

Did You Know?

Francis Peyre Porcher was born at Ophir Plantation in St. John's, Berkeley County, South Carolina on Dec. 14, 1824 to Dr. William and Isabella Sarah Peyre Porcher.

Through his mother's side, he was a descendant of the well-known English botanist Thomas Walter, author of *Flora Caroliniana*, the first catalog of the flowering plants of South Carolina published in 1788.

Porcher graduated from the Medical College of the State of South Carolina. He was first in his class of 76, in 1847. His thesis, *A Medico-Botanical Catalogue of the Plants and Ferns of St. John's, Berkeley, South Carolina*, was published later that same year by the faculty of the Medical College.

During his long affiliation with the Medical College, Porcher served as professor of clinical medicine and chair of materia medica, which he held from 1874 to 1891. With fellow Medical College alumnus Julian J. Chisolm (1830-1903), Porcher opened a hospital specifically for the care of plantation slaves.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Porcher joined the Confederate Army as a surgeon to South Carolina's Holcombe Legion and was then transferred to the Naval Hospital at Norfolk, Va. in March 1862. He finished his Confederate service in the South Carolina Hospital at Petersburg, Va.

While in Virginia, Porcher was "released temporarily from service in the field and hospital" by Confederate States Surgeon General Samuel Preston Moore to write, "Resources of the Southern Fields and Forests." The handbook identified local plants with therapeutic qualities that could be used not only by Confederate surgeons, but planters and farmers, in place of manufactured drugs made unavailable because of the Union blockade of Southern ports and the lack of southern pharmaceutical laboratories. The handbook written in 1863 was of such value that a revised edition was published in 1869.

Four editions of the manual were produced during the course of the war and are now available for research use at the Waring Historical Library.

When the war ended, Porcher returned to Charleston and resumed his academic positions at the Medical College. As his professional career thrived and he received many honors, he remained a prolific contributor to the medical literature and wrote on a variety of topics including yellow fever, diseases of the heart, typhoid and malaria.

After suffering a paralytic stroke, Porcher died at his home in Charleston, on Nov. 19, 1895.

Porcher's papers are housed at the Waring Historical Library, which has digitized them for research use.