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John Innerarity, 1783-1854

Marie Taylor Greenslade



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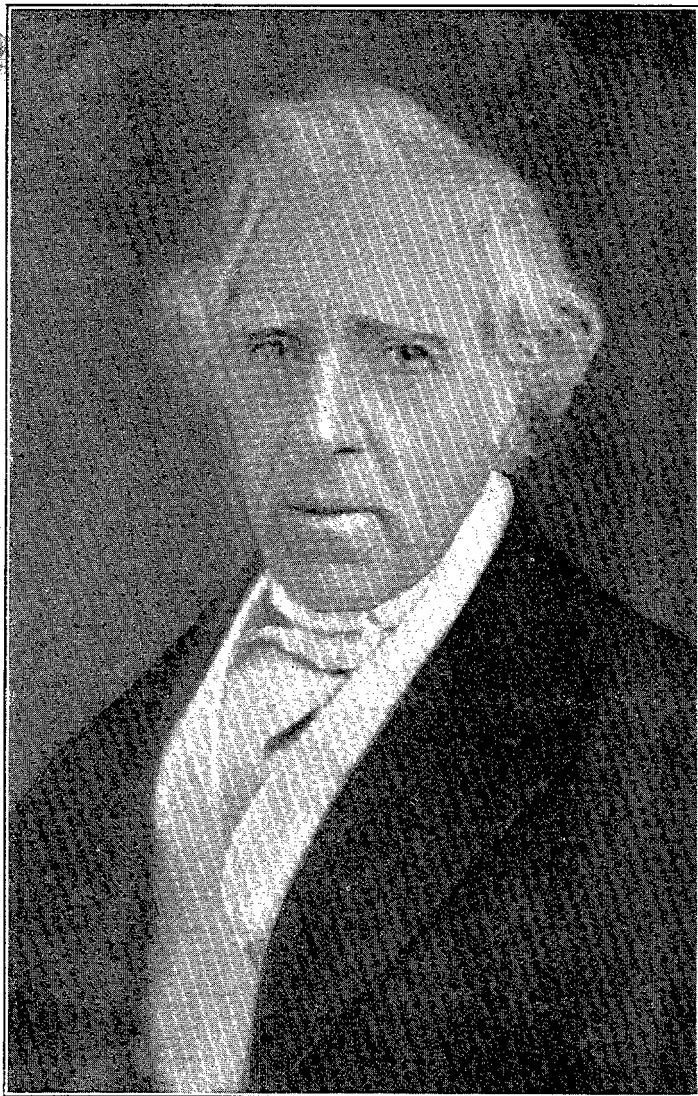
JOHN INNERARITY, 1783-1854

Instead of a commonplace biography it is hoped to make this sketch a human document illustrative of a beloved man who lived a most useful life and died in honor among his fellow citizens leaving a revered memory to his family and a large circle of relatives.

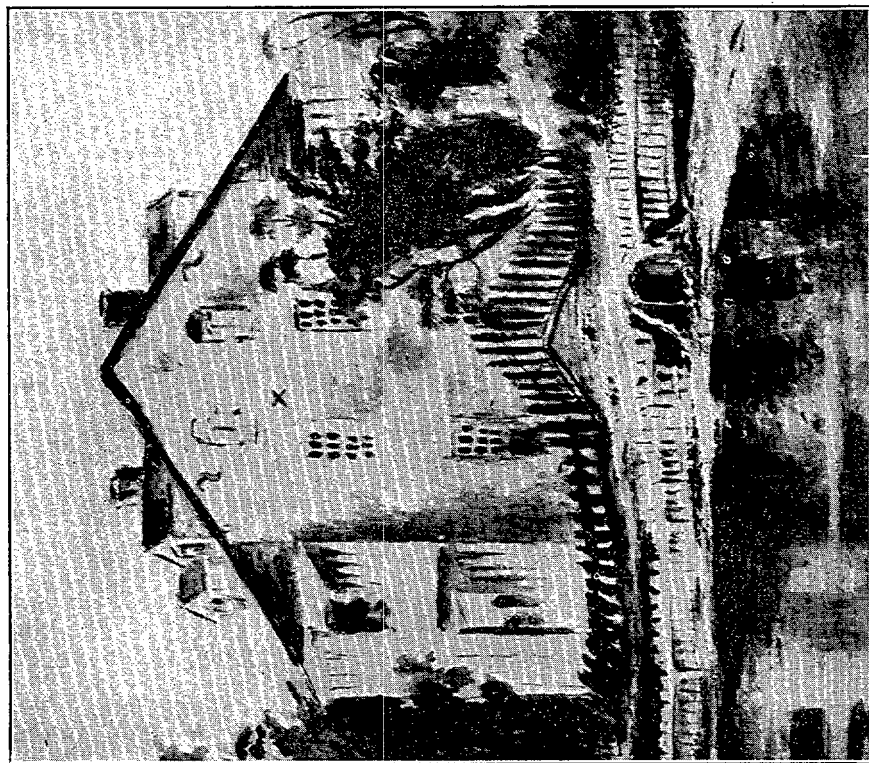
John Innerarity was born at Aberdeen, Scotland, November 11th, 1783, the son of John Innerarity and his wife Henrietta Panton (sister of William Panton), who at that time were independant in circumstances and highly respectable in character and connexions. He displayed in youth the marks of considerable talent and was given every opportunity to advance in learning. At fourteen we find him pursuing his education at Banff as a stepping stone to the great University of Edinburg to which he looked forward with grateful appreciation and eagerness. Our records show no mention of him again until 1800 when John Leslie, of London, writes to William Panton at Pensacola:

