

## Robert Grier

1780 - 1848

Robert Grier was born March 9, 1780, in Columbia County, GA., the son of the Revolutionary soldier, Brigadier General Aaron W. Grier and Jean (Jane) Gibson. He attended the Union Academy in Greene County and studied mathematics and astronomy with his uncle, Andrew Burns. On April 2, 1805, he married his double first cousin, Elizabeth Grier. They had six children, (1) Margaret, (2) Jane, who married Alexander Hamilton Dougherty, (3) Algernon Sidney, who married Drucilla Cook, (4) Demarius, (5) Aaron, and (6) Elizabeth. Three of these children lived to adulthood. For several years, he lived in Taliaferro County and teaching school. He was offered the Mathematics Chair at Franklin College, later the University of Georgia, but turned it down because his wife, Elizabeth had no desire to live in the city.

Finally, Grier moved to Butts County about 1830 and brought his first lot. He was hoping that the sulphur or mineral water at Indian Springs would help his ailing son, Algernon Sidney Grier. He built his home about 1840, a one and one-half story plain structure plantation with shed-roof wings. At that time, his home was deemed one of the finest homes in the area and represented the considerable wealth of a very prosperous farmer. The home contained molded cornices, paneled friezes, and over mantles on the downstairs fireplaces. The home was also noted for the paneled wainscoting of the two main rooms which extended onto the porch walls and the architrave trim on all the windows and doors. It was here on his 1,400 acres of land, more or less, he made his living growing cotton and food to feed his family; a flower garden, and orchard. In the end, his home was abandoned and fell into neglect and disrepair. It finally burned to the ground.

Across the street from his home, there is a large boulder. According to the story handed down, Robert Grier went out into the fields at night, lay down flat on his back on this huge boulder, and watched the stars. This is where he made his calculations for "The Georgia and South Carolina Almanack" which has been continuously published since 1807. Historically, "Grier's Almanac" was used by the settlers to plant their gardens and crops, butcher their livestock, and direct the work of the plantation. The housewife often relied on it for managing the affairs of the home. This almanac is still being used as an authority today for planting and gardening schedules, recipes, health information, astronomy facts noting when an eclipse will occur, planets and stars positions, and lastly, hunting and fishing guides. When Robert Grier died on May 4, 1848, the name was changed to "Grier's Almanac" and still bears his name after more than 198 years.

His nephew, Alexander Hamilton Stephens, who was eventually became the Vice President of the Confederacy, often visited the plantation. He and his uncle had great times together talking about world politics and drinking a lot of hot tea. No doubt, Grier probably shaped some of his thoughts and ideas. When Stephens was first elected to the U.S. Congress, he sponsored a bill which resulted in the establishment of the U.S. Weather Service. Alexander, also known as the Little Giant, was instrumental in writing Robert Grier's will and signed it as a witness.

Robert Grier died at the age of 68 and is buried with some family members in a small cemetery near the orchard on his property. Many people living in Butts County today are decedents of one of Butts County's most renowned citizens.