

Uncle Redmun's Journal
By Gordon Bunn
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Recently re-discovered at Stonewall Manor in Rocky Mount is a dusty old journal dated 1821-1826. This journal belonged to Redmun Bunn (d. 1826), who owned and operated a store in the immediate area around the Falls of Tar River. I have always affectionately referred to him as "Uncle Redmun" because he was the uncle of Bennett Bunn (d. 1949), builder of Stonewall Manor. Now this may confuse many of you familiar with Rocky Mount's history, because it was Bennett's nephew Redmond Bunn (d. 1883) who built Benvenue House in 1844.

Born in 1806, Redmond was only 15 years old when the journal began. This confusion between Redmun and Redmond began in 1806, when the younger builder of Benvenue, was born and orphaned by the death of his father, William Bunn, who was Bennett's brother. Bennett took responsibility for the child early on and treated him more as a brother than a nephew; hence the close relationship between Stonewall and Benvenue.

At first glance, the journal itself is a bit confusing to read. When opened up, it is necessary to view both pages at once. At the top of the left page is the abbreviation Dr. (debit), then Mr. or Mrs., then the customer's first name. On the right hand page appears the customer's last name followed by the abbreviation Cr. (credit). By looking in the appropriate column, one can learn what each person purchased, the price paid, and whether or not the item was paid for. Sales of brandy far exceeded other items. This would be apple brandy, or "applejack" as some of you seniors might call it. The immediate area around Stonewall and the falls has had a reputation for producing high quality apple brandy for generations. Researching the available supply today would be not advisable. There were of course other items for sale, such as powder & shot, molasses, nails, buttons and so forth, but none seem to have the mystique of applejack.

So, you ask, what role did "Uncle Redmun" play in Stonewall? Although he died before Stonewall was built, he played a very important role indeed. Let us begin with the death of his brother Benjamin (d. 1814), who was Bennett's father. At his death in 1814, he left all his lands north of Stoney Creek to Bennett. It was this tract of land on which Stonewall would later be built. Bennett at the time was in Pitt County, tending a store for Benjamin Atkinson. Atkinson, a wealthy merchant, died in May of 1816. In December, Bennett married his widow, Sally Hines Atkinson, who was ten years his senior. "Uncle Redmun" had no children and found himself alone when his wife died in April of 1818. On August 9, 1819, he married his brother Benjamin's wife, Drucilla, who of course was Bennett's mother. The deed books of Nash County (NASH DB 5-272) show that in 1809 "Uncle Redmun" deeded the Quarter Plantation (200 acres in present day Sunset Park area) to Bennett, with Redmun's other nephew, Willie Bunn having rights to the place until "Uncle Redmun's" death. Willie, according to Redmun's

will, was to receive all of his other land holdings. However, Willie died before “Uncle Redmun”, and consequently, the lands were to pass to Bennett. “Uncle Redmun” passed away on August 19, 1826, and according to the will, his entire estate, including his land, his store and his slaves, would pass into Bennett’s possession, upon Drucilla’s death.

Bennett was 43 years old when he lost his mother, Drucilla, on June 25, 1830. If the reader is not hopelessly lost at this point, perhaps you begin to see a great deal of land and money converge into the possession of Bennett Bunn. Bear in mind here that Drucilla was not only the beneficiary of her first husband, Benjamin, but of “Uncle Redmun” as well. Upon her death all of their combined wealth and land passed to Bennett.

No one knows exactly when the construction of Stonewall Manor began or how long it took to build it. The site itself came into Bennett’s possession in 1814 and perhaps the dream phase began about that time. Bennett brought the dream closer to fruition by marrying his deceased employer’s wealthy widow and returning home to Nash County. All dreams of that sort require cold hard cash and that certainly would have become available with the passing of “Uncle Redmun”. There has been no credit given here for any wealth that Bennett himself acquired – don’t forget that he was a merchant also. Financially speaking, all the pieces fell into place when Drucilla died in 1830, and this is the year that is generally accepted as to when Stonewall was built, bearing in mind that a year or more may have been required for construction. We must not overlook the fact that wealth in those days included slaves. Proper credit should be given where credit is due, and there is no doubt that Stonewall’s construction required vast resources of labor, and that labor was slave labor for the most part.

How does one achieve the wealth and status enjoyed by Bennett Bunn? Start by losing your brother so you are the sole heir. Lose a cousin or two to gain their share. Work hard, marry a rich widow, live during a time when you can own lots of slaves, and then struggle with the death of your mother. And it certainly would not hurt to have an “Uncle Redmun”.