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Gaspard T. Carrie *Kennesaw Meets Mark Twain*

BY ANDREW J. BRAMLETT

One of the most distinguished residents in Kennesaw history was Judge Gaspard Theodore Carrie, who served as postmaster and justice of the peace, owned a Kennesaw hotel and was the patriarch of one of the city's most prominent families.

G.T.'s father, Joseph Theodore Carrie, was born in France in 1773. Fleeing religious persecution, he moved to the United States before 1798, worked in Augusta and South Carolina and married Mary Eubanks in 1818. Their oldest daughter, Caroline, was born later that year, and their second child, Gaspard, was born Jan. 1, 1820. The Carries would have at least five more children. Though born in the Carolinas, Gaspard was raised in Augusta. He attended a Catholic school and worked at a newspaper.

In the 1830s and '40s, Penfield, Georgia, was becoming an important city — a group of Baptists established Mercer University there in 1833. Sometime between 1835 and 1840, Gaspard Carrie moved to Penfield and began working for two temperance newspapers, the *Christian Index* and the *Temperance Banner*. He became close friends with his boss, a veteran of the War of 1812 named Benjamin Brantly. In 1843, Carrie married Lucy Blodgett in Augusta, and they would have five children. In that same year, Carrie's brother-in-law enters the story.

William Tappan Thompson was an Ohio native who moved to Georgia in 1834. Three years later, he married Caroline Carrie, Gaspard's oldest sibling. The following year, Thompson began publishing stories he wrote in his own newspaper, the *Augusta Mirror*, and his best-known book, "Major Jones' Courtship," was published in 1843.

Written as a series of letters by a fictitious Maj. Joseph Jones, the book featured the Stallings family, which included the matriarch and three daughters, Mary, Caroline and Keziah. The Stallings family was based on the Carrie family, and Mary Stallings was the object of Jones' affection. Another member of the Stallings family was Tom, based on Gaspard. The Carries weren't the only real-life individuals to inspire Thompson. He also included a fictional version of J. Edgar Thompson, the chief engineer of the Georgia Railroad, who, according to legend, gave Atlanta its name.

When "Major Jones' Courtship" was first published, the *Augusta Chronicle* praised it as "the prize book of the season" and compared it to the works of Charles Dickens. Today, the book is remembered for using "atrocious grammar and Southern dialect." It is believed that the book inspired Mark Twain, as "Major Jones' Courtship" and "Huckleberry Finn" contain similar scenes set at a circus. In this small way, the early life of Gaspard Carrie helped influence one of America's favorite authors.

On April 9, 1851, Lucy Blodgett Carrie passed away, leaving Gaspard a widower. In 1852, he married Jane Harris. Carrie remained active in the temperance movement but began to look for ways to settle elsewhere. Both he and Benjamin



————— "So I had to spit, and slap it went, rite on the lightwood chunk, and out it went, spang!"

An illustration from "Major Jones' Courtship." Image courtesy of Google Books.



GENERAL SHERMAN'S CAMPAIGN—"BIG SHANTY STATION"—GENERAL LOGAN'S ADVANCE, JUNE 20, 1864.—[SKETCHED BY THEODORE R. DAVIS.]

This drawing shows Big Shanty during the Civil War. Image from the Bramlett Family Collection.

Brantly listed their houses for sale in October 1854. Carrie's house in Penfield had "six good rooms with a brick basement and six fireplaces, a good kitchen and smokehouse and other out buildings, being both pleasantly situated and convenient to the schools." While Brantly moved to what is now Bartow County, Carrie settled in Big Shanty, today known as Kennesaw.

In 1859, the Western & Atlantic Railroad began planning to build a hotel and eating house for its passengers in Big Shanty. Officials purchased land from Lemuel Kendrick and Carrie for the new building on the east side of the railroad tracks. Managed first by John W. Lewis and then by Kendrick, the establishment was run by George Lacy at the time of the Great Locomotive Chase. As such, it is often referred to as the Lacy Hotel.

The 1860 census provides valuable insight into Carrie's life. He was living with his wife, six kids and

a 24-year-old enslaved woman. His real estate was valued at \$1,000, and his personal property was assessed at \$2,500. His occupation was listed as merchant. During the Civil War, Carrie was a private in the 7th Regiment of the Georgia Infantry, but where he served is unknown. The only other known detail about his life during this time is he gave \$5 in 1862 to support sick soldiers in Atlanta.

In 1864, Big Shanty was burned to the ground as part of the Atlanta Campaign, and this event impacted the Carries greatly. Gaspard's story after the war will be shared next month.



Andrew Bramlett is vice president of the Kennesaw Historical Society and an honorary member of the Kennesaw Cemetery Preservation Commission.