

Story and Photos by Mark Shaffer

Note: The Beaufort Three Century Project (B3C) begins its final act as we count down to the Tricentennial Celebration on January 17, 2011. Lowcountry Weekly will continue to spotlight the unique history, people, places and events woven into the fabric of this landmark celebration.

The Historians



About this time last year the initial presentation of the Tricentennial Lecture Series generated the small town equivalent of a smash Broadway show. Hundreds of people were turned away for the first event and the rest of the series was an immediate sell-out. Even people who knew people couldn't get a seat. In fact, some of the people one would need to know to get a seat couldn't get a seat. An encore presentation wasn't simply necessary, it was practically mandated. B3C and USCB, co-sponsors of the series, have made it so. The trio of scholars has agreed to take the stage once again in what can only be described in certain circles as "Beatles-esque."

I recently joined B3C Project Coordinator, Deborah Johnson for a lively lunchtime conversation with two of the three principles involved. Dr. Lawrence Rowland is the Distinguished Professor Emeritus in History at USCB and author of *The History of Beaufort County, Vol. I*. His longtime partner in the series, Dr. Stephen Wise, applies his expertise on the Civil War in the upcoming second volume as co-author. Wise is also director of the USMC's Parris Island Museum. The third member of this supergroup of historians is absent. The distinguished former President of Middlebury College, Dr. John McCardell, was recently named Vice Chancellor of the University of the South, better known as Sewanee. This seemed an acceptable excuse and rather a stretch just to avoid lunch with a journalist, although he did miss some pretty good chili...

Beaufort as Epicenter of American History. Seriously.

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Mark Shaffer: You've actually been doing these lectures for quite a while.

Lawrence Rowland: "We put this series together years ago and have been doing it ever since. We have *never* had the kind of success we had with B3C last year. All of a sudden it was a hit, perf



ectly timed, perfectly spaced. So we're doing it again, doing what we've done periodically for fifteen years or so.

MS: So the packed houses, the standing-room-only crowds really took you by surprise.

LR: Oh, yeah. It took everyone by surprise.

MS: Deborah's mentioned that the three of you sort of got the rock star treatment.

LR: In as much as we've been doing it for fifteen years, (laughing) where were they for all those years? Not that we've had bad attendance – we've always had good attendance (at least on this side of the river).

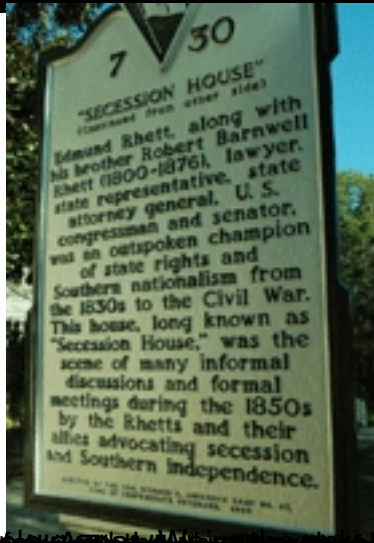
MS: Stephen, why do you think it was such a sudden smash?

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Start with the White A. Williams. Robert Barnwell Rhett is not the only one to tell the different story and that is why he is being looked at as a group of people who are not to be forgotten.



Robert Barnwell Rhett, along with his brother Robert Barnwell Rhett (1800-1876), lawyer, state representative, U.S. attorney general, and senator, was an outspoken champion of state rights and Southern nationalism from the 1830s to the Civil War. This house, long known as "Secession House," was the scene of many informal discussions and formal meetings during the 1850s by the Rhetts and their allies advocating secession and Southern independence.



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