

LEWIS JARELL DEUPREE

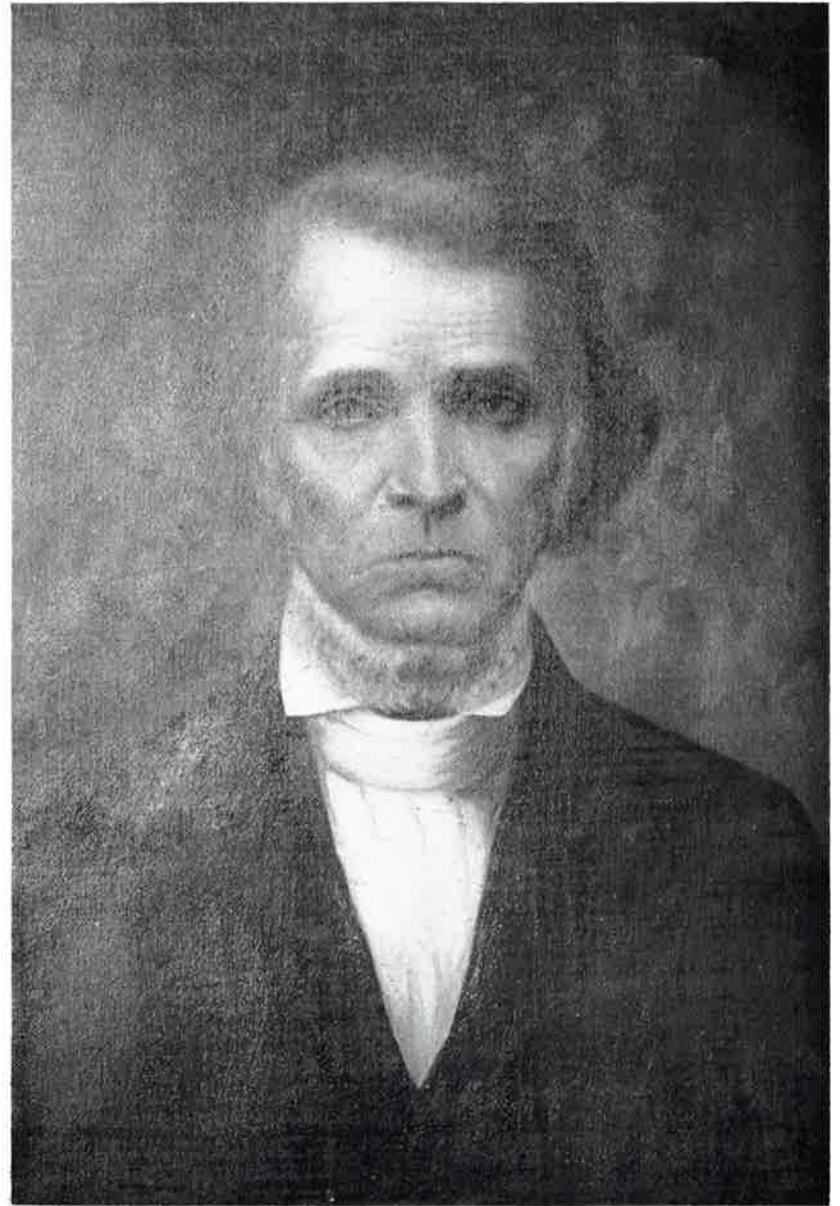
## Preface

Lewis Jarell Deupree grew up with Oglethorpe County as he was born in the year 1793 when Oglethorpe County was laid out or created as territory lying within certain boundaries.

Lexington being its county seat was the home of Mr. Deupree for 69 years until he moved to Athens to be with his daughters, Lucy Grattan Yancey and Mary Lewis Hunnicutt.

The brief history of his life, the Deupree Estate, the wise and wonderful letter to his children, the famous Deupree will case and more recently the formation of the Deupree Company will be of intense interest to the present and future heirs holding now and in the future substantial evidence of the generosity of a great and good man.

JOHN A. HUNNICUTT, M. D.



LEWIS J. DEUPREE



MARY LEWIS DEUPREE



LUCY GRATTAN DEUPREE

## Lewis Jarell Deupree

Lewis J. Deupree's Mother was Ann Atkinson, his Father was Drury Deupree.

Lewis Jarell Deupree was born July 31, 1793 near Lexington, Georgia, and died in Athens Georgia, April 17, 1870 in his 77th year.

His wives were as follows:

1st, Mrs. Kaziah Woody.

2nd, Miss Martha J. Adams born August 15, 1829, died October 14, 1856.

