

Lewis Henry Webb, 100 Years Ago
 April 16, 1959
 Rockingham Post-Dispatch Newspaper
 Rockingham, NC

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 Richmond County Historical Society
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ISSUED BY THE
 ROCKINGHAM POST-DISPATCH
 Issue of April 16, 1959

Letters Unearthed Writt

And Placed in November 1859 in Glass Jar
 In the Walls of the Old Dawkins' House.
 This House Torn Down in April 1959, and
 the Old Letters Found. They Give a Most
 Interesting Insight to 100 Years Ago.

THE SUNNYSIDE NURSERIES AND POMOLOGICAL GARDEN
 WAS ESTABLISHED IN NOVEMBER, 1859, IN THE WEBB
 BUT LATER KNOWN AS THE DAWKINS HOUSE, HALF
 A MILE NORTHWEST OF ROCKINGHAM, NORTH CAROLINA.

(By Isaac S. London, editor Post-Dispatch)

This story of a 160-year-old Rockingham house is a matter of history. We are starting it with the present, and then narrating backward. The two old letters at the bottom are the meat of the story.

The property of 229 acres was deeded for \$2000 to John Wesley Dawkins on Jan. 15, 1870, by Lewis H. Webb and wife Gattie of Nansemond county, Virginia.

John Wesley deeded it to his son Lewis Dawkins. On Nov. 3, 1923, Lewis and Nellie Dawkins deeded 40 1/4 acres to T. E. Cox; and in 1928 Mr. Cox deeded the house to his two daughters Fay and Helen.

In April, 1959, Fay Long and Helen Sneed decided to have the old story-and-a-half house torn down—it had gone to rack and ruin and vandalized. An efficient workman Clyde J. Sikes was given the job. In tearing down the old house, Mr. Sikes on April 3, 1959, found a bottle concealed in the wall, and in the bottle were a number of old papers, which are produced below.

The Lewis H. Webb referred to was about 35 in 1859 and unmarried. He was Clerk of Court for Richmond county. He was a native of Connecticut and was quite well educated, judging by the penmanship. He was Captain of the Free Body Guards (Company D, 23rd N. C. Regt.), that left Rockingham June 27, 1861, for training at Garysburg. In his History of this Company, written by the late H. C. Wall about 1872, from his notes and diary, on page 3 of the Wall sketch (now on file in Southern Historical Sketches at the University) is this reference to Capt. Lewis H. Webb.

Wrote Mr. Wall: "I need not omit the fact that while on this trip (to Garysburg in late June 1861), we met with the misfortune of being subjected, wrongfully, to military punishment thro' the misguided but revengeful temper of our quondam Capt. L. H. Webb. Our numerous company broke, while this dread functionary held his rank, need not be chronicled, as they are incidents too deeply impressed to be effaced by time or circumstances—suffice it to say, Capt. Webb proved himself unworthy the office and was therefore promptly ousted and First Lieutenant Knight placed in command of our Company."

A check of the Richmond county Courthouse records by I. S. London on April 8, 1959, shows that the 225 acres referred to above were bought for \$900 from Mrs. Mourning F. Robinson, widow of Colonel Charles Robinson, by John W. Leak and W. L. Steele—the deed dated January 8, 1859—and presumably bought for the Sunnyside Nurseries company.

Lewis H. Webb sold the 229 acres Feb. 13, 1861, for \$850 to his father Wm. G. Webb of Hartford county, Connecticut. Evidently

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Lewis H. Webb sold the 229 acres Feb. 13, 1861, for \$850 to his father Wm. G. Webb of Hartford county, Connecticut. Evidently his father died in a few years, because on Aug. 17, 1867, his brothers W. H. and Walter J. G. Webb gave him a quit claim deed as part heirs of W. G. Webb. And so did W. G. Webb's widow Celestia C. Webb. So that Lewis H. Webb in August 1867 came into entire ownership of the 229 acres and the Sunnyside house. And then, as noted, Lewis and his Virginia wife Gattie of Nansemond county, Virginia, deeded the property to John Wesley Dawkins, John Wesley to his son Lewis, and then Lewis and wife Nellie to T. E. Cox on Nov. 3, 1923 (or rather 40 1/4 acres of the original 229.)

