

The Chatham Historical Journal

Volume 1, Number 2

Chatham County, North Carolina

December 1988

MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE OF CHARTER MEMBERS OF CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the October 21, 1958, meeting of the Chatham County Historical Society contain the note that "Printed membership cards bearing the coat of arms of Sir William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, prepared by D. L. Corbitt of State Archives Dept. in Raleigh were presented to Members." The certificate reproduced below (original 8½" x 11") reads: This is to certify that Mrs. Henry Blair is a charter member of the Chatham County Historical Association, which was organized May 20, 1958. The objectives of this association are to stimulate interest in the history of Chatham County and the people who have striven for the educational, economic, and social progress of the county.



This the 21st day of October 1958.

s/Helen B. Siler
Secretary

s/Christine P. Earle
President

PATRICK ST. LAWRENCE IN CHATHAM COUNTY, 1783 - 1797

Wade Hadley

Patrick Saint Lawrence is remembered mainly for the house which he built at Pittsboro soon after that town was founded in 1787 and which survives there today. The following notes give some indication of the man himself, his character, and his status within the community.

The first record of St. Lawrence that I have found is in August of 1783 when he was appointed guardian to Thomas McCarroll, son of the deceased Dr. James McCarroll. Young Thomas was about eight years old at the time. Originally his mother, Elizabeth McCarroll, had been administrator of her husband's estate but after her marriage to St. Lawrence he appears to have taken over the management of her affairs.

In November of 1784 he was given leave to operate a tavern at his new home. The location was not given. It probably was on the Dr. James McCarroll estate. Dr. McCarroll had operated a store and tavern there from 1774 to 1777. This place was known later as Saint Lawrence, a rural post office of that name having been opened there in 1830.

By 1786 St. Lawrence was turning his interest to the area of Chatham Courthouse, twelve miles away to the east, where the new town of Pittsborough was to be founded. He was named to a commission to obtain land for this town and soon bought several lots there. When the Pittsborough Academy was chartered in 1787 St. Lawrence was named a trustee.

He then proceeded with the building of the substantial house which brought him fame and bankruptcy. It was originally located on the northwest corner opposite the present-day courthouse. It was operated as a tavern as well as being his home. This structure became known as the "Yellow House" from its original coat of paint. It has been moved to 205 South Street in Pittsboro and is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Brower. This

Chatham County Historical Association Pittsboro, North Carolina



Membership Certificate

This is to certify that Lemuel R Johnson is a charter member of the Chatham County Historical Association, which was organized May 20, 1958. The objectives of this association are to stimulate interest in the history of Chatham County and the people who have striven for the educational, economic, and social progress of the county.

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Helen B. Siler
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President

is one of the oldest, if not the oldest dated home now standing in Chatham County.

Patrick Saint Lawrence was a representative of the Pittsborough Lodge of Masons to the annual meeting in Fayetteville during December of 1790.

The Court Minutes of November 1796 record that P. St. Lawrence as administrator and guardian of the James McCarroll Estate turned over the assets in full to Thomas McCarroll, son of the late Dr. James McCarroll. The minutes of the same term also record that St. Lawrence made a gift of a Negro boy to his stepson, Thomas McCarroll.

In October of 1797 St. Lawrence sold his town lot No. 69 in Pittsborough. By this time he was being hard pressed by his creditors and was on the brink of bankruptcy. This was his last act within the county of which I have found record.

In August of 1798 a sale of the Patrick St. Lawrence assets was held by the Sheriff of Chatham County. At that time he was referred to as "late of Pittsborough," indicating he had departed the town and probably the state before that date.

Patrick's wife, Elizabeth, was granted a separation from him in the year 1800 by an Act of the North Carolina Assembly.

The County tax list of 1815 shows Elizabeth St. Lawrence as then living in Chatham and owning one slave and an improved town lot in Pittsborough.

The record of Patrick St. Lawrence prior to his coming to Chatham County is unknown to me. For a long time I could find nothing of his record after he departed. Then the final chapter was encountered a few years ago in an article about the claims of British merchants after the Revolutionary War. A paragraph written about 1804 by Colonel John Hogan of Orange County reveals that Patrick Saint Lawrence had wasted his wife's estate, ran away, and that he had died on his passage to the West Indies (*North Carolina Geological Journal*, Vol. XI, No. 4, p. 245).

CHATHAM'S FIRST COUNTY SEAT

The place where the government of Chatham County was first installed and functioned was at the house of Captain Stephen Poe. The first Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions of the new county met there on May 6, 1771, at which time William Hooper qualified as Court Clerk of Chatham and Elisha Cain became the first Sheriff of the county.

