

Names proposed for a newsletter/journal of the Chatham County Historical Association include "The Chatham County Gleaner" (suggesting gather, collect slowly, discover; neglected or overlooked items) and "Chatham Perspective" (suggesting distance, point of view). Other proposals are welcome.

CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION WILL MEET SEPTEMBER 18 AT MANN'S CHAPEL

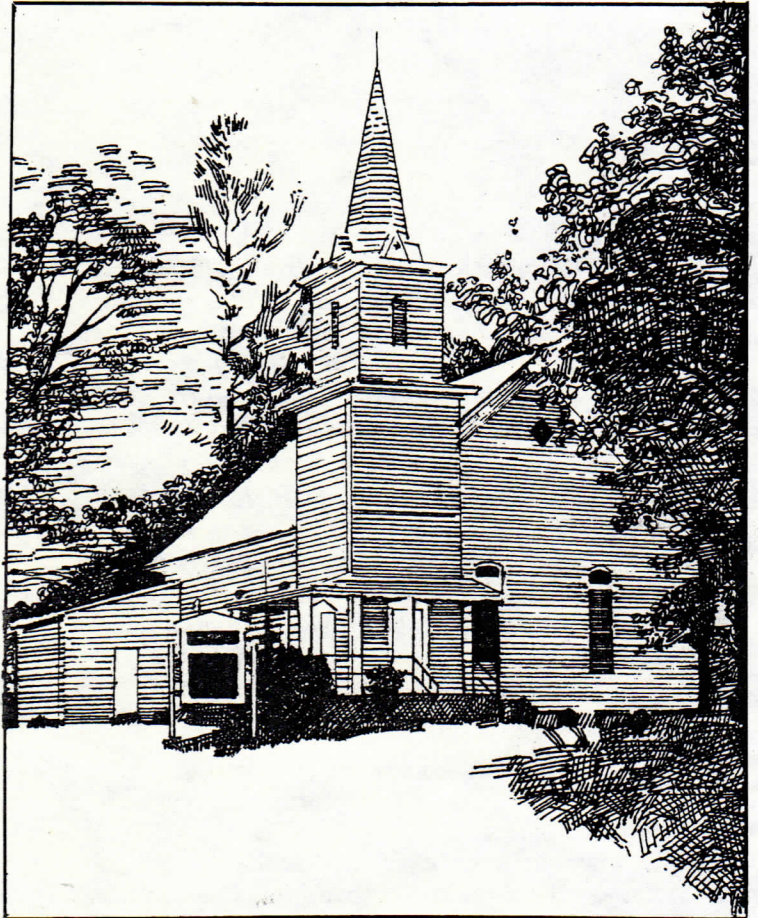
The next meeting of the Chatham County Historical Association will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 18, 1988, at Mann's Chapel Church (1.5 miles west of US 15-501 on SR 1532).

The Mann in Mann's Chapel is John Henry Mann. Henry was a nephew of Thomas Mann, Jr., the well-known pioneer circuit-riding preacher. Rev. Mann was intensely dedicated and zealous. When he wasn't out on the circuit (which was most of the time), he rested up at the home of his brother, William, at his farm on the Haw River. We may assume then that in addition to the inspiration and encouragement Henry received from his father, William, he was also influenced by his Uncle Thomas, and his Uncle Roland Mann, who had an active hand in the early days of Mount Pleasant Methodist Church.

We know from Rev. Mann's journal that Henry was active at Mt. Pleasant when he was a young man, and from Haw River Methodist Conference records we know that he was a church leader at Shady Grove in 1842 and also in 1850. Shady Grove was near what is now Cole Park Plaza. Some time between 1850 and 1854, Henry withdrew from Shady Grove and set up church in a school house that was located on the farm. In 1854 both Shady Grove and Mann's School House were in full connection with the conference. In 1858 there were probably about 15 members. We arrive at this number by inference from the fact that Mt. Pleasant had a known membership of around 150 members and was assessed \$175 by the conference. At the same time, the Mann's School House assessment was \$17.

The Civil War put a strain on the Mann's School House congregation, but they survived, and after the war, the church continued to grow.

