

ERIC CHALMERS POSTON

ROOTED IN THE PEEDEE

THE HISTORY OF POSTON, SOUTH CAROLINA AND ITS FOUNDING FAMILY.

A HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL ANALYSIS OF POSTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND THE POSTON FAMILY LINEAGE

Table of Contents

- [Historical and Genealogical Analysis of Poston, South Carolina, and the Poston Family Lineage](#)
- [Introduction: The Intersection of Geography, Infrastructure, and Kinship](#)
- [Part I: The Topographical and Economic Crucible of the Pee Dee](#)
 - [The Era of "Ellison" and the River Port Economy](#)
 - [The Vulnerabilities of Riverine Commerce](#)
- [Part II: The Infrastructural Revolution and the Birth of Poston](#)
 - [The 1914 Railroad Boom and Corporate Consolidation](#)
 - [Industrial Resistance and the Collapse of the Boom](#)
 - [Jurisdictional Reorganization: From Marion to Florence County](#)
- [Part III: The Poston Family Origins and the Transatlantic Crossing](#)
 - [English Antiquity and the Maryland Arrival](#)
 - [The Pennsylvania Settlement](#)
- [Part IV: The Great Southern Migration](#)
 - [Navigating the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road](#)
- [Part V: Establishing the South Carolina Roots and Dispelling Mythology](#)
- [Part VI: The Agrarian Expansion and 19th-Century Dominance](#)
 - [The Era of Hugh Poston and the Great Pee Dee Bottoms](#)
 - [Andrew Poston: The Architect of the Modern Settlement](#)
- [Part VII: Twentieth-Century Civic Leadership and Evolution](#)
 - [The Professionalization of the Lineage](#)
- [Part VIII: Ecclesiastical Architecture and Regional Landmarks](#)
- [Part IX: Modern Ecological Stewardship and Conservation](#)
- [Synthesis and Conclusion](#)

Works cited

Historical and Genealogical Analysis of

Poston, South Carolina, and the Poston

Family Lineage

Introduction: The Intersection of Geography,

Infrastructure, and Kinship

The historical trajectory of the American South is frequently defined by the symbiotic, often volatile relationship between early colonial families and the distinctive topographies they sought to domesticate. The unincorporated community of Poston, located in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina, serves as a profoundly compelling microcosm of this exact dynamic. Nestled alongside the meandering paths and dense floodplains of the Great Pee Dee River, the settlement's evolution—from a bustling, water-dependent river port to a critical railroad junction, and eventually to a quiet unincorporated enclave—mirrors the broader macroeconomic transitions of the rural American South spanning the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. The history of this specific locale is not merely a chronicle of changing municipal boundaries, but a testament to how shifting

modes of transportation fundamentally dictate regional prosperity and geographic relevance.

Simultaneously, the genealogical narrative of the Poston family—the community’s namesake and primary architectural force—provides a continuous, unbroken thread through these disparate historical epochs. Tracing their origins from the agrarian landscapes of Shropshire, England, through the colonial harbors of the Mid-Atlantic, down the treacherous and culturally significant Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, and ultimately into the deep, fertile river bottoms of South Carolina, the Poston lineage encapsulates the classic American migratory experience.³ The family's multi-generational persistence, evidenced by centuries of agrarian stewardship, aggressive infrastructure advocacy, and prominent civic leadership, demonstrates how a single kinship network can fundamentally dictate the nomenclature, economic trajectory, and even the geographic boundaries of an entire region.³

This comprehensive analysis examines the dual histories of the physical community of Poston and the generational lineage of the Poston family. By integrating cadastral records, regional infrastructural history, ecclesiastical archives, and meticulous genealogical data compiled over decades, a highly nuanced understanding emerges. This report will explore how the geography of the Pee Dee region shaped familial destiny, how the Poston family subsequently imprinted its collective willpower upon that very landscape, and how the eventual clash between agrarian traditionalism and industrial modernization arrested the town's development.