It is not known how many sessions of the court were held at the house of Captain Poe. The seat of county government was soon moved to a courthouse built at a site about half a mile south of the present courthouse at Pittsboro.

Therefore, the home of Captain Poe was important in our county history. If its approximate location could be determined, the site would merit a historical marker. There are indications that the home of Captain Poe was on the west side of the Haw River at or near Redfield Ford. Several old maps show this ford to have been where the main road from Pittsboro to Raleigh then crossed the Haw River.

Stephen Poe died in 1773. His wife was named Hannah. Should the approximate location of his house be determined and designated by a marker, an important contribution would have been made to Chatham County's early history.

Wade Hadley

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. 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
Pres., Gene Brooks, Box 83, Pittsboro 542-2882
VP, Marti Dreyer, Box 866, Pittsboro 542-4124
Treas., John Cooper, Box 1096, Pittsboro 542-3719
Sec., Jane Pyle, Box 913, Pittsboro 542-3603

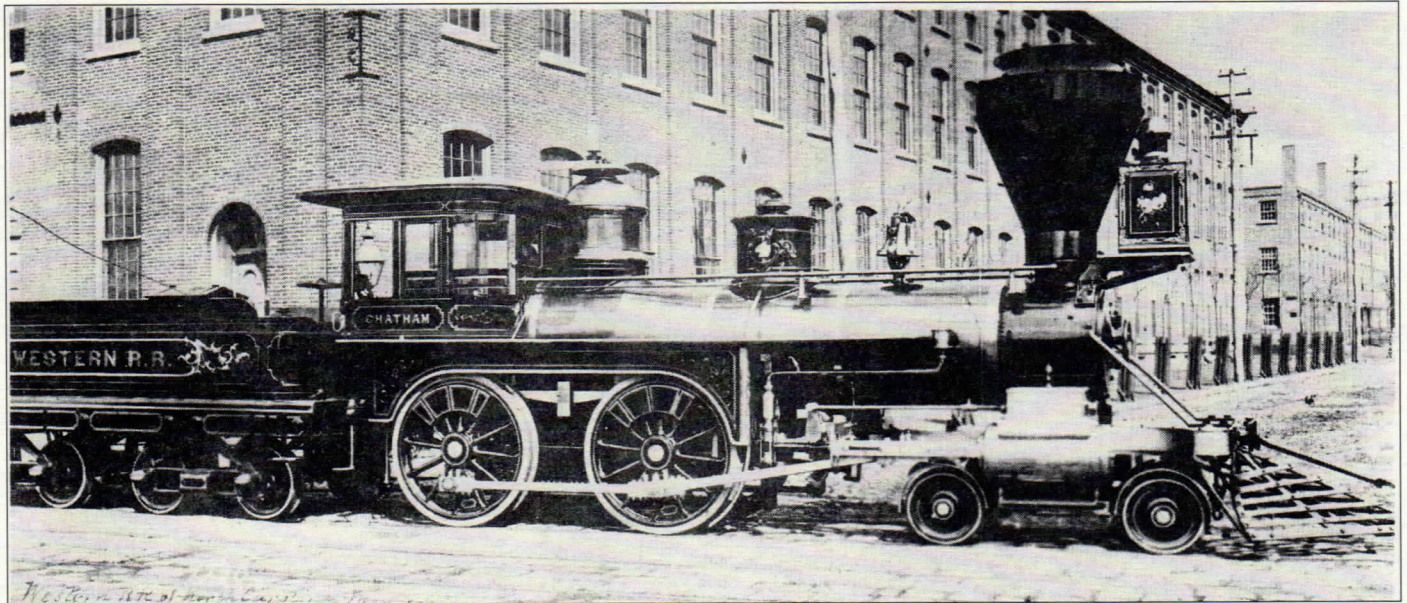


Daughters of William Henry Burns, Sr., shown here (position of individuals is not known) were Martha "Patsey" (b. 1816), Hannah (b. 1820), Deliah (b. 1825), Esperan (b. 1831), Sheba (b. 1833), Happy (b. 1836), and Mary Ann (b. 1840).

Burns (1793 - 1862) was the son of John Burns, Jr. and Mary Brantley. About 1815 he married Delila (1799 - 1876). The family lived in the May's Chapel area.

The photograph was taken probably about 1880 by J. W. Clary & Co., photographers, of Selma, Alabama.

