

**HISTORY OF WEATHER OBSERVATIONS  
Aiken, South Carolina  
1851-2005**

**August 2005**

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## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iii
List of Illustrations	iv
<b>Introduction</b>	
Executive Summary	1
Goal of Study	1
<b>Location of Observations</b>	
Location maps	2
Chronology of Locations and Elevations	7
<b>Observers and Instrumentation</b>	8
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1, Observer Stories	19
Appendix 2, Methodology	26
<b>References and Data Sources</b>	27

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Maps		Page
1.	The location of weather observing sites in Aiken, South Carolina, 1851- 2005.	2
2.	The location of weather observing sites in downtown Aiken, South Carolina, 1851 -1979.	3
3.	An aerial view of downtown Aiken, South Carolina, circa 2003.	4
4.	An aerial view of the Aiken Water Filtration Plant, Aiken, South Carolina, circa 2003.	5
5.	An aerial view of 31 Converse Drive in Aiken, South Carolina, circa 2003.	6
6.	An aerial view of Golden Bridge Court in Aiken, South Carolina, circa 2003.	7
Figures		
1.	Saint Thaddeus Church in Aiken, South Carolina, circa 1860.	10
2.	The Post Office Building in Aiken, South Carolina, in June 1912.	13
3.	Diagram showing the location of the weather instruments at Aiken, South Carolina, in August 1950.	14
4.	The backyard at 1028 Holly Lane, Aiken, South Carolina, in July 2005	15
5.	Diagram showing the location of the weather instruments at Aiken, South Carolina, in March 1979.	16
6.	Diagram showing the location of the weather instruments at Aiken, South Carolina, as of 3 November 1982.	17
7.	A view of the weather instruments at 2528 Golden Bridge Court, Aiken, South Carolina, in July 2005.	18
8.	Henry William Ravenel, 1869.	19
9.	The headstone of Henry W. Ravenel, St. Thaddeus Church, Aiken, South Carolina.	21
10.	The Reverend John H. Cornish, Aiken, South Carolina, circa 1850.	22
11.	The Reverend John H. Cornish and his wife Martha, Aiken, South Carolina, circa 1860.	23
12.	The headstone of Reverend John H. Cornish at the St. Thaddeus Church in Aiken, South Carolina.	24
13.	The headstone of Dr. William H. Geddings, St. Thaddeus Church, Aiken, South Carolina.	26

