Dear Mrs. Van Loan:

Thank you so very much for sending us the information on the two Senators. That about John Chesnut is especially interesting to us -- his much younger brother, General James Chesnut, was a graduate of Princeton.

I am enclosing the sketches of John Chesnut and of Thomas Park Lide. If you can add to the latter, we shall greatly appreciate it -- we had no idea that your records included such invaluable materials as 1855 blanks for a Biographical Catalogue.

You will note John Algernon Sidney Ashe exaggerated a little on his legislative service a bit -- he was in the House from St. Paul's 1826-30 and Senate 1830-36; in the Senate from St. Philip's and St. Michael's (city of Charleston) 1845-50.

Incidentally, I have seen his will, and it is truly pitiful -- he was a man of great wealth who lost everything in the War. He wanted to give the woman who nursed him in his last illness $100 -- if it could be found in his estate -- and there just wasn't that much money to give her in 1868.

Thank you again for your trouble, and please know that what you have told us will add greatly to our book.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Mrs. Emily B. Reynolds
State Librarian

By the way -- I am writing to Princeton, sending a copy of the Chesnut sketch, and asking if the 1940 catalogue is available.
April 11, 1962

Mrs. Emily B. Reynolds  
State Librarian  
State House  
Columbia, South Carolina

Dear Mrs. Reynolds:

Your letter of April 3 was a pleasure to read and we were particularly pleased to receive the biographical sketch on John A. E. Ashe. This will be carefully preserved here with the original record sheet filled out by Mr. Ashe on August 27, 1855. A photo copy of this latter is enclosed. Unfortunately our equipment would not reproduce the handwriting and I typed the answers as written by Mr. Ashe. You will note that he gives his birth date as "22d Sept. 1796".

John Chesnut entered Union College in the semester January through April 1817. His bills were sent to himself and his residence is given as Camden, S.C. He received the Bachelor of Arts degree with the class of 1819 in July of that year. A notation from the Princeton University catalogue of 1940 states "Entered as a sophomore in 1815. Dismissed for being in riot January 24, 1917." Evidently, then, he immediately came north and enrolled in Union College. Our President, Eliphalet Nott, had a reputation for his work with young men who seemed to need discipline.

Thank you for your interest in our historical records and we certainly appreciate your suggestion that you might send us material on both John Chesnut and Thomas P. Lide. Please do as our records has been "gathered" only since the Alumni Office was established in 1911 and we are anxious to supplement the early files.

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs. C. J. Van Loan, Jr.)  
Administrative Assistant
State of South Carolina

SENATORIAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Columbia
April 3, 1962

Mrs. C. J. Van Loan, Jr.
Alumni Office
Union College
Schnectady, 8, N. Y.

Dear Mrs. Van Loan:

The list of South Carolina students at Union College, prior to 1860, has been given to us by Professor Chalmers Davidson, whose research project overlaps ours. We are engaged in compiling a Biographical Directory of the S. C. State Senate, 1776 to date, and have our material nearly ready for the printer.

We are, however, continuing to follow any leads that come up. On your list of students, there are three Senators -- John Algernon Sidney Ashe (1814), John Chesnut (1819), and Thomas P. Lide (1830). We did not have the fact that Ashe and Chesnut attended Union, so are very glad to learn this.

The information we have on John A. S. Ashe has been gathered from the many sources which have consulted, including official records of all sorts and family histories, both printed and manuscript. We have not located any member of the Ashe family who could provide data on the Senator, however.

I am enclosing a carbon of our sketch, with the hope that you might be able to add to it. Please keep this for your files. Do you have biographical data on your alumni? We should be glad to send you anything we have on John Chesnut and Thomas P. Lide, of course.

Thank you so much for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Emily B. Reynolds
Mrs. Emily B. Reynolds
State Librarian

Note: We are giving inter-relationships of Senators where possible. General James Chesnut, Jr., was Confederate General and U. S. and Confederate Senator.
John Chestnut

1818

Entered as a sophomore in 1815. Dismissed for being in riot January 24, 1817.

He may have been a son of James Chestnut, a brother of Colonel John Chestnut of Camden, S. C. If so, John Chestnut, of the Class of 1818, was born in 1799 and died in 1839; was a South Carolina State Senator in 1836; was married to Ellen Whitaker. See Kirkland and Kennedy, History of Camden, I, p. 370.
Mrs. C. J. Van Loan, Jr.
Alumni Office
Union College
Schenectady, N. Y.

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Thank you so much for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Emily B. Reynolds
State Librarian
In 1835, during the second term of Andrew Jackson, war broke out in Florida with the Seminole Indians, who refused to be moved to the territory set apart for them west of the Mississippi. From the impenetrable swamps of the peninsula, the Indians prolonged hostilities until 1842.