John Wesley Dawkins died April 6, 1882, at age of 47. He was son of Eli and Polly Terry Dawkins—Eli born Oct. 23, 1805, died Nov. 14, 1884, and Polly born 1806 and died Sept. 20, 1871. A sister of John Wesley Dawkins was Elizabeth who married J. A. McQueen, parents of the late Mrs. Polly McQueen Bostick. John Wesley Dawkins had a whisky store on West Washington street, and he built the two-story brick store building between the Hudson shoe shop and the 3-foot narrow Polly McQueen building. John Wesley was a shrewd trader and though uneducated, he amassed much property.

Now with the above explanations, let's copy the letters and items found April 8, 1959, by Clyde J. Sikes while tearing down the old Sunnyside Nurseries (Dawkins) building half a mile northwest of Rockingham: It reads like a story from the dead— from 100 years ago; and you should file and save this April 16, 1959, copy of the Rockingham Post-Dispatch. Maybe all of this read 100 years hence — in 2059 — will make strange reading!

LEWIS H. WEBB 100 YEARS AGO

Sunnyside Nurseries 1859
 Items found in a bottle in the old Dawkins house torn down by Clyde Sikes April 3, 1959, Rockingham, N. C.

Item 1
 Their first bill head: "Bought of Stansell, Steele & Co., Nurserymen and Florists, Sunnyside Nurseries and Pomological Garden, one mile north of Rockingham."

Item 2
 On reverse side of 13 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches, written in ink "This is one of the first cards of this establishment. Nov. 1859.—L. H. Webb."

On opposite side:
 "SUNNYSIDE NURSERIES, and POMOLOGICAL GARDEN, Rockingham, N. C. L. H. Webb, Agent. All orders for fruit trees, flowers, ornamental shrubbery & c.

will meet with due attention. Argus, print."

Item 3
 The various letters and items were in another paper, on the front of which was written "OPEN & READ."

Item 4
 A small 5x7 sheet ruled on which was written in ink:
 "To Whomsoever This May Come:

Should not I come forward and claim this, or some of my descendants, if any are in this vicinity, please forward to any of my relatives, wherever they may be. Inquiries made at Rocky Hill, Connecticut (if no where else) may prove successful."
 L. H. Webb

Item 5
 (This letter was written in November, 1859 by Colonel Garter Congress W. L. Steele if plastered up in the space over the bay-window in this Sunnyside Nurseries house. Colonel Walter Steele was born April 16, 1823, and died Oct. 16, 1891, and served two terms in Congress

Written 100 Years Ago

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1 First Lieut-
2)

records by I.
as referred to
P. Robinson,
Leak and W.