**HISTORY OF WEATHER OBSERVATIONS  
Aiken, South Carolina  
1851 – 2005**

**Stephen R. Doty  
Information Manufacturing Corporation**

**INTRODUCTION**

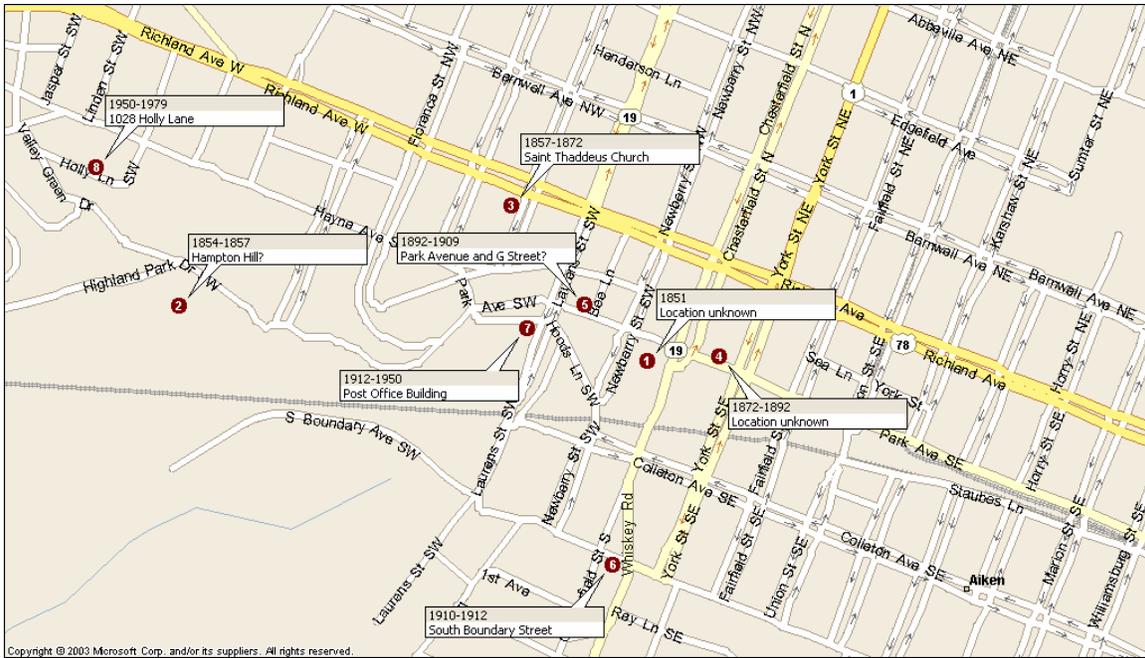
**Executive Summary**

Weather observations were being taken in Aiken, South Carolina, as early as 1851. By 1854 William Ravenel, a noted agricultural scientist began his observations from his farm. His friend and pastor, the Reverend John Cornish, assumed the observing duties in 1857 continuing until 1872. During the period of the Civil War a local physician, William H. Geddings, published monthly climatic summaries, and by 1872 he became the observer of record for Aiken. Dr. Geddings observed until 1892 when another physician took over the effort. Dr. C. F. McGahan faithfully recorded weather observations until 1909 turning over the effort over to yet another physician, Huger T. Hall. Dr. Hall observed until 1912. The weather observational program then moved to the new Post Office Building where Charles E. Carman, W. M. Brown and Frank McCoy served as observers. Frank and Mabel McCoy moved the site to their home on Holly Lane in 1952. Mabel McCoy's service ended in 1979 and Elise Dillinger assumed the duties from her home on Converse Drive south of Aiken. Her efforts lasted only a few months and the station was moved again in 1979 to the Aiken Water Filtration Plant, a few miles north of downtown. In 2003 the observing site moved south to the residence of the current observer, Katy White, on Golden Bridge Court.

**Goal of Study**

The goal of this study is to document the primary weather observational path at Aiken, South Carolina. Throughout the research for and preparation of this study, the goal was to produce a document that future studies can use to evaluate the validity of the data that were collected here, judge the trustworthiness of the observers who collected them, and determine the climatological significance of the whatever variability may be discerned.





**Map 2. The location of weather observing sites in downtown Aiken, South Carolina, 1851 – 1979. North is to the top of the map.**



**Map 3. An aerial view of downtown Aiken, South Carolina, circa 2003. The red arrow indicates the location of Saint Thaddeus Church. Observations were taken from 1857 until 1872 probably at a location across Pendelton Street. The green arrow indicates the location of the original Post Office Building where weather observations were taken from 1912 until 1952. The green lines show elevation contours. The Church building is at 520 feet and the Post Office at 510 feet. Source: Aiken County Planning and Development.**



**Map 4. An aerial view of the Aiken Water Filtration Plant, Aiken, South Carolina, circa 2003. Weather observations were taken at this site from 1979 until 2003. The green lines indicate elevation contours. The filtration ponds are located between 370 and 380 feet. North is to the top of the map. Source: Aiken County Planning and Development.**



**Map 5. An aerial view of 31 Converse Drive in Aiken, South Carolina, circa 2003. Weather observations were taken from this location in 1979. The green lines indicate elevation contours, the line running through the lot is 450 feet. North is to the top of the map.**

**Source: Aiken County Planning and Development.**



**Map 6. An aerial view of Golden Bridge Court in Aiken, South Carolina, circa 2003. The arrow indicates the location of the weather instruments beginning in July 2003. The green lines indicate elevation contours, the line just to the west of the house is 490 feet. North is to the top of the map. Source: Aiken County Planning and Development.**

### **Chronology of Locations and Elevations**

The following lists the chronology of weather station locations at Aiken, South Carolina during the period 1851-2005: (The latitude and longitude entries, when listed to seconds, were derived using U. S. Geological Survey maps as presented on Topozone.com. Elevations from aerial maps as provide by Aiken County.)

#### **1851 – Elevation unknown**

- Exact location of observations unknown

#### **March 1854 – October 1857 – Elevation unknown**

- Hampton Hill (exact location unknown)

**November 1857 – August 1872 – Elevation 520 feet - 33° 33' 44"N, 81° 43' 29"W**

- Episcopal Church of Saint Thaddeus, 125 Pendleton Street

**November 1872 – March 1892 – Elevation Unknown – 33° 32'N, 81° 34'W**

- Exact street location unknown

**October 1892 – December 1909 – Elevation 527 feet - 33° 33'N, 81° 46'W**

- Corner of Park Avenue and G Street (as of 1906)

**February 1910 – January 1912 – Elevation 500 feet - 33° 33' 17"N, 81° 43' 20"W**

- Residence at corner of Whisky Road and South Boundary Avenue

**February 1912 – 1952 – Elevation 510 feet - 33° 33' 34"N, 81° 43' 26"W**

- Post Office Building, corner of Park Avenue and Laurens Street

**1952 – March 1979 – Elevation 527 feet - 33° 33' 34"N, 81° 44' 02"W**

- Residence at 1028 Holly Lane

Official National Weather Service station name changed to **Aiken 4SSE** effective March 1979.

**March 1979 – June 1979 – Elevation 450 feet - 33° 30' 08"N, 81° 41' 33"W**

- Residence at 31 Converse Drive

Official National Weather Service station name changed to **Aiken 4NE** effective June 1979.

**June 1979 – March 2003 – Elevation 375 feet - 33° 36' 14"N, 81° 41' 13"W**

- City of Aiken Filtration Plant

Official National Weather Service station name changed to **Aiken 5SE** effective July 2003.

**July 2003 – Present – Elevation 492 feet - 33° 29' 34"N, 81° 41' 45"W**

- Residence at 2528 Golden Bridge Court

## **OBSERVERS AND INSTRUMENTATION**

### **1851:**

Thos D. Mutton recorded weather observations in Aiken during 1851. Observations seem to have been transcribed to U. S. Army Signal Service forms but no details of this effort have been located. He was listed as a "Medical Examiner" on the

coversheet of the transcription. No information has been found as to the location or instruments used.

**1854 – 1857:**

Henry William Ravenel recorded weather observations in Aiken from March 1854 until October 1857. He served as a Smithsonian Institution volunteer observer. He had purchased a farm from the heirs of Richard Hampton in the summer of 1853 and began to build a house at Hampton Hill. This location was approximately one and a half miles west of the Post Office Building, though the exact location has yet to be determined. No information is available on the instruments used.