A call was made upon South Carolina in 1836 for a regiment of infantry to do three months' duty in Florida. Governor McDuffie asked for one company of mounted men, seventy-six in all, from Colonel John Chestnut's regiment, Kershaw District. The response was enthusiastic.

The regiment was paraded on the morning of February 8, and Brigadier General James W. Cantey read the order for a draft, if a sufficient number did not volunteer. After patriotic speeches by Colonel Chestnut and Major William McWillie, "Old Glory" was planted a few paces in front of the line, and all who wished to enlist were asked to advance and dress by the flag. The entire regiment, with the exception of about twenty, at once came forward. As the Camden Journal, from which our reports are obtained, proudly exclaimed in its next issue: "There never has been, and we trust, there never will be, a time that such a resort (a draft) shall be necessary here." Colonel Chestnut himself volunteered and was elected Captain.

That afternoon, a meeting of the "elders" of the community was held at the Court House, to furnish the patriotic youth with equipment for the campaign, to provide for any families of volunteers left without support, and to raise funds for conveyance to the rendezvous at Furrysburg. Subscription lists were opened and, in a few moments, 23 horses, 19 sets of equipments and $855.00 in cash had been raised--the money by a note on the Branch Bank of the State in Camden, the entire assemblage pledging their faith for its payment, should the amount not be reimbursed by the United States Government.

That evening the company, well mounted, set out in high spirits, being accompanied as far as the river by a large number of citizens, including many ladies.

Arrived at the seat of war, Captain Chestnut's company saw little actual service. Under orders from General Eustis, they burnt the villages of Abram, who is described as a "Negro-Indian," and of Miccosopy, the head chief of the nation. From Volusia they were sent to Peay's Creek, below Tampa Bay, and returning, were honorably discharged at St. Augustine, on May 1. Here they chartered a steamer, by private contract, and came to Charleston, reaching Camden about the middle of the month. A public dinner was tendered them by the people of the town, at which a handsome sword was presented Captain Chestnut by his old company.
Not a man hadfallenduring the brief campaign, but many later succumbed to the effects of the deadly unhealthfulness of the Florida Everglades. Saddest of these loses directly due to the war was that of the much-beloved commander of the company, which occurred December 27, 1839. Captain Chestnut had contracted measles in camp, and as a result of exposure, a pulmonary trouble resulted. All efforts to save this valued young life proved in vain. A trip to Europe with his brother James was tried as a last resort, but, a few weeks after his return, he died at "Mulberry."

John Chestnut, by his amiable and virtuous character, seems to have won, to an unusual degree, the love, respect and admiration of his fellows. A former Camden friend, C. F. Daniels, in the course of a beautiful eulogy, thus speaks of him in his paper. (The New York Gazette)

"A member of one of the wealthiest, and, in all respects, most respectable families in the South, he was at the same time one of the finest specimens of republican blandness and simplicity to be found on the face of the earth. Every honorable man, whether rich or poor, was his peer, and none other, whether he rolled in poverty or riches, shared his favor."

He was the eldest son of James and Mary Cox Chestnut, and was born December 23, 1799. The only political position that he filled was a seat in the State Senate, to which he was elected in 1826. His planting interests were extensive.

He married Ellen, daughter of Thomas Whitaker. Six children were the issue of this union, of whom one only now survives (in 1906) James Chestnut of Alachua, Fla. Another son, John, was a gallant young captain in the Confederate service; he died, a mere youth, in 1868, and lies, beside his parents, in the family burying ground at Knight's Hill.

Two of Captain Chestnut's daughters, Serena and Mary, married respectively, Thomas and Edward, sons of Benjamin Haile. They too, with their families moved to Florida in the "Fifties."

Captain Chestnut's death drew forth, from an unknown Camden poet, signing only the initial "N," an elegy, both heartfelt and graceful, from which we extract a few lines:

"How swiftly Time flew o'er thy happy home! Around thy board bloomed opening buds, so fair, Thy hopes of future happiness! But then, Ah! then, thy country call'd; love, ease and home All, all, by thee resign'd. The tented field And soldier's fare, how cheerfully endured! E'en had they mortal frame gigantic been, Beneath the efforts of the soul within, It must have fall'n. The path of duty found, The inward man led on, till nature sank. But--thou hast liv'd, to gain the hearts of all! To meet in every eye affection's glance, From every lip, the wish to thee, of weal-- To reach thy sun's meridian height, undoomed In night to set. But, better far, eclipsed in Death, Remember'd how, as brilliant to the last!"