

The Chatham Historical Journal

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Chatham County, North Carolina

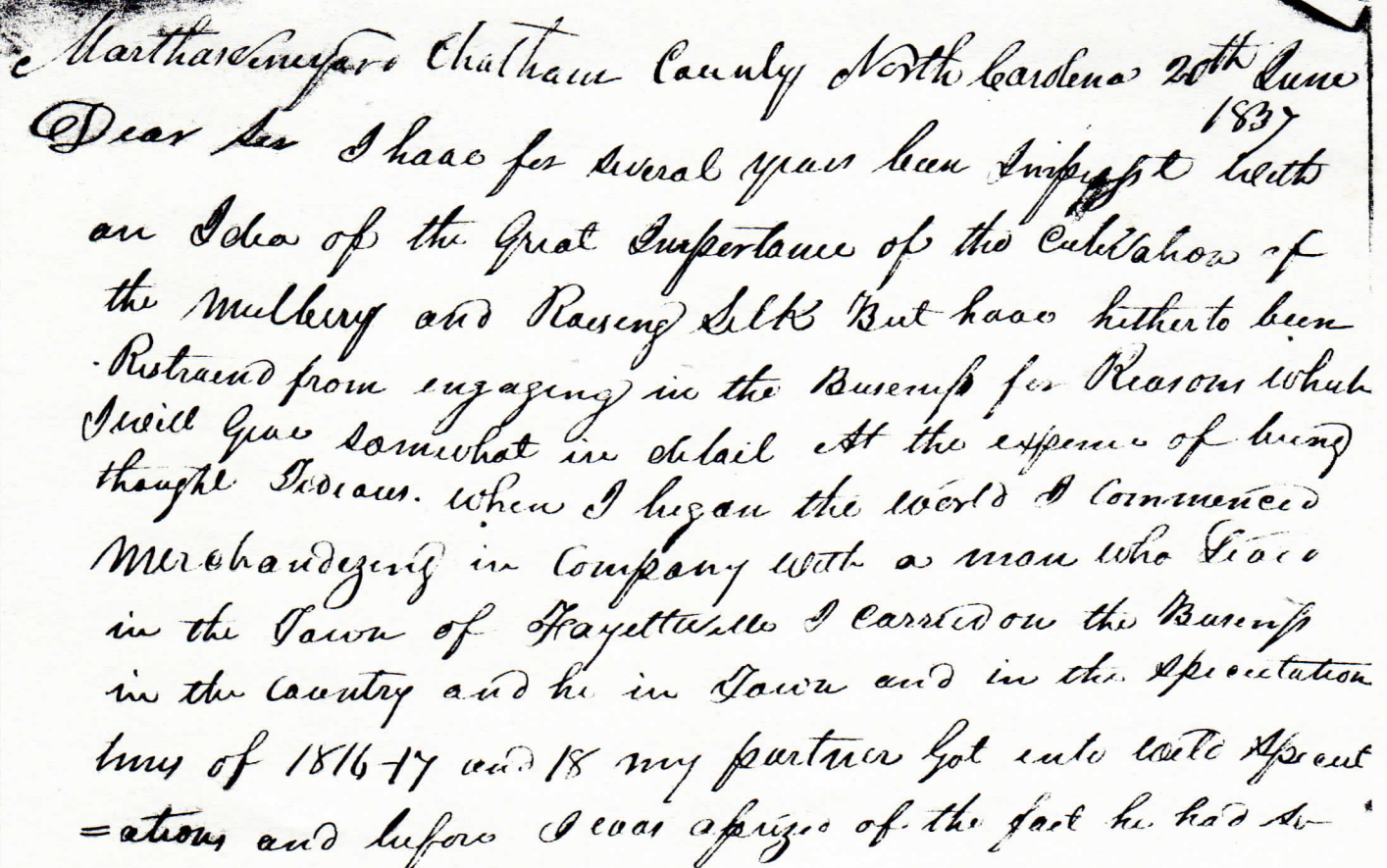
November 1998

A Letter from Chatham County

Marthas Vineyard Chatham County North Carolina
20th June 1837

Dear Sir I have for several years been Impresst with an Idea of the Great Impertance of the Cultivation of the mulberry and Raising Silk But have hitherto been Restrained from engaging in the Business for Reasons which I will Give somewhat in detail At the expenxe of being thought Tedious. When I began the world I commenced merchandizing in Company with a man who Lived in the Town of Fayetteville I carried on the