**1857 – 1872:**

Reverend John H. Cornish was the next weather observer in Aiken serving faithfully from November 1857 until August 1872, though the period March 1861 through December 1866 is missing. He served as a Smithsonian Institution volunteer observer. He was with the Episcopal Church of Saint Thaddeus which is located at 125 Pendelton Street. See Figure 1. His residence was across the street at the northeast corner of Pendelton Street and Richland Avenue. It is not known at which location his weather instruments were located. No information is available on the instruments used.



**Figure 1. Saint Thaddeus Church in Aiken, South Carolina, circa 1860. View is looking southwest. Richland Avenue runs from left to right, however, the buildings actually faces Pendleton Street.  
Source: Saint Thaddeus Church**

William H. Geddings, M.D., co-authored a book with Amory Coffin, M.D. entitled *Aiken; or Climatic Cure* in 1869 in which he provides monthly summaries for the period 1860 to 1867. The original observational forms have not been located.

### **1872 – 1892:**

William H. Geddings, M.D. recorded observations from October 1872 until March 1892. He served originally as a Smithsonian Institution volunteer observer changing over to a U. S. Army Signal Service volunteer observer in July 1875. Information has not been found regarding the exact location or the instruments though he might have been observing from the site of the Aiken Sanatorium on Haynes Street. He alternated his medical practice between Aiken and Bethlehem, New Hampshire. Therefore, observations for Aiken tend to be missing for the summer months.

Thermometer – In January 1878 there were three “Green” thermometers in service. These included a maximum, minimum, and exposed thermometers. The station had four thermometers in January 1888. All were listed as being manufactured by Green. The thermometers were listed as a dry (#715), wet (#709), maximum (#4088) and minimum

(#4021). No indication was given as to the exact location or height above ground for these instruments.

Barometer – A “Pike” barometer was being used as of January 1878. In January 1888 the barometer was listed as being manufactured by Green and was serial number 2521.

Rain Gage – A “Pike ???” rain gage was being used as of January 1878. The second word is undecipherable as the hand writing is very poor. The gage was listed as being “regulation” in January 1888. It was located so that the top of the gage was seven inches above the ground.

### **1892 – 1909:**

A second medical doctor, C. F. McGahan, began recording weather observations in October 1892. He was using the same instruments as Dr. Geddings before him which might lead one to believe that the instruments were not moved. He continued this effort until December 1909. He listed his location as at the corner of Park Avenue and G Street. The exact location of G Street is not known but probably would have been located close to the center of Aiken. He served originally as a U. S. Army Signal Service volunteer observer, later becoming a Weather Bureau cooperative observer.

Thermometer – The station had four thermometers in December 1892. All were listed as being manufactured by Green. The thermometers were listed as a dry (#715), wet (#709), maximum (#4088) and minimum (#4021). No indication was given as to the exact location or height above ground for these instruments.

In November 1901 the thermometers were listed as being “Weather Bureau” and were located in a Cotton Region Shelter mounted “on posts”. The February 1906 station history form lists the thermometers as standard Weather Bureau, Maximum and Minimum. They were located in a Cotton Region Shelter over cultivated ground, 30 yards from a two story stable to the north and were four and half feet above the ground.

Barometer – In December 1892, the barometer was listed as being manufactured by Green and was serial number 2521.

Rain gage – The gage was listed as being “regulation” in December 1892. It was located so that the top of the gage was seven inches above the ground. In November 1901 the gage was listed as being “Weather Bureau” and was located “In yard.” The February 1906 station history form lists the gage as a standard Weather Bureau located 30 feet from the nearest high object with the top being three feet height above the ground.

### **1910 – 1912:**

A third medical doctor, Huger T. Hall, carried on the observing effort beginning in February 1910 continuing through January 1912. He was a Weather Bureau volunteer observer. His residence and office was on South Boundary Avenue SW between Chesterfield Street South and Whiskey Road.

Thermometer - A substation history form prepared in 1951 listed the station as having a Cotton Region Shelter.

Rain gage – No information is available.

### **1912 – 1952:**

The Weather Bureau volunteer observational program in Aiken was moved to the rear of the Post Office in February 1912 when Charles E. Carman, the Postmaster, began serving as the observer. The Post Office was located at the southwest corner of Park Avenue and Laurens Street. See Figure 2. In August 1913 W. M. Brown, a postal clerk, began his tenure as the observer. On 16 April 1916, Frank B. McCoy, Sr., assumed the observing duties. The Weather Bureau inspector in 1936 noted that “The observer (Mr. McCoy) takes a great interest in the observations and does it in a fine way. The City is proud of it.” Observations were taken at this location until 1952.

Thermometer – The station was equipped with standard Weather Bureau instruments and shelter as of May 1914. The shelter was 37 feet southwest of a building on grass plot outside of driveway. The bottom of the shelter was four feet above grass and the door opened toward the east.

In February 1936 the shelter was found to be in the same location as it was in 1914 but it now faced north. The bottom of the shelter was three and four tenths feet above “poor turf.” The inspector called it a “fair position being 37 feet south southwest of post office, bordering concrete drive and close to some small trees but fairly good air movement.” The shelter was in need of painting. In November 1936 the shelter was some 75 feet west of the rain gage as the gage had been moved once again. A new maximum thermometer was installed as there was a problem with the old one.