Part I: The Topographical and Economic Crucible of the Pee Dee

Situated at coordinates 33°52'25.59"N 79°25'34.20"W within the modern boundaries of Florence County, South Carolina, Poston occupies a low-lying coastal plain environment characterized by an elevation of merely 69 feet above sea level.² Long before the advent of rail lines, paved highways, or modern supply chains, this terrain was utterly dominated by the Great Pee Dee River. This massive, free-flowing waterway served as the primary logistical artery for indigenous Siouan populations (such as the Cheraw), colonial European traders, and the antebellum planters who would eventually colonize the region.² The geography of the Great Pee Dee is characterized by diverse scenery along winding water trails, lined by dense swamps, bottomland hardwood forests, and coastal marshes that provided both exceptional agricultural fertility and severe logistical challenges.⁵

The Era of "Ellison" and the River Port Economy

Prior to the twentieth century and the adoption of the Poston name, the geographic locale currently recognized as Poston was originally known as "Ellison".¹ During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Ellison functioned as a vital, highly active river port on the Great Pee Dee.¹ The physical infrastructure of this era relied heavily on specialized, strategically located landings that facilitated the loading and offloading of agricultural commodities, commercial goods, and human capital.

Among the most historically significant of these logistical nodes was Allison Landing—alternatively documented in various historical records and county maintenance agreements as Ellison's Landing or Poston Landing.⁷ The strategic importance of this specific riverine geography predates the region's commercial boom. Allison Landing is situated approximately three miles upriver from the Port's Ferry site, a critical river crossing famously utilized by General Francis

Marion—the "Swamp Fox"—during his 1780 guerilla campaigns against British and Loyalist forces during the American Revolution.⁷ The presence of such landings, combined with the natural defensive capabilities of the surrounding swamps, allowed the Ellison settlement to mature into an agrarian logistical hub long before formal municipal incorporation.

By the 1820s, the introduction of steamboats revolutionized the economic capacity of the Great Pee Dee River, transforming it from a slow, current-dependent thoroughfare into a two-way engine of commerce.⁶ Pioneers of steam navigation, such as Captain Moses Rogers—who had previously commanded the *Savannah*, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic—were hired to command vessels like the *Great Pee Dee*. These steamboats drastically reduced the transit time for goods moving between the inland plantations surrounding Ellison and the coastal port of Georgetown.⁶ In 1822, for example, the *Great Pee Dee* could make the round trip to Georgetown in just four days and six hours, an unprecedented velocity for regional trade.⁶

The Vulnerabilities of Riverine Commerce

Despite the advancements in steam technology, the river port economy of Ellison was inherently fragile. The primary commodity driving this river economy was, unequivocally, cotton.¹⁰ Grown in the fertile floodplains and processed in local gins, cotton was routinely transported downstream to coastal markets. However, the river was treacherous, characterized by hidden snags, shifting sandbars, and unpredictable seasonal flooding.

Historical records highlight the financial risks associated with this dependency. In March 1822, the Pee Dee Steam Boat Company recorded a massive loss of \$2,277.19 due to 69 bales of cotton being severely damaged when their tow boat sank in the river.¹⁰ Although

the company managed to recover a portion of the value by selling the damaged bales at auction, the incident underscores the precarious nature of the Ellison economy.¹⁰ The settlement thrived as a decentralized node in the broader Southern cotton economy, but its prosperity was entirely dependent on the seasonal and temperamental flows of the Great Pee Dee. It was this exact logistical vulnerability that would eventually pave the way for the region's railroad revolution.

Part II: The Infrastructural Revolution and the Birth of Poston

The dawn of the twentieth century brought a paradigm shift in rural American logistics, transitioning the focal point of commerce away from natural waterways and toward the engineered certainty of steel rails. The community of Ellison was fundamentally and permanently transformed by this shift, a transformation driven largely by the aggressive advocacy and foresight of a local landholder named Andrew Poston (1829–1916).⁴

Recognizing the severe limitations of river transport—especially as regional agricultural yields increased and the demand for rapid access to northern markets intensified—Andrew Poston identified the economic potential of the railroad.⁴ As a prominent citizen, Confederate veteran, and owner of vast tracts of land in the Pee Dee bottoms, Andrew Poston utilized his personal equity to negotiate a highly consequential land-use agreement.⁴ This deal facilitated the construction of a regional rail depot directly within the Ellison community. In recognition of this foundational agreement, which sparked an immediate local economic boom, the predecessor to the