3rd, Mrs. Lucy Y. Peebles married L. J. Deupree May 24, 1864. Mrs. Martha J. Adams Deupree's children were as follows: Francina, Mary Lewis, Lucy Grattan, and Martha Mourning.

Francina married John W. McCalla and died without issue.

Mary Lewis, born October 12, 1852, died January 4, 1932, married John Atkinson Hunnicutt February 22, 1870. Their children were Martha Lewis, Lucy Edwin, Deupree, Mary Deupree, Sarah Ethel, Eleanor Francina, John Atkinson, and Nell Grattan.

Lucy Grattan, born December 5, 1854, died November 6, 1893, married Goodloe Harper Yancey. Her children were Mary Ella, William Lowndes, Louis Jarrell, Goodloe Harper, Lucy Grattan, and Benjamin Earle.

Martha Mourning, the youngest sister, died in infancy.

At the time (June 9, 1865) the letter which follows was written, his (Mr. Deupree's) children were off at school at the Salem Academy, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, having been taken there by their father during the Civil War to be cared for and taught by the Moravian Sisters; all wonderful women. His daughters' ages were: Francina 13, Mary Lewis 11, Lucy Grattan 9, when his letter was written.

When letters for all of the children at Salem Academy were received they were placed on the teacher's desk. The letters from Mr. Deupree to his daughters were so highly esteemed that they were never left unread by the teachers.

Lexington 8th June, 1865

My Dear Children:

After so long a time I once more write you. I am without any of your loving letters to reply to. Since in March the railroad has been so injured that I could not come or send you any comforts. I had intended to undertake to come and walk the gaps made in the railroad, but then I could not bring the articles on account of their weight, and at the same time my health had been so feeble I was afraid of the undertaking and it seems the Companies of the railroads are so exhausted with the war they are unable to repair the roads. Still I hope this will be done before long.

I have articles in a state of readiness to send, I have two pieces of cloth for dresses ready and for shimore stockings, shoe leathers, thread etc. I have ordered some goods from New York such as hats, calico, bleached shirtings etc to be forwarded to High Point care of A. V. Sulavin addressed as usual to Salem which I hope will be sent out. Tho not sure they will be sent for want of an agent in New York for regular agent there may be dead not having heard from since the war commenced. Be this as it may, you are not forgotten and I shall have relief soon if I live and in the meantime be cheerful and press onwards with every effort to improvement giving all diligence, and mend up your clothes and never allow yourselves to be idle and allow any opportunity to escape being improved as well outside of your regular studies as in cooking, ironing, washing, sewing, knitting, mending seeking all of the instructions from all who are capable of giving it with gratefull feelings for their giving you the opportunity to thus work learning all manner of domestic management as a great privilege. The day is coming when this information will be indispensable to your usefulness and happiness. Anything you can devote your attention to and I urge it upon you more earnestly now because what I expected to happen when this destructive war began had happened and which I trust in God will result in the final good of the white race as well as the amelioration of the black race—the blacks are now all free and we have a contract with them to work. The Yankeys were in our midst for about two weeks. They camped in the female school house grove, they annoyed me much and done one much damage taking my corn, fodder, milk, butter, bacon, flour and filling the kitchen for bread baking and ordering their meals at my table and rummaging all through my plantation and berating me for an old rebel and telling the negroes they were all free and fools if they worked without pay. The Yankeys did not tell them that they did not make anything for me to pay them out of for their work. The blacks made only corn, potatoes and peas and their master furnished them meat, clothes, and shoes and paid

their taxes etc out of his labors. They are doing about as they did before. I tell them they shall have half of wheat they made this year but at the end of the year I shall break up and they will have to provide afterwards for themselves as I can support them no longer for I shall have had a chance to support myself and my own children.

It is astonishing to see to what extent this war has ruined me. Railroad stock, bank stock, all, all ruined and it may be the land all confiscated. I have now on hand and which are valueless \$50,000.00 Confederate notes and Confederate securities together with all other means valueless. I have taken the oath of allegiance and with it I feel like I was just beginning the world again without a thing to begin with only this difference being old and infirm and not able to do hard labor having worked hard and spent my strength for naught.

Now my dear children I have said enough on the gloomy subject. My heart of hearts sickens at the contemplation on the subject. My nerves tremble from age and age infirmities so I can scarcely write intelligently.