Rain gage – The standard Weather Bureau gage was 37 feet south southwest of a building on same grass plot as shelter. The top of the gage was two feet two inches above the grass. By February 1936 the observer had moved the gage due to the growth of trees. The gage was now three and two tenths feet above the ground and about 22 feet south of the post office which itself was 35 feet high. This location was a few feet out from

under several thin trees about 12 feet high to the south. A house, some 20 feet high, stood about 35 feet south of the gage. The location was rated as unsatisfactory.

By November 1936 the gage had been moved 30 feet farther east to gain a “little better exposure” which was now rated a “fair” the inspector. The gage was 25 feet south of the post office and 15 feet from some shrubbery.



**Figure 2. The Post Office Building in Aiken, South Carolina, in June 1912. The weather instruments would have been located just off the photograph to the right. View is looking southeast with Park Avenue visible in the lower left corner. Source: Lista’s Studio of Photography, Aiken, South Carolina.**

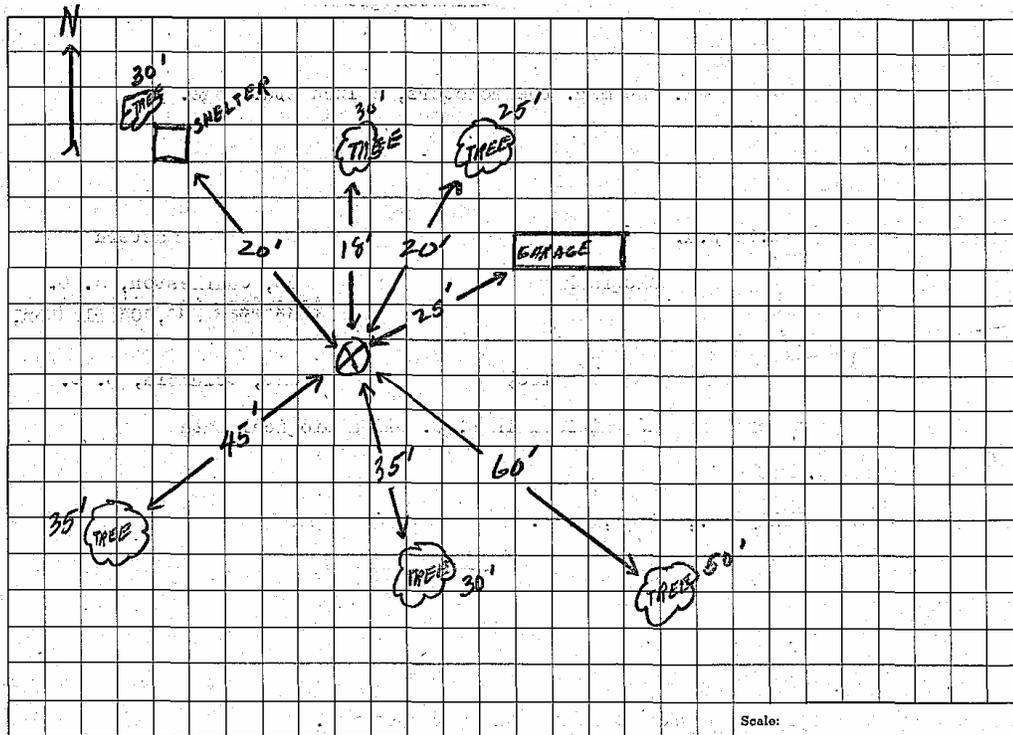
### **1952 – 1979:**

Frank McCoy, upon his retirement from the Post Office, moved the observations to his residence at 1028 Holly Lane in 1952. [The street number was originally 2608 but was renumbered upon annexation into the city.] The instruments were located to the rear of the house. See Figures 3 and 4. Mabel McCoy began signing the observational forms in April 1970 and she served until 18 March 1979 when her daughter Mabel Beasley

asked the National Weather Service to find a new observer due to the frail health of her mother. Frank and Mabel McCoy served as Weather Bureau and National Weather Service cooperative observers.

**Thermometer** – The station had standard National Weather Service maximum and minimum thermometers in a standard shelter. See Figure 3. In May 1964 one of the posts supporting the shelter had rotted out so new metal supports were installed. In October 1972 several bushes and small tree were removed from near the Cotton Region Shelter. At the time of this inspection it was discovered that the corners of the shelter were rotten and a new shelter was ordered. The inspector also discovered that there was a four degree separation in the minimum thermometer and a 13 degree separation in the maximum thermometer. The instruments were replaced. This situation was attributed to the poor condition of the shelter as the “wind could vibrate the whole thing.” A new shelter was installed on 15 November 1972.

**Rain gage** – The station had a standard eight-inch National Weather Service gage located 25 feet southwest of a small one-story garage. See Figure 3. The rain gage was moved ten feet south in November 1975.