. . . Mr. Innerarity through necessity of business is about leaving Catharine Court, having disposed of the remainder of the lease he had on his house there, and taken a small dwelling with garden & at an easy rent between three and 4 miles out of town, which besides other Conveniency's he hopes may prove

Note.-This biographical sketch has been prepared mainly from letters and other documents now in the possession of the author and Mrs. Heloise H. Cruzat, of New Orleans, both descendants of John Innerarity. Those papers are survivals of the records of Panton, Leslie & Co. and its successor, John Forbes & Co., which have been preserved by John Innerarity and his family. Selections from them will appear continuously in many issues of the *QUARTERLY*. As William Panton and his partners and successors were the foremost merchants and Indian traders of the entire Southern country, these records are of great value. Historical students of the whole region will be grateful to Mrs. Greenslade and Mrs. Cruzat for allowing, and assisting with, their publication.-Ed.



JOHN INNERARITY
1783-1854

[illegible]

favorable to your Sister's health, which as well as his own have been but indifferent this last winter.

He means also to rent a small Counting house near the Exchange to which he will daily resort to attend to his business.

His son John, who you will find a very smart intelligent youth is intended for you very shortly, and I think you will find him useful as he Already is not unacquainted with the business of the Counting house.

It was my intention to have employed him here, if I had had any use for an Assistant; and indeed I did get him to make copy's for me of some long letters to T. F. & you, not long ago.

This would have been highly gratifying to his Mother, who has the greatest reluctance to part with him, tho' she sees and Acknowledges the propriety of it- Talking of it the other day with Mr. Innerarity and her, she could not help shedding tears plentifully at the thought of a separation-The lad himself betrays no repugnance to the voyage, but rather on the contrary.

It is not however until January, 1802, that John Innerarity arrives in America. He was then nineteen years of age, six feet tall, of large frame, auburn hair with very soft brown eyes, and a most pleasing countenance full of intelligence. He was not to see the kind uncle who had sent for him, as William Pantton died at sea March 26th, 1801, en route from Pensacola to Havana. It was his brother James Innerarity, who had preceded him by several years to America, who welcomed him to Florida.

John had been accustomed to a civilization of harmony and completeness—here he was thrown on his own resources in a strange new world of traders, pack-horses, and curious-looking people in semi-civilized garb from the wilderness, who were always to be found in and about the "Big House", as the firm of Pantton, Leslie & Co. was called by the Indians and traders. Fortunately, he was courageous and strong, and set about his duties as a clerk with small ceremony in the firm whose name was later to be John Forbes & Company.

He applied himself with the same industry in the counting house as he had shown at the University, but his inclinations would rather seem to have led him to the study of literature and more intimate knowledge of the great masters of antiquity. He became well versed in law, was a great linguist, spoke nine living languages, and learned several Indian dialects. He was distinguished for his elegant manners, was dignified and reserved to strangers, and cordial and remarkably sincere to his friends. In his family life he might have been likened to the patriarchs of old, so benevolent and protective was his interest in each member of a large circle of relatives.

Romance was to come to John Innerarity in the new world. In 1806 he married Mlle. Marie Victoria Coulon de Villiers, the daughter of Jean Marcus Coulon de Villiers, Captain of the Region of Louisiana. Their courtship was conducted entirely in the French language as Mlle. Coulon de Villiers spoke no English. A letter refers to an expected residence in Mobile in 1807; but later Panton's mansion at Pensacola became their home. This historic dwelling was built by William Panton in 1785. It was a massive brick house, three stories and a cellar, built in the English style with adaptations for a Southern climate. The bricks, which had originally been brought from England, were put together with a shell mortar known for its durability. It was in this house that Alexander McGillivray died, February 17, 1793.