CSX railroad labeled the new rail siding "Poston".⁴ This corporate designation was swiftly adopted by the residents, and the name Ellison was permanently relegated to historical footnotes.³

The 1914 Railroad Boom and Corporate Consolidation

The year 1914 marked the absolute apex of Poston's infrastructural and economic ascendance.² The locale did not merely gain a single track; it became a highly connected junction point amid a frenzy of regional railroad consolidations and expansions. Several distinct corporate entities converged to form this network, turning the newly named town of Poston into a critical nexus between the inland agricultural markets and the Atlantic coast.

The complexity of this rail network is best understood by examining the various entities that intersected at Poston during this era:

Railway Corporate Entity Year Chartered or Rebuilt Route and Significance to

the Poston Region

North and South Carolina Chartered 1908 Operated from Gibson, NC,

Railway to the Pee Dee River.

Consolidated with its NC counterpart in 1911. Formed a vital northern connection

for the Poston junction. ¹⁴

South Carolina Western Chartered 1910 Built lines extending from
Railway Florence southeast. By
1914, this track was
extended directly to Poston,
connecting the town to the
larger Seaboard Air Line
main line in McBee, SC.¹⁵

Georgetown and Western Reorganized 1887 Existed in receivership
but
Railroad was rebuilt to main line
standards under Seaboard
Air Line supervision in 1911.
Extended seven miles to
Poston, creating a direct
link to the coastal port of
Georgetown.¹⁶

Carolina, Atlantic and Formed 1914 The massive consolidated
Western Railway entity created by the

merger of the North and
South Carolina Railway, the
South Carolina Western,
and the Georgetown and
Western. It centered much
of its regional traffic
through the Poston
junction.¹⁴

On December 1, 1911, a jointly-owned bridge was constructed across the Great Pee Dee River, physically linking the Georgetown and Western lines with the North and South Carolina Railroad, definitively placing Poston at the center of this new logistical map.¹⁶ The 1914 mergers that formed the Carolina, Atlantic and Western Railway (which was absorbed by the massive Seaboard Air Line Railroad the following year) spurred immediate and explosive economic growth in Poston.² The influx of continuous rail traffic created new jobs, attracted auxiliary retail businesses, and integrated the agrarian hinterland of the Pee Dee directly into the national supply chain.² For a brief, shining period, the town of Poston functioned as a modern Southern boomtown, defined by the rhythmic clatter of the Seaboard Air Line network rather than the whistle of the river steamboat.

Industrial Resistance and the Collapse of the Boom

The rapid urbanization and industrialization of Poston, however, clashed violently with the deeply ingrained agrarian conservatism of its residents. As the railroad companies sought to expand their corporate footprint and maximize the utility of the Poston junction, they proposed the construction of a large-scale railroad repair shop within the town.²

In the context of early twentieth-century urban development, securing a railroad repair facility was highly coveted by most municipalities. Such facilities guaranteed long-term, high-paying industrial employment, necessitated the building of robust local infrastructure, and effectively cemented a town's status as a premier industrial hub.¹⁷ However, the local population of Poston mounted fierce, organized resistance to the project.²

The rejection of the repair shop represents a critical socio-economic inflection point in the region's history. The citizenry's aversion to the proposed facility was rooted in a desire to maintain their traditional way of life. Heavy industrial facilities brought constant noise, significant environmental pollution, and rapid demographic shifts, as transient railroad workers and outside management would flood the local housing market and alter the town's political dynamics.¹⁷ The community ultimately signaled a strict preference for remaining a smaller, agriculturally adjacent transit stop rather than evolving into an industrialized city.

This localized resistance successfully killed the repair shop initiative, but it simultaneously halted Poston's physical and economic expansion.² The railroad corporations, denied the ability to build their necessary infrastructure, began to divest from the junction.