**Figure 3. Diagram showing the location of the weather instruments at Aiken, South Carolina, in August 1950. The location of the rain gage is indicated by the “X”. The instruments remained in this location until 1975.**

**Source: Official station history files at the National Climatic Data Center**



**Figure 4. The backyard at 1028 Holly Lane, Aiken, South Carolina, in July 2005. Mrs. Mabel Beasley, right, is the daughter of Frank and Mabel McCoy, who recorded weather observations at this location in Aiken from 1916 until 1979. The fence was originally chain link. Source: Photograph by author.**

### **1979:**

On 18 March 1979 the observations were assumed by Elise F. Dillinger at her residence at 31 Converse Drive. She served as a National Weather Service cooperative observer. The instruments were located on the southeast side of the house between a driveway and another house some 150 feet distant. See Figure 5. She took the observations for a short time, ending on 20 June 1979. The official National Weather Service station name changed to Aiken 4SSE at the time of this move.

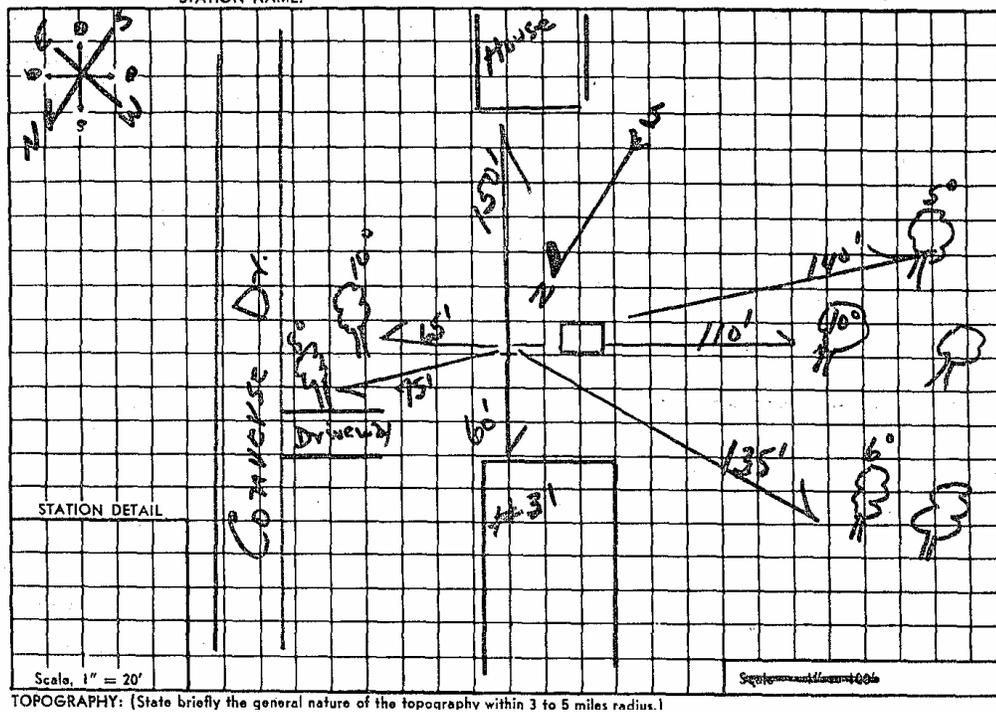
Thermometer –The station had standard National Weather Service maximum and minimum thermometers mounted in a Cotton Region Shelter.

Rain gage - The gage was a standard National Weather Service eight-inch gage.

38-0074-5

STATION NAME: Aiken 4SSE, SC

March 20, 1979



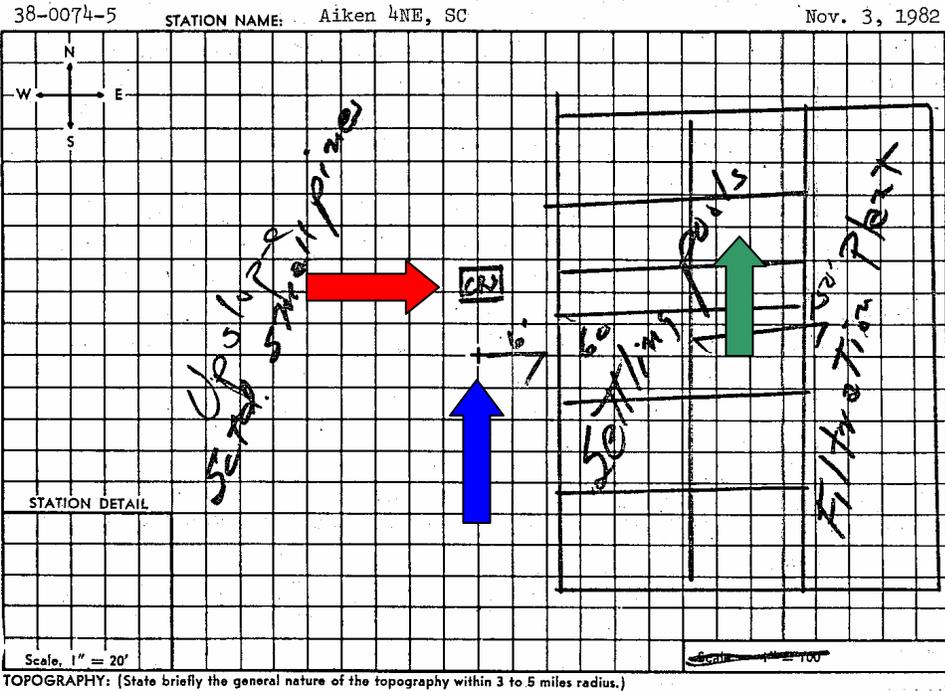
**Figure 5. Diagram showing the location of the weather instruments at Aiken, South Carolina, in March 1979. The instrument shelter was approximately 15 feet southwest of the rain gage. Notice that North is to the lower left in this diagram. Source: Official station history files at the National Climatic Data Center**

### 1979 – 2003:

Weather observations were moved to the Aiken Water Filtration Plant some three and six tenths miles north of town on 21 June 1979. James L. Bryant was the observer of record; a duty he performed until the end of March 2003. He served as a National Weather Service cooperative observer. The official National Weather Service station name changed to Aiken 4NE at the time of this move.

