

## The origins of Abbeville mansion

**JACK BRUBAKER, The Scribbler (New Era) | Posted: Tuesday, September 20, 2011**

Dear Dr. Scribberville:

Sometime could you give us the history of Abbeville? I toured the house many years ago after Dr. Farmer resided there. I know there have been wonderful upgrades to the home since that time.

Tom Englert [Historic Lancaster Walking Tour] says he thinks the house was built in the late 1700s. He says it predates Wheatland.

Kay, Lancaster

Dear Kay:

Tom is right. The basic outline of Abbeville, the large yellow house at 1140 Columbia Ave., was constructed about 1790. Wheatland wasn't built until 1828.

But the original structure at Abbeville is even older.

It began as a small stone building sometime before 1756.

John Stoner, a prosperous miller, enlarged the home in the 1790s.

Langdon Cheves (pronounced "Chivis") purchased the house in 1826, when he was 50 years old. He enlarged it and used it for a few years as his summer retreat from the heat of South Carolina.

Cheves named the place for his South Carolina birthplace.

Cheves had served three terms in Congress, beginning in 1810. He was chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means and, for a brief time, Speaker of the House.

Later he served as president of the Second Bank of the United States.

For the last 28 of his 80 years, Cheves remained on his South Carolina rice plantation. He died in 1857.

Cheves had sold Abbeville to local ironmaster William Coleman in 1829.

From 1835 to 1840, Abbeville housed a boys' school run by the Rev. Dr. William Augustus Muhlenberg, co-rector of St. James Episcopal Church.

Since then, several prominent Lancastrians have occupied the house.

They have included Judge Alexander Hayes; Christopher Hager, owner of Hager's department store and builder of the Fulton Opera House; Dr. John W. Appel Jr.; C. Dudley Armstrong, a vice president of Armstrong World Industries; Dr. John Farmer; and Robert Ecklin.

Ecklin and his wife, Ruth, purchased the property in 1995.

So there's a brief history of the ownership of Abbeville, one of Lancaster's oldest, most famous and most imposing homes.