This corporate retreat was disastrously compounded by a severe leadership vacuum following the death of Andrew Poston on October 20, 1916.² Andrew Poston was not merely a namesake; he was the

primary liaison between the agrarian community and the industrial rail barons. At 88 years old, he had maintained a remarkable vitality and influence, and his passing removed the town's most prominent civic advocate.¹³ Without his diplomatic leverage, the community was left highly vulnerable during a period of intense corporate restructuring by the Seaboard Air Line Railway.² Consequently, the original railroad spur lines that had created the boom began to vanish, and the local economy abruptly collapsed, plunging Poston into a sharp decline from which it never fully recovered.²

Jurisdictional Reorganization: From Marion to Florence County

The economic destabilization of Poston exacerbated long-standing political and administrative issues regarding its county affiliation. Originally, the settlement was governed as part of the Marion District (which later became Marion County).¹ However, the geography of the Great Pee Dee River—which had once been the region's greatest asset—proved to be a severe administrative liability.

Poston suffered from severe transportation and logistical disconnects with the Marion county seat.¹ The physical barrier of the river and the deteriorating local rail infrastructure meant that citizens and law enforcement faced arduous journeys to conduct basic civic business, pay taxes, or seek judicial recourse in Marion.¹ This geographic isolation led to a protracted jurisdictional "tug-of-war".³

Ultimately, the administrative burden and the demands of the local populace forced a redrawing of the map. Poston was officially absorbed into neighboring Florence County, which offered more accessible roads and administrative integration.¹ This absorption marked the final transition of Poston from an autonomous, burgeoning rail hub into a quiet, unincorporated community

adjacent to South Carolina Highway 51 and U.S. Route 378.¹ Today, the modern remnant of its once-mighty industrial past survives primarily as a minor segment of the CSX Andrews Subdivision, a fading whistle-stop that serves as a monument to a bygone era.²

Part III: The Poston Family Origins and the

Transatlantic Crossing

The geographic and infrastructural history of the town of Poston cannot be decoupled from the deeply researched genealogical history of its founding family. The Poston lineage in America represents a sprawling, extensively documented migration that perfectly mirrors the broader patterns of Anglo-American settlement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The preservation of this history is heavily indebted to local archival efforts, preservationists, and meticulous genealogical compilations, most notably Erma Poston Landers' seminal 1965 masterwork, *A Poston Family of South Carolina: Its Immigrant Ancestor and Some of His Descendants* ²⁰.

English Antiquity and the Maryland Arrival

The precise origins of the Poston family trace back to the agrarian and mercantile environments of Shropshire, England.³ The immigrant ancestor, definitively identified in genealogical and tax records as John I Poston (c. 1680–1744/1745), initiated the family's transatlantic crossing early in the eighteenth century.⁴ Historical ledgers and shipping manifests indicate that he embarked from the major port of Liverpool on April 26, 1703.³

The exact nature of his early years in the American colonies features slight regional divergences in historical documentation, reflecting the highly fluid movement of early colonial settlers. Some historical archives place his initial arrival and integration in Leonardtown, St. Mary's County, Maryland.²⁴ From there, the family developed extensive early ties to neighboring Charles County, Maryland.²⁴

Records from this Mid-Atlantic region show early Poston descendants actively involved in the local colonial Anglican community. Specifically, family members are heavily documented within the records of Trinity Church in Durham Parish, Charles County.²⁵ Figures such as Richard Poston (baptized at Trinity Church) and William John Poston were heavily engaged in the ecclesiastical and civic affairs of Maryland throughout the 1700s, with William John Poston inheriting the family's "Goodwill Plantation".²⁵ The family's connection to Trinity Church was substantial; early Postons were listed as tithers of the parish, subscribed toward the rebuilding of the church, and served as trustees for local educational institutions like the Charlotte Hall School.²⁹

The Pennsylvania Settlement

However, the specific branch of the family that would eventually migrate south to settle the South Carolina Pee Dee region firmly anchored itself further north in Pennsylvania. By 1722, John I Poston appeared on the colonial tax rolls of Chester County, Pennsylvania.⁴ The Mid-Atlantic colonies offered vast expanses of relatively affordable land and a degree of religious and economic freedom that appealed to English immigrants.