John Innerarity was a clerk from 1802 to 1811, managing clerk at Pensacola, which was the chief establishment, in 1807; and admitted as a partner in 1812 in the firm of John Forbes & Co.

The original establishment of Panton, Leslie & Co., in Pensacola, dates back to 1774 when Panton built his wharf under authority of General Gage, Governor of Massachusetts and Commander in Chief of all the

British forces in the Colonies. Panton, Leslie & Co., were engaged in trade long before the American Revolution in Charleston and Savannah, carried on by means of small hardy ponies which penetrated into the heart of the Creek Nation. They had an establishment in London with branches in the West Indies, St. Augustine, Pensacola, Mobile, Appalache and Havana. There was an establishment at New Orleans also, first under the title of Wm. Simpson as agent, then as partner. In 1788 fire destroyed the store and goods. At Pensacola the stock required for the trade was valued at \$50,000, requiring a staff of fifteen or more clerks ; in addition there were the skin house and tan yards. There were agencies at St. Johns, St. Marks, Prospect Bluff, and a trading post at Chickasaw Bluff on the Mississippi. Shipping at one period was conducted in their own vessels ; at a later period chartering of American vessels was discussed, as well as the advisability of establishing a branch house at Liverpool.

John Innerarity did not find fair and easy sailing in the trade ; poor types of vessels had to be sold on account of salt-water damage to cargoes ; worms were destructive in the valuable furs, and even the cow-hides ; delayed cargoes were frequent and cargoes were sometimes seized. International law problems were ever present, with disputes and intrigues of all kinds. There were arduous trips on horse-back on the path to the Indian country by first one member of the firm and then another, all with the object of trying to collect the large debt owed to the House by the Creek Nation. There was the trying episode of Bowles culminating with the plunder of St. Marks ; General Wilkinson's taking of Mobile in 1813 ; the invasion of General Jackson, 1814 ; the episode of Nicholls and Woodbine ; and devastating fires at New Orleans and Mobile. Thus the trade that had begun with the pony

packs was kept in continual ferment from one cause or another—all of which are matters of history touched on but briefly here to show that John Innerarity's burdens were ever on the increase and the repose he sought was denied him for many years.

In 1817 John Forbes withdrew from the firm leaving the Innerarity brothers the surviving members; James living at Mobile, John continuing at Pensacola. Though there are large gaps in the correspondence the records show they speculated in land, grew and shipped cotton, sugar, and flour and furnished plantation supplies. James died at Mobile 1847; and John, the surviving partner, began the tedious task of winding up the affairs of the old firm.

John Innerarity was at one time British Vice Consul at Pensacola. He became Vice Consul of France and was decorated by that government in 1846 with the Cross of the Legion of Honor. The old mansion that had been noted for its hospitality in Panton's time was no less so as John Innerarity's residence. It was here at breakfast that Lieutenant Wilson, by order of General Jackson, arrested Marcos de Villiers, a Spanish officer; and John Innerarity with all who were present marched to jail with the guest. Wilson, some years later, became the son-in-law of John Innerarity, marrying his daughter Henriette. From this home another daughter, Melanie, was married to Isaac Hulse, a surgeon in the United States Navy, a man much loved in Pensacola and particularly noted for his success in treating the dreaded yellow fever. A third daughter, Victoire, married William, the son of James Innerarity. Henry, the only son, died unmarried.

The historic old house was destroyed by fire in 1849. It might have been saved, but Mr. Innerarity was Vice Consul of France and the sails of the French fleet being stored in his cellar, his energies were directed in saving them to the detriment of his own

property. The warehouse in the rear of the property, now sole reminder of so many events in the history of West Florida, was converted into a residence under the supervision of Doctor Hulse who wrote: "The walls are of brick, three feet thick at the base, and three stories high. The new dwelling will have as many conveniences almost as he enjoyed in the spacious dwelling that was destroyed. His actual loss by fire he estimates at over \$50,000." During the War for Southern Independence the converted warehouse was partially damaged. When sold to Doctor James Herron in 1874 it was repaired and served as a marine hospital. This old building, for parts of three centuries an interesting and imposing land-mark on the water-front, was largely destroyed by fire and storm about 1915, but the walls are still standing today.

John Innerarity continued to live there until his death July 28th, 1854.

MARIE TAYLOR GREENSLADE