1 presumably
1 for \$850 to

"Anno Domini 1859,
November 17th.
This building was erected by
Peter W. Stanell, John W. Leak,
Water L. Steele and Louis H.
Webb (note: the spelling, though
Webb was Lewis; Henry Webb),
Agent for W. C. Webb, Proprietors
of "Sunny Side Nurseries" as
the residence on the estate.
The architect was L. H. Webb
and the carpenter Thomas W.
Moody, assisted by Tillman
Dunn, Zedeeah Smith and Jim
Mask a mulatt; the bricklay-
ing and plaster by Lewis, a slave
of John W. Leak.
The foregoing Proprietors en-
tered into a par te ratio for the
purpose of raising fruit trees
and ornamental shrubbery, by
which they believed the tastes
and social advancement of their
fellow-citizens would be im-
proved and their moral feelings
elevated. Of course, as no man
can live by his patriotism alone,
it was hoped that whilst we
were improving the tastes, and
adding to the enjoyments of
others, they would in their turn
give us a substantial "quid pro
quo" in the shape of a liberal
and remunerative patronage.
To enable us to carry out the so-
cial interest, heretofore set
forth, by showing to others our
sincerity and respectability in
what we proposed and satisfy-
ing ourselves, too, that we
"could" and "would" do all as
promised, this building was de-
signed and constructed. It was
intended as a specimen of rural
taste and architecture, to be
surrounded by shrubbery, taste-
fully laid out, and thus afford
examples of the beautiful to
be followed by our friends, and
a pleasant retreat for ourselves
and families where we can en-
joy ourselves among fruits and
flowers, feeling profoundly
grateful to a good Providence
for all His blessings, and espe-
cially for "casting our lines in
such pleasant places."
Up to this time, our Orchard
consists of 237 apple trees, em-
bracing 36 varieties; 463 peach
trees, 19 varieties, 193 standard
pear trees, 22 varieties, and 234
dwarf pear trees, 71 varieties.
We expect to enlarge the same
during the present season by
adding apricot, cherry and
plum trees, and a number of
dwarf and a few standard pear
trees.
We have also a good variety
of everblooming rose bushes and
some of the choicest evergreens.
The first trees raised by us
which were put in market were
80 apple trees sold by L. H. Webb
to H. H. Huske, Esq. of Fayette-
ville at 12 1/2c.
Our largest customers are P.
A. Stanback, Dr. R. D. Dickson,
James P. Leak, and Luke Black-
mer Esq. of Salisbury.
The foregoing was written by
Col. Walter Leak Steele to be
plastered up in the space over
the bay window.
The land belonging to us, and
upon which we are now operat-
ing, consists of 225 acres bought
of Mrs. Mourning P. Robinson,
widow of Colonel Charles Rob-
inson, deceased, at the price of
\$4.00 per acre.
The total expenditures up to
this time are about \$3000.
This enterprise was much ridi-
culed by many citizens of
Rockingham, chief among
whom was Robt. L. Steele a
brother of one of the Proprietors.
This year (1859) in June I ad-
dressed a Miss Fanny LeGrand
who rejected me. (This young
lady was Miss Frances LeGrand
married four years later on July
15, 1863, to Capt. W. I. Everett,
France was born Feb. 8, 1840,
and died October 3, 1908—1861.)
I love her, but I had been
schooled on a bitter school, and
have learned to bear such dis-
appointments with fortitude.
I have been residing in this
building since April of 1859,
leading a lonely bachelor's life,
sighing for a congenial spirit,
in a wife.
I mean to try again soon, but
who, I know not.
I am Clerk of the County
Court of Richmond county, and
my record book speaks for my
official capacity. I am now in
the third year of my second
term (must have been elected
in 1852 when just 25 years
old). Whether or not I shall seek
the office again, I do not know.
I have been told by good friends
that I can have it as long as I
desire it.
I am assisting a poor carpenter
by the name of Moody in
building a house for John D.
Shaw, Esq. a lawyer residing in
Rockingham. I am only assist-
ing him by hiring his hands for
him. I hope he may make a
"fish basket," though I think
it extremely cheap, and there-
fore quite suggestive, rather of
a beautiful Sisseton than any-
thing fishy. I have determined
to add a few private show-bits,
if they should not be found un-
fit this house is torn down on
account of old age or decay, I
can hardly think they will fall
into the hands of, and be read
by any one who will feel any
particular interest in them, by

reason of relationship to the
writer.
I desire then, that if, when
this paper is discovered, there
are none of my "kith and kin"
here to receive it, that, those
who do get it, will forward this
to them, wherever they may be.
I write this, for these reasons:
First, I am not married,
though now 31 years and 6
months old. And have no rela-
tives in North Carolina at this
time. I know how greatly I
should be pleased NOW to find
such a SCRAP as this, written
by any one of my ancestors
even 40 years ago. And I doubt
not that there may be when this
paper is discovered (as it has
been 100 years later—1859),
some who will feel such an in-
terest in myself.
I may yet marry. Though
whom I cannot tell, for I am
unengaged, and not courting
any lady, and perhaps I may
be blessed with affectionate
and fond children, who will love
any reminder of their father
even as they love him or reverse
his memory. But should I not
marry, which is more than
probable, for the reason that I
have reached an age when the
chances of marrying are grow-
ing rapidly more and more im-
paired; and the further reason
that I have been always thus
far very unfortunate in my mat-
rimonial pursuits. Some of my
brothers, or my only sister (God
bless her) will maybe have children
who will remember kindly their
"Uncle Lew," and be glad to
read and preserve these lines.
I would if my time permitted
write a great deal, but as I have
always intended if spared to a
sufficient season to write all
that I might do here, I will not
now go to such length.
I have said above, that I have
been unfortunate in my search
for a wife. I have detailed at
length elsewhere my courtships,
and especially that of my love-
for, and engagement to Miss E.
J. Ledbetter, as also the cir-
cumstances of the breaking off
of that engagement. She is still
unmarried, and need I say that
she is still dear to me, though
I have long since given up all
hopes of ever marrying her.
(NOTE: This "Miss E. J.
Ledbetter" was Miss Eliza
John Ledbetter of Anson
county born Jan. 16, 1839,
and died Nov. 27, 1912. She
was married about a year
after Capt. Lewis Webb
wrote this letter —

children) bids fair to become a
lovely woman. If she makes as
good a one as her excellent
mother, she ought to be happy.
—L. H. Webb