In 1878 Henry Mann deeded his farm to his daughter, Mary Emily Mann Strowd. In 1880 Mary Emily Strowd deeded approximately one acre of land that she specified "for and in consideration of having a church." We may assume then that the gift was for



construction of the church, which is still standing. It also seems possible that the expression "in consideration of having a church" may imply that the old schoolhouse had fallen in or seemed about to do so.

In 1935 Mary Emily Strowd's grandson, Clifton, and his wife Marie, increased the size of the church lot by deeding additional land.

In the period between World War I and World War II, Mann's Chapel reached the upper level of its influence, in which it was not only the center for worship, but also was in a sense the community center. A very high level of comradery existed. People knew that they had good neighbors, and likewise the privilege of being a good neighbor. At this time Mann's Chapel was almost entirely an agricultural community. Cornshuckings, wheat threshings, etc., in which there was

community participation, were taken for granted. After World War II there was a drift to other types of employment, and Mann's Chapel, the community center, became less and less important. Eventually, it also became less and less important as the worship center, and that led to such low membership that in 1984 the Methodist Conference discontinued assigning a minister to Mann's Chapel.

In May 1985, Mann's Chapel Church Preservation Society was formed, with the purpose of maintaining the building and to use it, once again, for a center of activity for the community. ■

J. Lamont Norwood

(Co-author of *Chatham County, 1771 - 1971*, Wade Hadley was recently named Historian Laureate of the Chatham County Historical Association.)

NOTES CONCERNING DR. JAMES McCARROLL AND HIS DESCENDENTS

Wade Hadley

Approximately four miles east of Siler City and less than 100 feet north of U.S. Highway No. 64 lies an interesting and neglected tombstone. It is approximately six feet long, four feet wide, and one foot thick. It consists of soft soapstone-like material. It was originally placed horizontally over the grave, resting on a low foundation of brick. The inscription is as follows:

Here lies interred the body of Doctor James McCarroll. He was born in the County of Armaga in the Kingdom of Ireland in the year 1734 and departed this life on the 93rd day of the year 1777, the 43rd year of his age. Remarkable for his knowledge in the arts and science. This monument erected by Elizabeth McCarroll the 11th day of 1778.

This monument may be the earliest within Chatham County on which as much information concerning the deceased is recorded.

When I first visited it, over fifty years ago, it was surrounded by land under cultivation. The area is now grown up with trees and bushes. The tombstone is now tilted from its base and mainly covered by debris. It is located on land owned for many years by Mr. H. H. Whitehead.

For those wishing to visit the site, a reference point is Wilson's 64 Auto Sales, located on the south side of Highway 64 about four miles east of Siler City. From there, go east along the highway for about 400 feet and then north into the woods. The tombstone lies within about 100 feet of the highway.

I became interested in Dr. McCarroll after seeing his tombstone and reading the inscription. Since then I have collected information concerning him over a period of four years (1773-1777) while he was living in Chatham County.

In February of 1773 Dr. McCarroll bought 500 acres of land in Chatham County located on the east side of Rocky River and on both sides of Varnell (or Vernon's) Creek. The location is about four miles due east of Siler City and highway 64 runs through it.

The County Court Minutes for the May term of 1774 show that Dr. McCarroll was then living on the above land, that he had a store there, and that he had been granted license to operate an Ordinary.

James McCarroll was made a magistrate in Chatham County by the Council at New Bern on 12 of August 1774 (*Colonial Records*, Vol. 9, p. 1027).

His home and store were on a public road running from Wilmington and Cross Creek (later Fayetteville) north to Hillsborough and settlements west of that place. It is sometimes referred to as the "Cape Fear Road" in early records. This road is on the Collet 1770 map.

Dr. McCarroll died at age 43 leaving one son, named Thomas, who was around two years old at the time. This Thomas McCarroll grew up in Chatham County, first living at the place on Varnell Creek inherited from his father and later in the Haywood area. He married Sarah Ramsey, daughter of John and Sarah Birdsong Ramsey. Their children were James A., Elizabeth, and John R. McCarroll. Elizabeth married Cornelius Tyson. James A. left North Carolina and was living in Madison County, Tennessee, in 1822.

Between 1780 and 1784 Elizabeth McCarroll, widow of James McCarroll, was given three grants of land by the State of North Carolina, one of which was in behalf of her son Thomas McCarroll. This suggests recognition of some service rendered to the state by Dr. McCarroll. About six years after the death of McCarroll, his widow married Patrick St. Lawrence.