Accompanied by his wife, Martha, John I Poston acquired an early land patent comprising 274.5 acres that straddled Octoraro Creek in West Fallowfield Township.⁴ This Pennsylvania agrarian settlement

provided the family with immense economic stability for several decades, allowing them to accumulate the capital necessary for future generational expansion. John I Poston drafted his last will and testament on December 8, 1745, naming his wife Martha and his son John II as executors, thereby establishing the legal framework for the transfer of the Chester County estate and ensuring the family's continued prosperity.²⁶ His will and the subsequent inventory of his estate remain filed in the Chester County Court House in West Chester, Pennsylvania.³¹

Part IV: The Great Southern Migration

The second generation of the American Poston lineage was fundamentally defined by the economic pressures, geographical constraints, and abundant opportunities of the expanding colonial frontier. John II Poston (born c. 1724), having inherited the lucrative land on Octoraro Creek, married Margaret Baldrige around 1749.²⁶ Margaret was the daughter of William Baldrige and Janet Holmes, connecting the Postons to other established colonial lineages.²⁶ The couple operated the Pennsylvania farm successfully for nearly two decades.

However, the comparative affordability of land in the southern colonies, coupled with the increasingly crowded conditions and rising land prices of the Mid-Atlantic, prompted a massive demographic shift among Pennsylvania farmers.³¹ On September 2, 1766, John II and Margaret Baldrige Poston executed a pivotal real estate transaction that would alter the family's trajectory forever. They sold their 274.5-acre Chester County tract to a buyer named James Smith for the substantial sum of £730.²⁶ The surviving deed explicitly identifies the vendor, stating: “John Poston of the Township of West fallowfield in Chester County in the province of

Pennsylvania yeoman (son of John Poston late of said Township yeoman deceased) and Margaret his wife”.²⁶

Navigating the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road

Following this total liquidation of their northern assets, the family embarked on a rigorous and highly dangerous southward migration. They traveled via Conestoga wagon, traversing the historic Great Philadelphia Wagon Road.³ This thoroughfare, stretching from Pennsylvania down through the Shenandoah Valley and into the backcountry of the Carolinas, was the primary conduit for the settlement of the southern frontier. The journey required immense physical endurance and represented a total commitment to cultivating untamed wilderness.

Documentary evidence tracks the family's progress along this route, marked by tragedy. By early 1767, Margaret Baldrige Poston had died, likely a casualty of the harsh conditions of the migration or frontier life.²⁶ This is inferred from her father William Baldrige's will (dated January 9, 1767), which left his son-in-law John II a mere £5, while other legatees received £50.²⁶ Genealogists conclude this discrepancy strongly suggests John II had already relocated his family deep into the south, effectively removing himself from the immediate Pennsylvania familial sphere.²⁶

John II Poston successfully resettled in Rowan County, North Carolina.²⁶ Between 1769 and 1784, he became a highly prominent civic figure in Rowan County. He first appeared in surviving county records on November 16, 1769, when he was appointed to a jury to survey and lay out colonial roads—a vital public service on the frontier.²⁶ Over the subsequent years, he utilized the capital from his Pennsylvania land sale to acquire over 1,200 acres of land, including a 640-acre purchase on the east side of the Catawba River at the mouth

of Morrison's Creek from James McKnight for £300 on July 31, 1779.²⁶ John II Poston drafted his final will on August 31, 1784, in Rowan County, naming his new wife Margaret, his sons Robert and John, and his daughters Mary, Jean, Margaret, and Elizabeth, before it was proved in court on February 10, 1785.²⁶

Part V: Establishing the South Carolina Roots and

Dispelling Mythology

While John II established a massive agricultural foothold in North Carolina, it was the subsequent generation—specifically his grandsons through lines that pushed even further south—that ultimately populated the Marion District (modern Florence County) of South Carolina.⁴

For many decades, deeply entrenched oral traditions within the Pee Dee region maintained that the original South Carolina patriarchs were two brothers named "John and Andrew" who had traveled directly from England, or perhaps directly from the port of Philadelphia, to settle the swamps.³ This localized myth simplified the family's complex, multi-generational migration.