Now my dear children the only object and consolation that encourages me to desire to live (save to fulfill my mission obediently to the will of my Heavenly Master) is to be of some aid to you and as an instrument in the hands of our Masterful God of aiding to direct your young and tender minds in the right way that you may become honored instruments in turn in His hands of getting good and doing good in your day and generation to this desired end put forth all your energies both physical and mental in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom for acquirements are powers.

You will be thrown upon your own resources in a cold uncharitable world to make your way as best you can under God. Now to start on this mission make as few false steps as possible, lay the foundation deep and solid in the rock of truth, integrity and virtue, study well what is right, study well what is wrong and the right pursue and the wrong to shun. Study human nature in yourselves and others. Create an element of your own where faith and virtue *dwells* and where serenity *dwells* and where a constant sunshine of conscious rectitude reigns then you can claim the righteous is as bold as a "lion" while the wicked fleeth when no man pursueth.

As before mentioned avail yourselves of every opportunity of getting all the information you can in domestic affairs, fear not the wash tub, ironing, cooking and the correct mode of cooking quantities to be used in cooking, let not your hands be found idle, don't say to yourselves we get nothing for all this. You are getting good pay if you avail yourselves of the opportunity of being afforded the opportunity of being taught under those who have the skill and are willing to teach you when you manifest a willing and anxious mind to be instructed.

Now my dear children let me add a few words upon the subject of Religion and the mode and the manner of its conduct as practiced in its forms, organization, etc. Religion does not consist in big meetings and long protracted noisy outbreaks of passions, crying and shouting and such like, scenes as are often shown off in our part of the world, but in an honest purpose to acquire the truth upon the subject and by the grace of God through faith to take its seat in heart and to be there as a well of saving waters the fruits of which will flow out in all practical life as a testimony that you have been with Christ and that his spirit abides with you and that you have heard that small voice, "Thy Sins are forgiven you" and remember God has said "There is no man that liveth and doeth good and sineth not."

My dear children educate and train yourselves in all your labors and duties to be patient enduring and accurate, never to be impatient or spasmodic but regular, constant and firm, not too credulous to be satisfied by designing sugary tongues.

But be polite to all and respectful and watchful of all, — un-deviating faith in your Pas' advice and counsels and all the "Ladies Teachers" he may place over you never doubting their counsels, instructions and teachings.

Your anxious father,  
Lewis J. Deupree

P. S.

And remember dear children, the old story, good minds, good manners and morals are the foundation of happy lives — be content and happy.

L. J. D.

Francina, Lucy Grattan, and Mary Lewis became superb house-keepers, wonderful mothers and possessed poise and graciousness along with beauty and staunch Christian character thus fulfilling their devoted father's fondest wishes and desire.

The descendants of the Deupree daughters have without exception reached a high pinnacle of success in the business and professional world and the girls in the families have maintained the highest standards of womanhood.

Lewis J. Deupree was probably the richest man in Georgia at the beginning of the Civil War, worth approximately one million dollars. By the cruel fate of war his investments in railroad stocks and bonds, bank stocks, real estate, plantations, buildings, a large merchantile and banking business and cotton brokerage were

rendered practically valueless. He paid ten thousand dollars in gold for bonds from his own resources, also fifty thousand dollars which was mentioned in his letter to his children.

He was one of eight children, self-educated and at an early age began to bear the financial burdens of his less gifted brothers and sisters. Because of his extraordinary business capacity he amassed a large fortune; yet he maintained through life a high reputation for integrity and honesty. He was remarkably unobtrusive and retiring in his manners and singularly averse to ostentation and to the demonstrative in act or word and in consequence to those who did not know him well, he appeared to be reticent and distant and cold; but his wife and children and those admitted to his intimacy never had occasion to doubt his cordiality or his confiding disposition. In society and in the church he showed little if any disposition towards self-assertion. Generally he remained silent in the business meetings of his church but when money was to be raised he was always to speak in time to head the list with an amount commensurate with his obligations. No one was more princely in his benefactions but he never bestowed them on any object until by actual investigation he became confident that it was deserving.

He was for many years a member of the Baptist Church at Lexington and on his death bed expressed confidence in the Savior.

He was known to his contemporaries as Judge Deupree on account of his unflinching capacity to settle fairly debated questions, probably a Justice of the Peace.

A man most methodical in his habits as demonstrated by his taking the usual time to dress and eat his breakfast and walk slowly to his office after being told that it had been ransacked by thieves during the night. At one time his office and bank building were the only brick structures in Lexington and escaped from a disastrous fire which burned a good many wooden structures.

His home was not a show place. It was well built for comfort and contained the best furniture, ample fireplaces, large windows and all conveniences to promote health and happiness and gracious living.