**Thermometer** – The station had standard National Weather Service maximum and minimum thermometers mounted in a Cotton Region Shelter. The shelter was originally located between the settling pools but was move on 3 November 1982 to an area six feet west of the pools due to construction at the plant. See Figure 6.

**Rain gage** - The gage was a standard National Weather Service eight-inch gage. The gage was originally located between the settling pools but on 3 November 1982 it was relocated to an area six feet west of the pools. See Figure 6.



**Figure 6. Diagram showing the location of weather instruments in Aiken, South Carolina as of 3 November 1982. The Cotton Region Shelter, red arrow, was located a few feet north of the rain gage, blue arrow. The original location of the instruments is indicated by the green arrow.**

**Source: Official station history files at the National Climatic Data Center.**

### **2003 – Present:**

Kathy R. White serves as the current weather observer in Aiken having assumed the duties on 1 July 2003. The instruments are located in the backyard of her residence at 2528 Golden Bridge Court. See Figure 7. She serves as a National Weather Service cooperative observer. The official National Weather Service station name changed to Aiken 5SE at the time of this move.

**Thermometer** – The thermometer is a standard National Weather Service Maximum Minimum Thermometer System (MMTS). The instrument is located 14 feet northeast of the house.

**Rain gage** – The rain gage is a standard National Weather Service eight-inch gage. The gage is 25 feet northeast of the MMTS.



**Figure 7. A view of the weather instruments at 2528 Golden Bridge Court, Aiken, South Carolina, in July 2005. View is looking west.  
Source: Photograph by author.**

The following remark was made by James L. Kilmer, the Hydro-Meteorological Technician for the National Weather Service at the time of the establishment of this observing location.

“Reactive and relocate station. This location is more than 5 miles from the previous location. It is 7.8 miles south of the previous location. However, it is compatible with the earliest documented location dating back to 1906. It is also compatible with all subsequent locations except the immediately previous location.”

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Observer Stories

#### Henry William Ravenel



**Figure 8. Henry William Ravenel, 1869. Dr Ravenel was a South Carolina planter, botanist, and agricultural writer. Source: South Caroliniana Library.**

The following was found on the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, web site, [www.sc.edu/library/socar/uscs/1995/ravenl95.html](http://www.sc.edu/library/socar/uscs/1995/ravenl95.html).

“Born on 19 May 1814 at Pooshee plantation in St. John's, Berkeley, Henry William Ravenel first attended Pineville Academy and later graduated in the class of 1832 from South Carolina College. While in college he was especially interested in chemistry and natural philosophy. After first establishing himself as a planter at Northampton plantation, Ravenel turned to botany as an avocation. His studies in natural history brought him into contact with some of the most eminent men in the field, among them Charles Hyde Olmstead, John Bachman, Moses Ashley Curtis, and Asa Gray. Between 1853 and 1860 he published five volumes of *The Fungi Caroliniani Exsiccati*, the first published series of named specimens of American fungi. In collaboration with English botanist M.C.

Cooke, Ravenel later published a second series, *Fungi Americani Exsiccati*. These publications established the South Carolinian as the leading authority on American fungus and led to extensive scientific correspondence.

The Civil War brought financial ruin to Ravenel, and subsequently he made various attempts to earn a living for his family by operating a nursery and seed business, by publishing a newspaper, and by writing for agricultural journals. He was offered professorships of botany at the University of California and at Washington College, Lexington, Va., but declined both due to ill health and deafness. In 1882 he accepted work as agricultural editor for the weekly *News & Courier*.

Ravenel was elected to membership in a number of learned societies, and in 1886 the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill, conferred the degree of LL.D. upon him. He collected and classified an extensive herbarium of fungi, mosses, and lichens. By 1881 his summary of specimens indicated a total of some eleven thousand species. Parts of the herbarium were later sold to the British Museum and to Converse College. In 1853 Ravenel removed from Northampton plantation and settled at Aiken. He died there on 17 July 1887. Ravenel was survived by four children from his first marriage and five children from his second.”

Further information on the Ravenel’s arrival in Aiken and his agricultural orientation was found in the book *Henry William Ravenel, 1814-1887, South Carolina Scientist in the Civil War Era*.

“Settled into rented quarters in Aiken, the Ravenels were quite comfortable. Pleasant surroundings and friendly neighbors created a good first impression of the town. They had carried with them a letter of introduction from the Reverend William Dehon of Saint Stephen’s Church to give to the Reverend John Cornish of Saint Thaddeus, Aiken. “I feel assured,’ Dehon wrote, “that my loss will prove your gain, & that your hands may be strengthened & your heart cheered by this addition to your flock of two devoted Christians, with their children, the lambs of his fold.” With their way thus smoothed, the Ravenels joined the Episcopal church of Saint Thaddeus, and Ravenel began to sing in the choir. About twenty-five other families already gathered at Saint Thaddeus to worship, among them the families of future friends Amory Coffin, a physician, and Octavius Dawson, a former resident of Saint John’s.”