The rigorous archival work of genealogist Erma Poston Landers, alongside modern historical conservationists, has definitively corrected this narrative. Utilizing primary source documents, census data, and Revolutionary War claim indents, historians reconstructed the true lineage.²⁰ The most definitive piece of evidence was an 1838 family Bible belonging to Hugh Poston (a descendant), which confirmed that the two foundational brothers in the South Carolina

backcountry were actually John III and Anthony III (the latter often phonetically recorded in ledgers as "Antney").³

These brothers were not the original immigrants, but the grandsons of John I.³ Anthony Poston (born c. 1760 in Chester County, PA) appears clearly in the South Carolina census records of 1800 and 1810, effectively confirming the permanent anchoring of the family line in the Great Pee Dee region.²³ John III is documented as serving as a private in Colonel Hugh Giles' Regiment of Militia, and later in Colonel John Ervin's Regiment during the Revolutionary War, serving under the command of General Francis Marion's Brigade.²⁶ The transition from the mid-Atlantic to the southern frontier forced a rapid adaptation by John III and Anthony III to the deep river bottom environment, where the family transitioned from the wheat and mixed-grain farming of Pennsylvania to the cultivation of highly profitable cash crops suited to the humid, flood-prone Carolinas.

Poston Generation Key Figure(s) Geographic Historical

Location Contribution

First John I & Martha Shropshire, England Immigrated from

Poston to Chester Co., PA Liverpool in 1703;

secured the original

274.5-acre land

patent on Octoraro

Creek.⁴

Second John II & Margaret Chester Co., PA to Sold the PA estate

(Baldrige) Poston Rowan Co., NC in 1766 for £730;

navigated the Great

Philadelphia Wagon

Road; became a

major landholder on

the Catawba

River.²⁶

Third John III & Anthony Rowan Co., NC to Dispeled the "John

III ("Antney") Poston Marion District, SC and Andrew" oral

myth; served in the

Revolutionary War;

established the

permanent family

foothold in the Pee

Dee river

backcountry.⁴

Part VI: The Agrarian Expansion and 19th-Century

Dominance

By the early nineteenth century, the Poston family had thoroughly integrated into the social, economic, and political fabric of the South Carolina lowcountry and the Pee Dee backcountry. The fourth and fifth generations transitioned the family from rugged frontier pioneers into established agrarian elites and regional community organizers.

The Era of Hugh Poston and the Great Pee Dee Bottoms

The primary conduit for the family's massive demographic and geographical expansion in the nineteenth century was Hugh Poston (August 27, 1791 – December 27, 1846).²³ Born in the Marion District to Anthony Poston and an unknown mother (historically recorded in some tertiary texts as Elizabeth), Hugh represents the critical fourth generation of the American lineage.²³

Hugh Poston married Ann (Nancy) Lawson, and together they cultivated a sprawling agrarian enterprise along the highly fertile but logistically challenging Great Pee Dee bottoms in the community of Hannah, South Carolina.⁴ The family was remarkably prolific, a common and necessary trait for agrarian dominance in the antebellum South. Hugh and Ann raised eleven children, including prominent sons who would carry the lineage forward: Reddick, Benjamin Durham, Andrew, Hugh II, Simon, and Daniel, alongside daughters such as Elizabeth.²³

This demographic explosion ensured that the Poston surname would become virtually ubiquitous across Marion, Florence, and surrounding counties. The economic viability of Hugh's operation relied upon the intensive agricultural practices typical of the era,

navigating the complex seasonal floods of the river to produce staple crops that fueled the local port economy at Ellison.⁴

Andrew Poston: The Architect of the Modern Settlement

Of Hugh's eleven children, none left a more indelible or permanent mark on the physical geography of the region than his son, Andrew Poston (1829 – October 1916).⁴ If the preceding generations were defined by transatlantic migration, wilderness survival, and agrarian land acquisition, Andrew's life was entirely defined by infrastructure advocacy and civic engineering.

Andrew Poston's early life was marked by the intense socio-political fractures of the mid-nineteenth century. He served as a soldier in the Confederate army during the American Civil War, surviving the catastrophic conflict to return to the Pee Dee region.¹³ In the post-bellum era, as the Southern economy struggled to reconstruct itself, Andrew recognized a fundamental economic truth: the future of regional prosperity lay not in the unpredictable river currents of the Pee Dee, but in the iron grip of the expanding railroad networks.