Records of his son and of his three grandchildren were found up to 1827. After that date nothing on this McCarroll family living within Chatham County was found.

A rural post office, opened in western Chatham County in 1830 and named Saint Lawrence, was on the land where Dr. McCarroll lived and was buried. ■

The to-be-named newsletter is an occasional publication of the Chatham County Historical Association. Its purpose is to disseminate items of historical interest about Chatham County. Material, which should be previously unpublished, may include photographs, private papers, church or organization records, monographs, or letters. Items should be of reasonable length and should include source(s) of research material.

Chatham County Historical Association Officers, 1988
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The James I. Waddell house, later the N. M. Hill house, was located at what is now 404 West Salisbury Street, Pittsboro. The photograph is undated. (Courtesy of Mrs. W. Lea Powell III)

SOME COMMENTS ON THE DIARIES OF BISHOP ASBURY AND CHATHAM COUNTY

J. Lamont Norwood

I think that the observations of Bishop Francis Asbury's trips through Chatham County in 1780 and 1790 are of interest not only to historians but also to most all Chathamites. Rev. Asbury, the founder of the Methodist Church in the South, had a rather poor opinion of Chatham County, but admittedly those were rugged times. The following excerpts from his diary express his views on education, roads, housing, dress, etc.

Saturday, 22. We set out for Crump's, over rocks, hills, creeks, and pathless woods and low land; and myself in the carriage. The young man with me was heartless before we had travelled a mile; but when he saw how I could bush it, and sometimes force my way through a thicket, and make the young saplings bend before me, and twist and turn out of the way, or path, for there was no proper road, he took courage; with great difficulty we came in about two o'clock, after travelling eight or nine hours; the people looking almost as wild as the deer in the woods. . . .

Sunday, 23. We passed Haw River, wide, but shallow, bad going down and coming up; they took the carriage over by hand; then we had to travel the pathless woods and rocks again. . . . The time to favour this people, I fear is past; and they seem hardened, and no preaching affects them, at least not mine; they are exceedingly ignorant withal. There are a few serious people, but much distressed one way or another. . . .

Monday, 24. . . . I crossed Rocky River about ten miles from Haw River; it was rocky, sure enough; it is in Chatham county, North Carolina. I can see little else but cabins in these parts, built with poles: and such a coun-

try as no man ever saw for a carriage. I narrowly escaped being overset: . . . I crossed Deep River in a flat boat, and the poor ferryman sinner swore 'because I had not a silver shilling to give him. I rode to friend Hinton's, borrowed a saddle, and rode near six miles to get three, as we were lost: when we came to the place there were about sixty people. I was at some loss whom to preach to, saints or sinners: but found sinners as unfeeling as those who are out of the reach of mercy. . . . I was glad to get away, for some were drunk, and had their guns in meeting. . . .*

I suppose that when Bishop Asbury wrote that he didn't know if he should preach to saints or sinners, he meant that if the congregation had been predominantly "saints," he would have urged them to keep up the good work, and if they had been mostly "sinners," he would have urged them to "get saved." Apparently he found Chathamites to be about 50/50 and he was at a loss as to which way to go. Wonder what his decision would be if he could return today?

Bishop Asbury noticed that some brought their guns to church, and he did not like that. However, at that time wild game no doubt made up an important part of the daily diet. Those pioneers would have considered it to be more than carelessness, probably downright sinful, if on the way to church a wild turkey passed and they didn't have a gun.

Notice that the last person Bishop Asbury saw in Chatham in 1780 swore at him. According to Mark (6:8), Christ told his disciples not to take any money with them. I guess Rev. Asbury took that to mean him also.

**The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, Elmer T. Clark, Editor-in-Chief (Abingdon Press, Nashville. 1958)

On January 21, 1790, Asbury spent the night at the home of the widow Sarah Snipes. She is my great, great, great, great-grandmother. In Chatham County there are dozens, make that hundreds, of direct descendants of Sarah and William Snipes, who came here about 1780. Direct descendants include Ed Holmes, Pittsboro political leader, and most or all of the Snipes, Strowd, Norwood, Hackney, Crabtree, and Andrews families in Baldwin Township. ■

LACY JOHNSON AND JOHN LONDON REMINISCE ABOUT FORMER TIMES

(Long-time chief sheriff's deputy Lacy Johnson (J), 1900 - 1984, was interviewed by John London (L), 1908 - 1988) on January 5, 1982. The interview was taped by Jerry Markatos (M) and the tape is on file in the Pittsboro Memorial Library. The following excerpt was transcribed in August 1988 by Jane Pyle. Persons interested in making taped interviews of Chatham County people may write or call the secretary of the Association to request tapes and use of the tape recorder.)