“Few in attendance at the AAAS meeting could have argued with Ravenel, for long-standing concerns with paleontology had already made botanists

aware of the significance of plant geography. Ravenel, however, brought to the question a different perspective. His agricultural orientation was clear as he urged the importance of collecting data on the meteorological and topographical factors that could influence the growth and distribution of plants. Rainfall, humidity, average temperature at different seasons, temperature range, and the direction of the prevailing winds could all determine the types of plants able to grow in a locality. Depth of the surface soil, its chemical composition, and proximity to bodies of water were physical features of the land that could also affect the flora. Ravenel, in his work with the Black Oak Agricultural Society, had already discussed the connection between meteorology and agriculture, and now he extended the principle to the growth of plants in nature.”

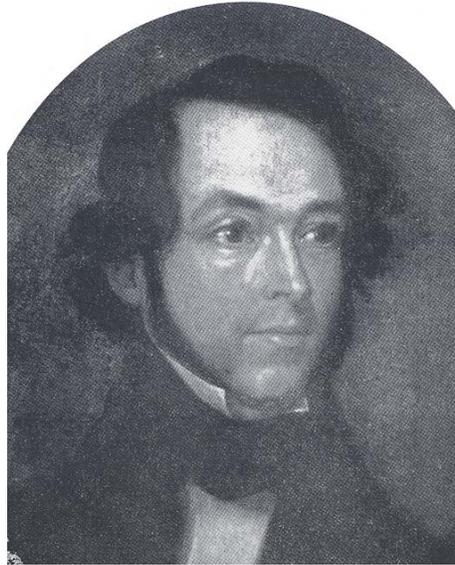
Henry Ravenel was buried at St. Thaddeus Church in Aiken, South Carolina. See Figure 9.



**Figure 9. The headstone of Henry W. Ravenel, St. Thaddeus Church, Aiken, South Carolina. Photograph taken in June 2005. Source: Photograph by author.**

## Reverend John Hamilton Cornish

On 10 November 1846 Reverend John Hamilton Cornish, his wife Martha, two children and three servants left Sullivan's Island, South Carolina to journey to Aiken, South Carolina. The following Sunday, 15 November 1846, Reverend Cornish held his first service at St. Thaddeus Church in Aiken. Thus began a 23 year relationship with the Church.



**Figure 10. The Reverend John H. Cornish, Aiken, South Carolina, circa 1850.**  
*Source: St. Thaddeus of Aiken, A Church and Its City.*

Attendance at St. Thaddeus services varied widely during the early years from just two people on Christmas 1847 to 34 communicants by 1854. Attendance reached over 250 in later years. In 1856 total alms for the year were \$170 reaching \$524 by 1864.

John Cornish, a founding member of the Aiken Horticultural Society, was an avid gardener. He would often conduct experiments with plants, flower, and fruits in the Cornish garden with his friend Henry Ravenel. He once considered commercializing grapes and wine making but abandoned the idea after finding little interest. In 1861, at the time of his 46<sup>th</sup> birthday, Rev. Cornish planted a California cedar in front of the Church. This cedar stands today.

Rev. Cornish also was involved in establishing the early schools in Aiken. He established the St. Thaddeus Seminary for boys in 1853 but the school did not last long. In 1859 a Board of Trustees was appointed to establish a free school in Aiken, Rev. Cornish was one of the founding Trustees. He was appointed the chairman of the

building committee and by 1860 the school opened to 80 students. The Aiken Academy became the Aiken Institute and in 1936 the Aiken High School.

In December 1860, with the Ordinance of Secession passed, a parade and speeches were held in Aiken. The first speaker was Rev. Cornish and on 23 December 1860 the prayer for the President was omitted at St. Thaddeus for the first time. By November 1861 Rev. Cornish was drilling daily with the Aiken Home Guard. On 11 February 1865 the war finally came to Aiken when Sherman's troops advanced on the town. The battle was short-lived with the Confederates holding the day. The Union troops moved on to Columbia, South Carolina, where they destroyed most of the city.

In 1868, while on a three month trip to the North East, Henry Ravenel wrote Rev. Cornish of trouble brewing at St. Thaddeus. Upon his return to Aiken on 23 December 1868 Cornish found that he was being asked to resign. He formally resigned on 15 May 1869.

It is assumed that John Cornish continued to live at his home and garden on Richland Avenue until his death in 1878. His weather observations continued until 1872.



**Figure 11. The Reverend John H. Cornish and his wife Martha, Aiken, South Carolina, circa 1860.**

**Source:** *St Thaddeus of Aiken, A Church and Its City*

John Cornish and his wife Martha had nine children of whom seven lived to adulthood. Martha Cornish died on 13 February 1864 at the time of the birth of the ninth child. The Reverend John Cornish died 25 May 1878. John Cornish and his wife and two of their children are buried at St. Thaddeus. See Figure 12.



**Figure 12. The headstone of Reverend John H. Cornish at the St. Thaddeus Church in Aiken, South Carolina. Photograph taken in June 2005.  
Source: Photograph by author.**

### **William H. Geddings, M. D.**

William H. Geddings graduated from the Medical College of South Carolina in 1861. He became the Chief Medical Purveyor for the Army of Northern Virginia in October 1862. After the war he moved to Aiken, South Carolina, for his wife's health as he was convinced that it offered an ideal climate for sufferers of pulmonary diseases and tuberculosis.