Business in the country and he in Town and in the speculation times of 1816-17 and 18 my parter Got into wild speculations and before I was aprized of the fact he had so Involved himself and me with him that he Ruined us both and I was left with only my wife and eight female Children to shift the best way I could. and have not been able to discover any way to provide for them any thing Like a comfortable Living untill I have by Chance seen some of your publications on the subject of the Silk Business and heare I met with other difficulty that took some time to get over. Several years ago the people in this section seemed to Get alive on the



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subject and a Number of families procured the Eggs and commenced Raising the silk worm on the Native mulberry which Grows Spontaneously here tho not in sufficient quantity to supply many worms And one Gentleman who has always been noted for Going hedelong in every thing he undertaks so overstocked himself that he had to appropriate the whole of his Dwelling House to the accommodation of his worms and when the Began to feed Greedily he had to go several miles Round and purchase mulberry Leaves at 50 cents per hundred pounds at this Rate he could not procure a sufficient supply and the Business Turned out Bad and to Cap the Climax himself and all his family were taken sick that summer which was attributed to the silk worms and they have since that time been viewed as a pestilential Insect and viewed with abhorrence by many. When you commenced the publication of the Silk Culturist one of your numbers was sent to the post office at this place. I took it from the post office and thought I could procure a sufficient number of subscribers that would amount to such a sum as to enable me to make a Remittance and Give the paper a General Circulation in this neighbourhood But I tried in Vane I could not Get a single subscriber and most of people were opposed to any persons engaging in the Business in the neighbourhood for fear it would create some infectious disorder and more over they could not be made to believe it a Business worth pursuing and another Idea was that it would take a man his Lifetime to Raise a sufficient number of Trees to carry on the Business to any extent And as I have already mentioned I was too poor to Go on without help and to Get help for that object it was hopeless But I have 2 particular friends what are always willing to assist me in any thing they can have faith in But whenever I mentioned the silk Business I Got Cold Comfort until within a few weeks past one of my friends had a few numbers of the farmers magazine sent him for perusal he there Read the Correspondence Between the Editor of that and Mr. Gray who Lives near Fredricksburg Va he Immediately sent for me showed me the statements and informed me that he was satisfied now that I had not been under a delusion and recommended me to prepare for a Commencement as soon as possible my other friend who is the Gentlemans fatherinlaw who is quite and old and a very infirm man But his approbation was also wanting so I Got the Loan of the Book to let him read it and Get him convinced But when I called see him he handed me the Report of JQ Adams to Congress and told me he was satisfied that situated as I and my family were it was the best thing I

could engage in and urged me to prepare to begin as soon as possible Now as I wish to act Advisedly on the subject and take a Right start the object of this Letter is to ask information of you on the following points (towit)

1st what will the cutting of the Moras multicaulis of the China and the Italian Mulberry cost me 2 What will seed of the different Kinds cost and 3dly when or what time will be the proper season to make application for Either or the whole 4thly What will a full set of the Pamphlets or other publications on that subject which you have published since the commencement that would be necessary for to Give a new beginner correct information as to the Culture of the Trees the management of every Branch connected with until the silk is prepared for Market cost-- The Earliest information on the subject will be very thankfully Received as I wish to make all the preparation that my slender means will allow of with all the assistance I can Get to make as Early a commencement as possible and as I do not wish to Bring a [] on the Business I will begin at the fountain head the freight of Cuttings will not cost much and a Gentleman who Lives about 15 miles from me who has a son that is merchandizing and who Goes to Hartford to purchase Domesticicks when he Goes to the north for Goods would in all probability enable me to send and Receive such quantity as I may be able to pay for through his agency

Your reply will be anxiously Looked for and thankfully Received and I can then prepare to act in accordance to such a plan as you may suggest

I am Sir with high Consideration

Your Obt & Humble Servant
Geo Luther

Mr Comstock
Secretary of the Silk
Society

[We are indebted to David Rossell of North Liberty, Iowa, for telling us about this letter and sending a transcription of it. Mr. Rossell writes, "George Luther of Martha's Vineyard, North Carolina, wrote to F. G. Comstock, editor of The Silk Culturist, a newspaper devoted to silk culture, published in Hartford, Connecticut during the late 1830s. The Silk Culturist was probably the most respected of the various silk newspapers printed in the United States during the 1830s and 1840s. In addition to serving as an editor, Comstock sold mulberry trees and silkworm eggs." The letter is in the Connecticut Historical Society, with whose kind permission the facsimile is reproduced.]