L: But you know, Lacy, the interesting thing to me about that was the same time they had that planing mill over there, the oil mill was running over across the railroad. And the oil mill had that little two-wheeled cart with an ox pulling it, bringing shavings from the planing . . . [end of tape side 1]

L: Mighty cheap that way. You see, they were getting rid of the shavings. They didn't want the shavings.

J: They brought firewood over there for years and years. I hauled it over there when I was just a little boy, wasn't big enough to unload it hardly.

L: Just a couple of hundred yards apart, the two mills were.

M: When was it that the second mill started up?

L: The oil mill? I don't know. 1910 or somewhere along there, I would guess. I don't know.

J: They built it before 1910.

M: And the first mill was a water mill?

J: No, it was power . . .

L: What I say, oil mill, I meant pressing cottonseed to get cottonseed oil.

M: O.K., I understand now.

L: You see, at that time, Jerry, there was a whole lot of cotton raised in Chatham County. In fact, there were at that time, when I was a boy, there were three cotton gins in Pittsboro.

J: I reckon there was 150 cotton gins over the county.

L: Every neighborhood had one.

J: And they had an oil mill there and made cottonseed meal, and everything. And they fired for years with hard, people hauled wood for the boiler. Old man Nooe got started up with the planing and they found out they could boil with the shavings.

L: I'll tell you one thing, around that oil mill it smelled good, didn't it? You could go around

there and smell that oil cooking and it would make you just as hungry as the dickens.

J: Yeah, it was about like going down the street and smell a good bakery. . .

L: . . .or barbeque cooking.

J: Oh, they ground there and shipped carloads of linseed oil, and everything. And they didn't have to ship in many cotton seed. People would haul 'em on a wagon from Siler City down here.

L: But you know, Lacy, people back in those days, everyone had a cow, you know, a family cow. Get that cottonseed meal and cottonseed hulls, mix 'em together for cow feed. Good feed, too.

J: Yeah, they'd buy an old shay [?] to haul shavings with, and they'd get so dang fat they couldn't even shave [?].

M: I've tried to find cottonseed meal around here and there's not many places that will keep it, it's so attractive to anything that walks, to any little creatures, it's hard to keep the mice and rats out of it.

J: Yeah, and then another thing, all these big feed companies buy it all up. Put it in chicken feed.

L: I don't know when I've ever seen any cottonseed meal. Lacy, folks used to buy that cottonseed meal and take acid and mix it together for the fertilizer.

J: Well, that was a corn fertilizer. . . I remember they built a big warehouse, and old man Doc Ellis [?] lived over yonder where Lee Harmon lived. He was an old man but a sharp old duck. And he went out there one day and they wanted to sell him some meal. They had it just stacked up there where all the terminals coming out, going to [. . .?]. Well, he said, give him the right kind of price, he'd buy a few hundred bags. Well, Ellis bought three or four hundred bags. He said, now, with the understanding, I believe he had to March or April. They said all right, and they took his money. And that was in the fall of the year, and then along in February or March, they paid him about a dollar or so a bag on it, on the meal, to make fertilizer, to ship and all. That's the way he traded around.

L: He was a right sharp old fellow. You know, when he moved from over yonder at the Harmon place, he moved down to where Mrs. Riddle lives now. You remember that? And he had Mr. Ben Hackney make him a coffin, and he kept the coffin under his bed. As kids, we used to go down there and get the old man to show us his coffin.

J: And later, he kept it down at old [Stan?] Johnson's store building and put it upstairs. And the building caught a fire and burned it up. He had it made out of cedar lumber.

L: I said Ben Hackney. Wasn't Ben. What was it?

J: Tom.

L: Tom Hackney.

J: Old man Tom. He worked for Nooe for years. He was a good carpenter. ■