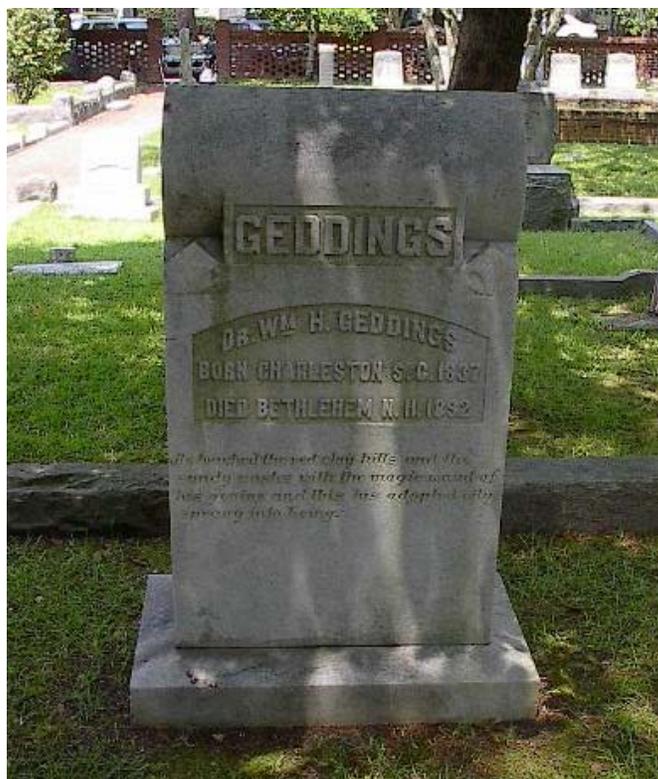
The following was extracted from *Aiken, South Carolina as a Health Resort* published by Walker, Evans, & Cogswell, printers, Charleston, South Carolina in 1877. This was the preface to an article written by Dr. Geddings entitled *A Contribution to Medical Climatology*, the author is unknown but the message is interesting:

“Few branches of therapeutics are less understood, and no article of the material medica is prescribed more empirically than climate. From the time that the great physician of Cos published his renowned treatise on

“air, water, and locality,” much has been written on climate; but it has been made to adapt its many varieties to the treatment of those diseases in which they are especially indicated. The time, we trust, has arrived when the patient will demand of his physician something more definite - not to say more rational – than the mandate to go South. That section is very extensive, and possesses many climates, differing widely among themselves, with peculiarities as marked as those which distinguish New York from Newfoundland. In that vast tract there are resorts varying in height from a few feet above the sea level to several thousand; dry, cold, and bracing resorts, with a winter mean of 38° F; and others, moist, warm, and relaxing; mountain climates; insular climates, and other varieties too numerous to mention. The illness of a member of the writer’s family [Dr. Geddings] compelled him, some seven or eight years ago, to seek a home in this region, and having selected Aiken as a place of residence, he had made its climate a special study. For the past five years he had made tri-daily observations with improved meteorological instruments, following rigidly the instructions furnished by the Smithsonian Institution, and United States Signal Service. In the following pages he proposes to give the result of his labors, trusting that they may aid his brother practitioners in selecting a winter home for such of their patients as they may determine to send South.”

The following was extracted from *St. Thaddeus of Aiken, A Church and Its City*:

“The relative ease of inland travel on the cars and the mildness of dryness of its climate enabled Aiken’s reputation as a health resort to flourish during the mid-1800’s. Following the lead of the Charlestonians, Northerners began seeking haven in Aiken from tuberculosis, known at that time as consumption. Initially they traveled by ship to Charleston, then by “the cars” to Aiken. Dr. Amory Coffin and Dr. W. H. Geddings are largely responsible for fostering Aiken’s reputation as a health resort. Both parishioners are buried in St. Thaddeus cemetery. From 1890 to 1940 the railroad would play an important part in the establishment of the Winter Colony, each season bringing to Aiken many visitors and to St. Thaddeus many communicants who would build and strengthen the church.”



**Figure 13. The headstone of Dr. William H. Geddings, St. Thaddeus Church, Aiken, South Carolina. Photograph taken in June 2005.**  
**Source: Photograph by author.**

Dr. Geddings died 1 September 1892 in Bethlehem, New Hampshire, the location of his summer home. His last weather observation taken in Aiken was in March 1892.

## **Appendix 2 - Methodology**

The primary sources of information for this study were the Aiken observers' daily weather records themselves. Copies of these reports were available from the National Climatic Data Center's on-line system called WSSRD. These reports were considered the primary sources because they were written by the original observers and not altered by subsequent readers.

Many sources were gleaned to obtain a glimpse of the lives of the observers, the location of the observation sites, and the historical environment that produced the climatic history of Aiken, South Carolina. Interviews were conducted with local historians, children of deceased observers, and recent observers in order to obtain a first hand account of their love of observing. Maps, drawings, and photographs were included when appropriate to illustrate the information.

The street maps were generated using Microsoft's Streets and Trips software. Elevations, latitude, and longitude were determined from the United States Geological

Survey maps available on Topozone.com.

## **REFERENCES AND DATA SOURCES**

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