George Luther first appears in U.S. censuses for Chatham County in 1820, with a wife, five children under ten years of age, and 34 slaves; in his household were six engaged in

agriculture and two in manufacturing. In the 1850 census he gave his age as 65, his place of birth Maryland; his wife Barshaba was born in Virginia; and the household included seven daughters ranging in age from 4 to 32 and two sons, 12 and 19.

Chatham County 1771-1971 records his being postmaster at Buckhorn Falls in 1816. Most of his land was south of the Cape Fear River, but he also owned lots in both Haywood and Pittsborough before his troubles with Henry Branson of Fayetteville, the speculator to whom Luther refers in his letter.

The Chatham County Historical Association invites anyone with information about George Luther to forward it to the Association.]

Dr. Lloyd

In the past most small towns and rural communities in our area of the country had their "one-of-a-kind characters" at whom they laughed and made fun, yet loved. Those areas also had their heroes who were admired and praised by most people. Seldom were the "hero" and the "character" the same person, as was the case with Dr. Lloyd.

I first came into contact with Dr. Lloyd on the day of my birth.

"Brack" Lloyd grew up in Orange County and went North--Philadelphia, I think--to medical school. He came back home to practice medicine among the rural people of Orange, Chatham, Alamance, and Durham counties and the mill-town of Carrboro. He was such a good doctor, though, it was not unusual for the professional people at the University in Chapel Hill to call for his services.

While in the North he met and married a young nurse. She must have helped him some with his patients, but I never heard of anyone who knew much about her. Although they must have loved each other and been happy, the only time I heard of his mentioning her was the time he said, "My wife has had so many operations they don't sew her up any more. They put in a zipper so that now the surgeons just unzip her to explore or remove her parts."

I first came into contact with Dr. Lloyd on the day of my birth. Dr. Hemphill was Mother's doctor, but the delivery proved to be very long and complicated. Finally, he frankly admitted he had done everything he knew to do, but I still was not born. Reluctantly he sent for Dr. Lloyd. According to Dr. Abernethy, the other Chapel Hill doctor, and Uncle Cary, it was Dr. Lloyd's exceptional skills that brought me safely into the world. While Mother and I were battered and bruised, we both

survived, thanks to him.

This was only one example of his superior knowledge and ability as a doctor. Every family had a story of how Dr. Lloyd had snatched someone from the very jaws of death and brought him back to health.

A person was not at all impressed by the appearance of the old doctor. And he did appear to me to have been just as old the first time I remember seeing him as he did the last. He was not a large man, and it seemed to me his clothes were from one to two sizes too large for him. In my mind I can see him without a coat but wearing the vest to his suit. The vest was usually unbuttoned, and his shirt sleeves were rolled up half-way to his elbow. Almost always he wore a black hat with the crown pinched in about three or four places at the top. You never knew when he had a new one for he always bought the same hat and shaped it to his style before wearing it.

Dr. Lloyd lived in what I considered a large house in Carrboro and had an office in his home. But everyone knew that the doctor could be found in the front corner of Eubanks Drug Store on East Franklin Street in Chapel Hill at about the same hour every day. There, a person could tell the doctor about his symptoms and get poked in the stomach, side, or back a few times. The doctor would look at sore throats or swollen glands.

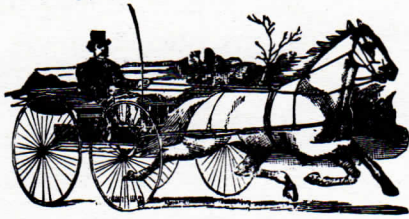
If he thought medication was required, a prescription would be written. Of course the patient was embarrassed to take the prescription to another drug store to be filled, so Eubanks benefitted from this unofficial doctor's office whether or not any rent was paid for the space.

