

Scenes at Gonzales Gardens Dedication Yesterday

The State
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TOP PHOTO—One Hundred and Second Cavalry (Essex Troop) band shown playing yesterday afternoon at the dedication of Gonzales Gardens. (Story on Page 1.)

LOWER PHOTO—A portion of the crowd that attended the ceremonies. Typical dwelling units to be seen in background.

Shown as they were photographed while speaking at the dedication exercises yesterday are William Elliott (left) and D. W. Robinson, Jr. (right).—Photos by Sargeant studio.



ington that this great project be named "Gonzales Gardens" and the reason...

Named in Their Honor

William Elliott, publisher of The State, made the dedicatory address at the exercises at Gonzales Gardens yesterday afternoon. Of the three brothers, for whom the project is named, he said:

The purpose of this gathering is to pay tribute to three citizens of Columbia and South Carolina—the three Gonzales brothers. Born in the coast country they moved in early life to the capital of their state, and there lived and worked until they got the signal of "thirty," which in the newspaper world means that they responded to the call of the Grim Reaper. The sons of a Cuban patriot father and a South Carolina mother of many family connections, their early life was passed in the dreary times following the Confederate war. Perhaps environment may not change character, but whether environment or inheritance, the hardships of those early years riveted in their character certain traits which make it fit that we should be here today.

While in many respects they differ as much as three individuals could differ, the major and worthy elements of character were the same.

Moral courage was common to them, that enabled them to dare to do all that may become a man.

Independence—they had "the glorious privilege of being independent."

Uncompromising honesty—that made their friends and even enemies respect them through the decades.

Loyalty—not only to their friends but to their homes, their city, their state and their nation.

Pride of Race—not the futile worship of aristocratic ancestors but the pride which made them restless to serve and forbade any act that was mean or base.

It is true that many of these phases were displayed through the newspaper which they built, but it is not as newspaper men, but as citizens, that this great project commemorates them.

Fifty years ago the Gonzales brothers envisioned the Columbia of today. Fifty years ago they started fighting for better living for the masses, for an enlightened and diversified agriculture, for the abolition of child labor, for educational facilities within the reach of the young, for improved higher institutions of learning, for importation of industries to give employment to

our people and to bring payrolls into a poverty-stricken state.

Like their father, Ambrosio Jose Gonzales, who was forced to flee his native land because of his fight for the oppressed people of his country, they were militant for the underprivileged. Their motives were twisted and misrepresented by opposing politicians, and the very people they sought to help were thus often turned against them. Many things they advocated long years ago are now commonly enjoyed privileged.

One characteristic was common to the three brothers. Money was one of the last motives behind their work; they were not influenced by "saint seducing gold," and at times they were in dire need of money because so much was given away to worthy causes and to friends. And be it said to their renown that they did not always analyze the thriftiness of those to whose aid they contributed. In other words, they often got "stuck." But their fine ability took care of all these things, since they were always able to emerge from any pecuniary hole into which they dug themselves.

Had they no weaknesses of our common humanity? That they did; but none that compromise what is already said. "Their faults be gently upon them."

The oldest was Ambrose, who was old enough to remember when a Negro slave, waving an old bag from the back of a mule came riding down his grandfather's avenue of live oaks and crying, "The Yankees are coming! The Yankees are coming!"

An humble signal that means the end of one civilization and the beginning of another—whether for better or worse it is not now for us to say.

Through various forms of apprenticeship he became the most expert telegrapher in the press offices of New York and thence to Columbia to start, with his brother, Narciso, the struggle to establish their newspaper. It was a long and hard fight, and would have failed but for the loyalty of many friends—a loyalty which they both remembered to their dying day. These early friends lived (in the minds of these Gonzales) with halos around their heads. Ambrose prided himself on his ability "to turn sharp financial corners," but he needed all that he had in that respect to finance the payrolls of his paper and later to operate a model farm, build a tourist hotel, help

support a boat line on the river, and contribute far beyond his means to many community causes. These were not all financially successful, but all had his aid because he thought them worthy.