As a prominent land-owning farmer noted for his exceptional memory, robust vitality, and wide-ranging civic influence, Andrew utilized his massive landholdings to entice rail developers to the town of Ellison.⁴ As detailed in Part II of this report, his successful negotiation of the 1914 depot deal directly led to the establishment of the CSX predecessor siding. This act of private diplomacy caused the railroad corporations, and subsequently the town itself, to adopt his family name.⁴ The fact that a single individual could negotiate the renaming of a centuries-old river port speaks volumes about the concentration of capital and influence held by the Poston family in Florence County during the early twentieth century.

Part VII: Twentieth-Century Civic Leadership and

Evolution

While the town of Poston eventually receded into the background of South Carolina's industrial landscape following the repair shop controversy, the descendants of the family continued to exert substantial influence over Florence County and the surrounding areas. However, the nature of this influence shifted dramatically. Mirroring national trends, the Poston lineage transitioned from strictly agrarian pursuits to specialized public service, medicine, and law enforcement.

The Professionalization of the Lineage Dr. William Henry Poston (March 1, 1881 – November 6, 1950) exemplifies this transition from farm to professional practice. Graduating from the Medical College of the State of South Carolina in 1909, Dr. Poston dedicated forty-one years to medical practice, initially in Savage, SC, and predominantly in Pamplico, South Carolina.³⁴ The archival preservation of his fourteen medical school notebooks—covering complex topics from bacteriology to nervous diseases—highlights the rigorous academic turn of the family.³⁴ As a specialist in proctology and a highly active member of the American Medical Association, the South Carolina Medical Association, and local Masonic lodges (Pamplico Masonic Lodge No. 324), his career highlights the family's deep integration into the educated professional class of the New South.³⁴

Similarly, the family produced highly notable figures in public safety and municipal governance. Roger Earl Poston (1928 – March 18, 2016)

served as a military police officer in the U.S. Army before embarking on a highly distinguished career in local law enforcement.³⁵ Beginning his service with the Florence Police Department in 1951, he systematically rose through the ranks to become the Director of Public Safety and Chief of Police for the city of Florence.³⁵ His administrative capabilities were highly sought after; he also served as the Chief of Police for the cities of Beaufort and Orangeburg, and holds the historical distinction of serving as the very first police chief for the city of North Charleston.³⁵ His leadership role as the Assistant Director of the SC Law Enforcement Assistance Program in the Office of the Governor, coupled with his graduation from the elite FBI National Academy, cemented the Poston family's legacy of public stewardship at the state level.³⁵

Part VIII: Ecclesiastical Architecture and Regional

Regional

Landmarks

The deep entrenchment of the Poston family and their contemporaries in the South Carolina landscape is also reflected in the region's ecclesiastical architecture and historic landmarks. The social and religious lives of these agrarian families were anchored by local churches, many of which share direct historical ties with the families that populated the Florence County area.

While early Postons were heavily involved in Trinity Church in Charles County, Maryland, the family's later generations interacted with a different set of ecclesiastical institutions in South Carolina.²⁵ Within the broader Pee Dee and coastal regions, specific churches stand as monuments to the era's cultural priorities. For instance, Christ Episcopal Church in the Mars Bluff vicinity (Florence County) was formally established as a chapel in 1843 by the Rev. N.P. Tillinghast of Trinity Church, Society Hill.³⁶ Consecrated in 1859 on land donated by local planters, this church served the spiritual needs of the agrarian elite in the Florence area before becoming a mission church in the 1890s.³⁶

Similarly, the architectural ambitions of the region are reflected in structures like St. Luke's Church in Charleston. Constructed beginning in 1859 in a "Perpendicular Gothic" style uniquely adapted to the Southern climate, it featured giant lancet windows, elaborate tracery, and soaring 55-foot ceilings.³⁸ Although damaged during the Civil War, it continued to serve congregations until its purchase in 1950 by the New Tabernacle Fourth Baptist Church, illustrating the evolving demographic and religious landscape of South Carolina that

the Poston family navigated.³⁸ Furthermore, local infrastructure such as E. St. Luke Church Road in the Johnsonville area of Florence County directly references these historical religious anchors, demonstrating how deeply ecclesiastical history is embedded in the region's modern civil engineering and E-911 mapping systems.³⁹