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For a doctor, his attitude towards sanitation was lax, to say the least. Many stories have been told of how people with boils or abscesses would see Dr. Lloyd at the drug store. If the boil or abscess were considered "ripe," the doctor would pull out his pocket knife, and, without benefit of antiseptic or anesthetic, would proceed to lance the swollen, pus-filled area. I have always thought he surely must have poured alcohol at least over the knife, but that was not a part of any story I ever heard.

He was so well known for such acts, Dr. Beard, Dean of the UNC Pharmacy School, told his classes that "Brack" Lloyd could successfully do things no other doctor would dare if he wanted his patients to live.

N. M. HILL,
Livery and Feed Stables.



Special Attention to the Traveling Public.
Teams at Any Hour—Day or Night. Pittsboro, N. C.

Nathaniel Hill's livery was across the creek at the bottom of the hill below St. Bartholomew's church.

(Business card courtesy of Evelyn Powell)

Once Mother had a severe case of bronchitis, and Dr. Lloyd was called to treat her. Instead of writing a prescription, he took a bottle from his bag and counted out a dozen or so pills for her. As he handed the pills to me, somehow some pills from the bottle spilled to the floor. I helped pick them up and started to toss them into the wastebasket.

"Hold on," he said. "They're all right. Let me have them."

He poured the pills back into the bottle. Not only had the floor not been swept that morning, but there were bits of bark and dirt that had fallen off some wood which had been placed in the stove just before the doctor's arrival. I wondered where Mother's pills had been before he gave them to me. She took them, though, and got well whether they were clean or dirty.

Dr. Lloyd was either a terrible businessman, a very trusting person, or very compassionate. Never did he send a bill to a patient. In fact, he did not keep books on monies due him. People paid when his treatment was finished, or whenever they had the money, or, sometimes, not at all. His fees were always a dollar or so less than those of the Chapel Hill doctors. In 1942 his fee for pre-natal care and delivery of Larry Crabtree was \$25.

The doctor had a vocabulary which would have been the envy of any sailor. In groups of men and/or women he spoke his mind freely and often in language husbands would never have used in the presence of their wives. However, in the presence of only one woman, he was the perfect gentleman. Hardly anyone was ever offended by his language. People laughed it off. After all, it was just "Brack" Lloyd!

But the good doctor didn't want anyone doing him any favors. He and Bruce Strowd, owner of Strowd's Garage and the Ford agency in Chapel

Hill, were very good friends. On one occasion the doctor had parked his car near the garage. Since there were few paved roads in the area, the car as usual was covered with layers of dust or mud or maybe both. When Mr. Strowd saw it, he said to one of his employees, "Bring Brack's car in here and clean it up for him."

When Dr. Lloyd returned to his car, either it was not parked where he had left it or, in its state of cleanliness, he didn't recognize it. He couldn't find his car. The words he had for Mr. Strowd were certainly not expressions of thanks, but that was "Brack" Lloyd. No one minded what he said.

The doctor considered himself to be in the home of a friend whenever he made a house call. If the visit happened to be around mealtime, he might pull up a chair and eat with the family. Knowing this, some people prepared extra or better food for the meal he might eat with them. I have heard Uncle Floy laugh about the breakfasts the doctor ate in the Oldham home. Aware of his love for country ham, Aunt Florence always cooked it for him along with scrambled eggs and hot biscuits. Taking a large serving on his plate, Dr. Lloyd would complain about "these damn country folks who are digging their graves with their knives and forks."

Of course, not everyone liked Dr. Lloyd, but it was the personality and habits of the man, not the ability of the doctor, that people objected to. His death was a personal loss to those whom he had doctored through the years. Others said, "Brack Lloyd was quite a character! We're gonna miss him."

The "hero" and the "character" were gone, and no one has taken his place!

[Vivian Cole grew up in Chatham County. Cole Park Plaza is built on the site of her family home. Kay Cameron has been encouraging Ms. Cole to give her reminiscences of Chatham County a broader audience, and the Chatham County Historical Association is grateful to Ms. Cameron for her efforts and to Ms. Cole for permission to publish her work.]

The Chatham Historical Journal is an occasional publication of the Chatham County Historical Association. Its purpose is to disseminate items of historical interest about Chatham County. To be considered for publication, articles or photographs should be previously unpublished, of reasonable length, and include detailed sources of information.

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