I will mention a few instances that illustrate the man:

A traveling representative of a concern submitted a contract for him to sign. The representative thought his product was essential to Ambrose. Said Ambrose: "I wish to consider this contract further. There are some clauses about which I am not satisfied." Said the representative: "You will have to sign it in the end, so why waste time? Sign on the dotted line, and do it now!" "So!" said Ambrose. "Listen, man, for that insolent ultimatum, as long as I am president of this company we will never again use your product!" And he never did as long as he lived—15 years.

Once again—early in his career his concern owed a manufacturer much money he could not pay. He asked for time—plenty of time. It was granted. He paid that debt and never bought or considered the product of any other maker.

For a decade or more he suffered invalidism that would have daunted any man but the most intrepid, but it never chilled his sympathy nor stopped his work, but "through long days of labor and nights devoid of rest" he wrote four books of outstanding merit—one of which "The Black Border," contains stories of the coast country of his boyhood and the picturesque language of the Negroes of the plantations. It has already gone through three large editions.

Next in age was Narciso Gener, named for one of his father's Cuban friends. For some years before Ambrose moved from New York to Columbia he had been at the head of the Columbia bureau of The News and Courier, and his long articles were always signed "N. G. G." Always afterwards in the newspaper world he was known by these initials. He was a confirmed optimist for Columbia and South Carolina, and his predictions for the bright future of both put courage and hope in our people. To the dishonest, the hypocrite or the sycophant he gave verbal lashings that were brilliant, if not discreet. To the dishonest he seemed to say, mend your ways "lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue thy ling'ring." His services to Columbia are commemorated on the monument to him at the

corner of Senate and Sumter streets. Fellow citizens erected the monument. The scholarly Dr. Samuel M. Smith, the eminent Presbyterian divine of Columbia, made the address when the monument was unveiled. N. G. G.'s denunciation in his Columbia paper of dishonesty brought about his death. He died in 1903.

The youngest of the brothers was William Elliott Gonzales. His long and arduous preparation for his life work brought him forward with such distinction that he became the friend and adviser of President Wilson, who had such confidence in him that he made him minister to Cuba and then promoted him as ambassador to Peru—our first ambassador to Peru—and the first diplomat of that rank ever appointed from South Carolina.

An occasion such as this does not allow meticulous details but I will mention a few certificates from his fellow citizens. Some years ago the head of a business concern appointed a committee of Columbians to award a gold watch to the city's most valuable citizen. The committee unanimously awarded the watch to William E. Gonzales.

The American Legion awards annually a plaque to a citizen of this state for distinguished service. In 1932 the award was engraved as follows: "Department of South Carolina. Distinguished service award to Captain William Elliott Gonzales. Soldier, Diplomat, Journalist, Citizen."

When he was on his deathbed the Kiwanis club of Columbia presented him a tribute engraved "for distinguished public service, prompted by a patriotic mind and a tender love for his fellow men."

It could truly be said of this youngest of the three that he was "the kindest man, the best conditioned and unwearyed spirit in doing courtesies."

This brings to mind that each of the brothers did military service in Cuba in the Spanish-American war, serving to free the land of their patriot father, who was forced to flee from the vengeance of Spain.

When I was asked by the chairman of this great Housing authority to speak these words today I demurred on the ground that I was the kinsman (which I am proud to be), their friend from early youth, and their associate for many decades. But the committee declared it was on these very grounds that I was

invited. So if there be fault it is on their heads; not mine.

This that I have given is a scant outline of the reason the authority recommended to Washington that this great project be named "Gonzales Gardens" and the reason the government in Washington approved and authorized the name.

And it is right and just that this noble establishment that surrounds us today in its complete and graceful form, to make better the living conditions of those who dwell herein, should be named in honor of three men who all their lives thought, and wrote

and worked for better living conditions in our great state.

When I look back on the more than half a century of intimacy with the lives of the three Gonzales brothers, I am moved to say of each, what one brother living, said of one brother dead:

"Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail

Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,

Dispraise, or blame—nothing but well and fair,

And what may quiet us in a death so noble."