Part IX: Modern Ecological Stewardship and Conservation

In the contemporary era, the Poston family's relationship with the land has evolved significantly, shifting from aggressive agricultural exploitation to deliberate ecological preservation. This represents a profound closing of the historical loop—from the early pioneers who fought to tame the wilderness of the Great Pee Dee, to modern descendants actively working to protect it from overdevelopment.

Dr. Harold Chalmers Poston, Jr., alongside his wife and two sons, currently stewards the Poston Preserve.⁴ Located in Manning, South Carolina, this private wildlife sanctuary encompasses sprawling open fields, intricate wooded trails, and delicate aquatic habitats such as Dragonfly Pond.⁴ The preserve functions as far more than just a piece of real estate; it is a living, breathing monument to the family's 250-year legacy in the state.⁴

By prioritizing the conservation of native flora and fauna, the preserve maintains the intrinsic natural beauty and cultural heritage of the Pee Dee backcountry.⁴ It serves as a tangible link connecting the past to the future, embodying the philosophy that true legacy requires constant, intentional stewardship.³ From John I Poston's 1722 tax line in colonial Pennsylvania to the modern boundaries of the Poston Preserve, the family continues to define its identity through its relationship with the American soil.⁴

Synthesis and Conclusion

The intersecting histories of the unincorporated community of Poston and the Poston family yield profound insights into the

mechanics of rural American development, revealing a highly reciprocal relationship between geography and lineage.

Initially, the harsh topography of the Great Pee Dee River selected for specific types of settlers—those capable of enduring the grueling agricultural demands and logistical risks of river-bottom farming.⁴ The Postons, hardened by their grueling transit down the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road and their colonial experiences in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, were uniquely suited to this task.⁴ They mastered the riverine logistics of the Ellison settlement, utilizing strategic locations like Allison Landing to integrate their agricultural output into the global cotton market.⁷

However, as the industrial revolution relentlessly encroached upon the agrarian South, the family—led by the visionary Andrew Poston—flipped this dynamic. Rather than submitting to the geographical limitations of a declining river port, they leveraged their accumulated land equity and civic influence to reroute national rail infrastructure directly through their specific parcels.⁴ The renaming of the town from Ellison to Poston is not merely a trivial historical footnote; it is a permanent cartographic recognition of private familial capital successfully dictating public infrastructure.

The rapid collapse of this economic boom following the town's rejection of the rail repair shop in 1914 provides a critical historical corollary.² It perfectly demonstrates the limits of individual advocacy against collective cultural resistance. While Andrew Poston could bring the railroad to the town, he could not fundamentally alter the cultural DNA of the agrarian community, which remained deeply suspicious of heavy industrialization and the disruptions it promised.² The resulting economic stagnation, followed by the town's jurisdictional absorption into Florence County due to transportation inefficiencies with the Marion county seat, illustrates how quickly a

community can be marginalized when it fails to fully integrate into emerging macroeconomic networks.¹

Concurrently, the Poston family narrative serves as a masterclass in genealogical endurance. The family systematically dispelled its own localized mythologies through rigorous archival preservation, replacing the lore of "John and Andrew" arriving directly from England with the meticulously documented realities of John and Anthony traversing the colonial interior.³ Unlike many colonial families whose descendants scattered entirely across the continent during the Western expansion, a critical mass of the Poston lineage remained hyper-localized within the Florence and Marion region for over two centuries.³ This density of kinship fostered an outsized local influence, allowing the family to permeate the civic, medical, and law enforcement institutions of South Carolina throughout the twentieth century.³⁴

Ultimately, the unincorporated community of Poston survives today not as the major industrial metropolis it briefly threatened to become, but as a resilient geographic placeholder. It stands alongside the protected lands of the Poston Preserve as a living, cartographic archive of a single family's enduring, 250-year imprint upon the South Carolina backcountry.³

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