and a burden to his fellows, walked into a surprise and delight she invited me immediately and I was storm to die to try to save his companions. He became a hero granted a complete tour. Nothing in years has given me more in England where his portrait hangs in the Cavalry Club.. pleasure than to see this family landmark not only beautifully restored and its' dignity revived, but done to a better standard than when first constructed.

In 1964, I called on his sister, Violet Oates, a spinster common ancestor in the 18th century, we traced the English With care and painstaking efforts, the Days house of Oates, Gestingthorpe, from which Captain Oates and preserved the minute 156 year old details of Nevitt House his sister Violet descended, and the Irish house of Kilnahone while unobtrusively incorporating modern technology and from which Edward Frederick Oates descended and who conveniences. The Nevitts who built, lived and knew the married Louise Bartow Nevitt. Perhaps my appreciation for 19th century house in its youth would surely be stunned and family history began then but only to lay dormant until I pleased to see it bold, bright and beautiful in the 21st century. reached my 60s.

I repeat, this family is essentially a modest family but especially lucky, that splendid, sensitive people like the Days many of our ancestors were witness to or participated in some came along and while not knowing any of its' history, fascinating moments in history. While our blood lines have somehow connected with the old place which languished for flowed in disparate places linking with families of varied so long in the 20th century. How fortunate for our family, for origins, John and Sarah Nevitt began a uniquely American residents of Savannah and for a great many yet unknown family. Sarah never saw Nevitt House that John built, but her people that the Days have preserved Nevitt House. They sister Louisa did, and lived there for 39 years. Nevitt House restored it not just back to sound condition, but to an elegant is especially, therefore, linked to the Stotesbury line. Their style and gracious state that will inspire future generations of father, Captain Arthur, was said to have served on the *Bon* their family to preserve and protect Nevitt House in the 21st *Homme Richard* with John Paul Jones during the defeat of the century and beyond.

British warship, *Serapis*. I researched the crew list of the *Bon* To Steven and Carol Day, I can only say a humble thank you on behalf of our family and countless unknown *Homme Richard* finding no Stotesbury. others who will experience the joy of Nevitt House thanks to your sacrifices and efforts. May you have many, many long and happy years in Nevitt House.

A later Stotesbury, E. T. Stotesbury, after serving as began an astonishing rise in the company which became part of J.P. Morgan's banking system. In time, as Tony Drexel Axel C F Holm became less active, Morgan placed E.T. Stotesbury in control Nogales, Arizona

September 25, 2007