(NOTE: This Alice Lenoir
Steele was born Aug. 9, 1845,
and died Sept. 17, 1917, and
was married on July 31,
1864, five years after Capt.
Webb wrote his letter, to
William Crawford Covington,
the wedding taking
place in Cheraw. Among
their children were Walter
Steel Covington of Lenoir,
Thomas Arrey Covington,
Hettie who married John C.
Birmingham, Corinna who
married Mr. Tyler, Mary
Wall who married Sheriff
Homer D. Baldwin.—ISL)

Today the hands on this place
are engaged in ditching, setting
out cuttings of Japonica,
planting peach seed etc.
To you who may read this, I
give this advice and clause,
**BE HONEST
BE INDUSTRIOUS
BE FRUGAL,
SEEK WISDOM
LOVE GOD AND SERVE HIM
AND YOU WILL BE HAPPY!**
—Lewis Henry Webb.

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Item 6
(a detailed personal letter by
Lewis Henry Webb)
November 17, 1859
due attention.
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France was born Feb. 8, 1840,
and died October 3, 1908—1861.)
I love her, but I had been
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have learned to bear such dis-
appointments with fortitude.
I have been residing in this
building since April of 1859,
leading a lonely bachelor's life,
sighing for a congenial spirit,
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I have long since given up all
hopes of ever marrying her.
(NOTE: This "Miss E. J.
Ledbetter" was Miss Eliza
John Ledbetter of Anson
county born Jan. 16, 1839,
and died Nov. 27, 1912. She
was married about a year
after Capt. Lewis Webb
wrote this letter — married
about late 1860 or 1861 to
William Bennett Little who
died in 1910. They made
their home on the Little big
plantation some twelve
miles southwest of Wades-
boro. They had two daugh-
ters and six sons—and now
in 1959 there are 21 grand-
sons and innumerable great
grandchildren. One of the
grandsons in Wadesboro is
our friend Hal Little. But
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and died Nov. 27, 1912. She
was married about a year
after Capt. Lewis Webb
wrote this letter — married
about late 1860 or 1861 to
William Bennett Little who
died in 1910. They made
their home on the Little big
plantation some twelve
miles southwest of Wades-
boro. They had two daugh-
ters and six sons—and now
in 1959 there are 21 grand-
sons and innumerable great
grandchildren. One of the
grandsons in Wadesboro is
our friend Hal Little. But
with Eliza John living some
39 or more miles from
Rockingham 100 years ago,
upon which we are now operat-
ing, the wonder is that Col-
webb ever got a chance to
court her.—ISL.)
This year (1859) in June I ad-
dressed a Miss Fanny LeGrand
who rejected me. (This young
lady was Miss Frances LeGrand
married four years later on July
15, 1863, to Capt. W. I. Everett,
France was born Feb. 8, 1840,
and died October 3, 1908—1861.)
I love her, but I had been
schooled on a bitter school, and
have learned to bear such dis-
appointments with fortitude.
I have been residing in this
building since April of 1859,
leading a lonely bachelor's life,
sighing for a congenial spirit,
in a wife.
I mean to try again soon, but
who, I know not.
I am Clerk of the County
Court of Richmond county, and
my record book speaks for my
official capacity. I am now in
the third year of my second
term (must have been elected
in 1852 when just 25 years
old). Whether or not I shall seek
the office again, I do not know.
I have been told by good friends
that I can have it as long as I
desire it.
I am assisting a poor carpenter
by the name of Moody in
building a house for John D.
Shaw, Esq. a lawyer residing in
Rockingham. I am only assist-
ing him by hiring his hands for
him. I hope he may make a
"fish basket," though I think
it extremely cheap, and there-
fore quite suggestive, rather of
a beautiful Sisseton than any-
thing fishy. I have determined
to add a few private show-bits,
if they should not be found un-
fit this house is torn down on
account of old age or decay, I
can hardly think they will fall
into the hands of, and be read
by any one who will feel any
particular interest in them, by

I have long since given up all
hopes of ever marrying her.
(NOTE: This "Miss E. J.
Ledbetter" was Miss Eliza
John Ledbetter of Anson
county born Jan. 16, 1839,
and died Nov. 27, 1912. She
was married about a year
after Capt. Lewis Webb
wrote this letter — married
about late 1860 or 1861 to
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