Lewis J. Deupree was known throughout Georgia for his keen financial mind. Being a merchant and financier he was keenly aware of the economic conditions throughout his lifetime.

Augusta, Georgia, was the main business point in Georgia—the Savannah River had boat traffic and was the main dock area for such items as cotton and sugar—the latter being shipped from Cuba up the river to Augusta.

Each year a boat load of sugar would arrive at the Augusta docks. The load would serve the surrounding area of Augusta with sugar for a year. Merchants would gather in Augusta and purchase their supply. It had always been the custom for several wealthy men in Augusta to buy the entire load of sugar and then parcel it out to the individual merchants in the surrounding areas for a price considerably higher than the purchase price. No one thus far had disputed their rights and reluctantly paid the price asked by the Augusta brokers.

Judge Deupree attended the auction in Augusta when the boat load of sugar was to be auctioned off. He started the bidding to the astonishment of the Augustans who had always bought without any competition from the unknowns outside of Augusta. The bidding became more heated—the men of Augusta decided to run the price of sugar to an outrageous price—let Deupree buy and then buy back from him the sugar at a very low price believing no man from little Lexington, Georgia, could finance such a purchase single handed and then have the financial security to hold on to it.

So Judge Deupree bought the entire boatload of sugar—paying in gold—and then he stated: "Gentlemen I have enjoyed the spirit of competition displayed here today and I consider my investment a good one. Since I have paid quite a good price for this sugar I will be delighted to sell portions of the cargo to the gentlemen of Augusta and this area for 30 percent above my purchase price. Should none of you be interested in the purchase price I have named I have already employed wagons to cart the cargo in whole or in part to my place of business in Lexington, Georgia."

The Augustans and merchants finally realized that Judge Deupree had single handed cornered the sugar market and was more

than financially able to hold on to the sugar till hell froze over if necessary.

In the end of the episode the gentlemen of Augusta and the merchants of the surrounding country bought their sugar from the Judge and that's that.

Oglethorpe County gave to the South and Nation a number of great statesmen and jurists; four Governors of Georgia, Gilmer, Lumpkin, Matthews, and Crawford. Some of Georgia's counties are named for them. Intellectual giants in those days.

William H. Crawford represented his state in various capacities as legislator, United States Senator, Ambassador to France, and Secretary of the United States Treasury.

When Athens was a mere college town people would come to Lexington to purchase their better class goods. When the site of Athens was a howling wilderness, Lexington was growing into an important business center.

The town was also the political center of Georgia and in an oak grove near the Meson Academy the greatest statesmen and orators of the state would meet in joint debate to settle all political issues.

It was in Lexington that Ben Hill and Alec Stephens held their noted debate when Mr. Hill sarcastically said during his address, "The idea of little Alec Stephens aspiring for office over myself! Why if you will grease the little fellow I will swallow him."

"Yes," rejoined little Alec, "When you swallow me you will have more brains in your stomach than you have ever had in your head."

The town of that day had handsome residences with pillard columns the pride and glory of the Old South. Most of these old mansions are standing and well preserved. The hospitality, culture, and refinement of the citizens of Lexington were recognized all over the state.

When in 1833 it was suggested that the Georgia Railroad include Lexington on its route the citizens were horrified at the thought of having the beauty of Lexington and the close by land desecrated.

Oglethorpe County was the seat of the marvelous agricultural empire of Jim Smith, comprising several thousand acres of land,

a private railroad, huge brick barns and extensive farming equipment with his gins and large store houses for cotton and other crops. This great agricultural estate disintegrated after the death of its owner in 1915.

What is known as the Deupree Estate in Athens, Georgia, was created in 1867 by the erection of a building called the Deupree Building, a large brick structure two stories high. The first floor (ground floor) has been used for stores, the second floor contained a large very high ceiling hall used for years as a dance hall, for theatricals and Federal Court room and offices. This original building was partially destroyed by fire and replaced with a modern two-storey building without the very spacious dance hall. A great many commencement dances were held in the old buildings. Stores and a warehouse (cotton) were added and new property from the Marks Estate was acquired for the Deupree Estate by Messrs. Howell Erwin, Sr., and Deupree Hunnicutt.

This property of the Deupree Estate on the corner of Broad and Thomas Streets and Clayton and Thomas Streets has been managed by Deupree Hunnicutt for 60 years; kept fully insured and repaired through the years with a meticulous attention to the distribution of income and all other matters pertaining to the proper and skillful management of such an estate which had its good and bad years of panics, low cotton prices, poor business and everything else that would plague a small college town in the South. The tenants had a nasty habit of throwing all sorts of paper and trash on the lower roofs. Torrential rains would overflow the stopped-up gutters and the storekeepers below would be almost drowned. After a few of these terrible episodes Deupree Hunnicutt was very fondly referred to and also called Noah.

This property (the Deupree Estate) was deeded to the daughters, Francina, Mary Lewis, and Lucy Grattan in a most remarkable instrument known as the Deed of Gift, July 3, 1869, by their father, Lewis J. Deupree. A part of this deed of gift reads as follows: And should the said Francina, Mary Lewis, or Lucy Grattan jointly during the continuation of their life interest in the same endeavor or meditate selling or in any way disposing of other than their interest in the same then the whole shall immediately vest in the deacons of the two churches (Baptist) above

provided for who shall immediately take possession and sell the same and vest the proceeds as directed aforesaid and should either of the said daughters, Francina, Mary Lewis, and Lucy Grattan attempt or meditate selling or disposing of other than their life interest or portion then the said portion shall immediately vest in the aforesaid deacons or be disposed of as aforesaid and any similar attempt, attempt or design on the part of child or children who may enjoy the interest of either sister shall work a similar forfeiture as to his, her or their representative interest.

Even a child endowed with the most unsophisticated legal acumen would venture the opinion that the deacons did not get the property. The intent of this deed gift has been religiously adhered to and the property (Deupree Estate) is owned by the children of Lucy Grattan and Mary Lewis Hunnicutt.

Mrs. Lucy Y. Peebles became the third wife of Mr. Deupree on May 24, 1864, and on the day he married and in contemplation of said marriage he and the said Lucy Y. on the day of the marriage and before the ceremony was solemnized entered into marriage articles which provided for the settlement of \$10,000 by the said Lewis J. Deupree upon the intended wife and for securing to her sole and separate use of her own property, etc., a marriage settlement.

Mr. Deupree died in 1870 and a year later this will and two previous wills were contested. The Deupree will case, some 44 pages of it in the Georgia Code was a celebrated one and read and referred to by lawyers and judges for many, many years. The lawyers representing one James E. Deupree, *et al*, were Linton Stephens, Peebles, and Stewart; Reed and Morton.

Robert Toombs and J. D. Matthews represented the defendants Francina, Mary Lewis, and Lucy Grattan Deupree. The cost of this litigation was huge and borne by the defendants. The contestants were paid substantial amounts. Judge Hiram Warner, Chief Justice of Georgia Supreme Court, probably Georgia's most eminent jurist rendered the following decision: in my judgment, the children of the testator (Mr. Deupree) by his former marriage, his (heirs) have the clear, undoubted legal right under the public law of the State to have the judgment of the Court in favor of a revocation of the testator's will and that he

died intestate under the statement of facts disclosed in the record, and judgment of the Court below should be affirmed. Also, he further stated that the law does not interfere with the right of a testator to dispose of his property by will—it simply declares to him that if he marries after making his will in which no provision is made in contemplation of an event, that will shall be revoked and he must make another if he desires to dispose of his property by will. This decision was a masterpiece of clarity and logic.

On February 7, 1959 in Athens, Georgia, the organizational meeting of the Deupree Company, a corporation of Clarke County, Georgia, was held. The charter was granted to the Deupree Company by Clarke Superior Court earlier in this day February 7, 1959.

The corporation commenced business with a capital of \$195,960.00, represented by 195,960 shares of the \$1.00 par value common stock of the corporation.

The first directors of said corporation unanimously elected are Deupree Hunnicutt, Sr., John A. Hunnicutt, III, E. S. Sell, Jr., B. Earle Yancey, Jr., Don A. Yancey, and Howell C. Erwin, Jr.

The first officers of the Deupree Company unanimously elected are Howell C. Erwin, Jr., President, Deupree Hunnicutt, Sr., Vice-President, and John A. Hunnicutt, III, Secretary and Treasurer.

The real estate holdings in the corporation comprise 129 feet on South Side of East Clayton Street and a frontage of 81.4 feet on the north side of East Board Street, together with the block bounded by Dearing, Church, Waddell, and Pope Streets in the City of Athens in exchange of 195,960 shares of the \$1.00 per value stock of the corporation.

The Deupree Company has negotiated with the J. C. Penney Company for some time and is now in the final stages of negotiation to erect a very large modern and well-constructed Department Store to front on both Clayton and Broad Streets.

The stockholders, directors, and officers feel the store will not only be beneficial to the present stockholders and members now but also to the owners in the future.