(Photograph and information contributed by James Vann Comer)



The locomotive Chatham was made in March of 1866 at the Baldwin Locomotive Works. It was then delivered to the Western Railroad, which extended from Fayetteville to Egypt (now Cumnock), on the south side of Deep River. This was the first railroad to enter Chatham County, which it reached around 1862. At that time Chatham County extended approximately three and a half miles south of Deep River in this area. In 1908 the area of Chatham County south of Deep River was taken to form the northern portion of Lee County.

The locomotive Chatham continued in service until 1887. Company records show that in March of 1880 the Chatham was undergoing a thorough overhaul and repairs. It continued in regular service until 1885 and had been designated as number 4 on the locomotive roster. In 1886 and 1887 it was limited to irregular use in shifting service and was in need of repairs. At that time it was the oldest locomotive on the roster. The Chatham was an American type 4-4-0 locomotive with 24-inch stroke and 13-inch-bore cylinders.

The Chatham appears to have been the second locomotive owned by the Western Railroad. Its first locomotive was named the George P. McNeill, bought after construction of the railroad had started from Fayetteville around 1858. Other locomotives of the Western Railroad were the Clarendon, Cumberland, and Sapona.

(Photograph and information contributed by Wade Hadley)

PRIVATE OR FAMILY CEMETERIES IN CHATHAM COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

These cemeteries belong to the period when people in rural locations were frequently buried at their home place. Neighboring families sometimes shared a common burying ground. Such burial sites are common in Chatham County. An estimate of one hundred is considered conservative. Many of them have long been abandoned and include no recent burials. Some are at locations which are now obscure and difficult of access. These cemeteries are an integral part of the county's historical record.

The subject cemeteries range in size from a single grave to some with forty or more burials. The latter may include several branches of a family along with others related by marriage. A good example of this type is the McMath cemetery in the Hickory Mountain area.

A description of the Dr. James McCarroll grave was published in Vol. 1, No. 1, of the *Chatham Historical Journal*. Other samples follow.

DARK – private cemetery. There are two stone markers at this site with inscriptions as follows:

Susannah, wife of Jim Dark/b. 1760 - d. 1847

Aaron Dark/b. Feb. 8, 1791 - d. July 12, 1825

Susannah may have been a daughter of John Headen, first of that family to come to Chatham County. Her husband may have been William Dark (1750 - 1851).

MARSH – private cemetery. Two stone markers with inscriptions as follows:

William Marsh, Sr./Died November 2, 1854./Age 103 years, 9 months, and 7 days./“He served his country as a soldier in the Revolutionary War.”

Sarah, Wife of William Marsh, Sr./Died August 2, 1832./Age 68 years, 4 months, and 24 days./“She was a humble Christian, a devoted wife, and a prudent mother.”

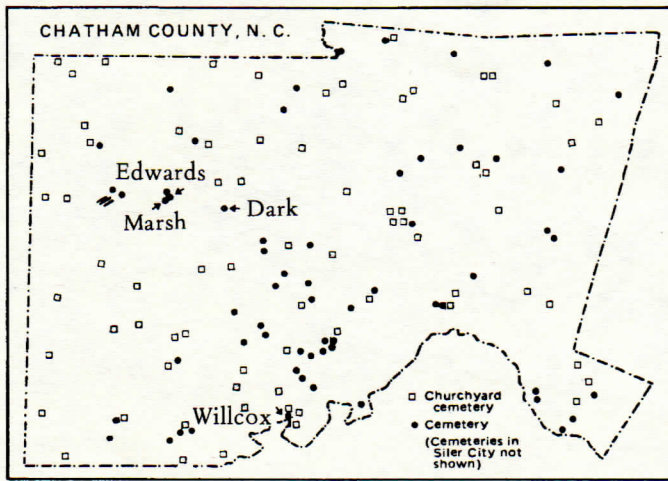
EDWARDS – cemetery. The following inscriptions could be read on gravestones:

Nancy Edwards: d. 12 Dec., 1803

John B. Edwards: d. 20 Feb., 1800

Wm. T. Edwards: d. 9 Oct., 1816

Nine gravestones were counted at this site. Sunken areas indicate other unmarked graves. This is the place where Dr. James McCarroll lived from 1773 to



This very preliminary distribution map was compiled from data on the N.C. Dept. of Transportation highway map of Chatham County, 1978, and from a "Historical Research Map," Stout Map Co., Greensboro, n.d. Locations shown may not be accurate and the compilation is incomplete.

1777. It was later known as the Saint Lawrence community and post office. William Edwards and Thomas Rives bought the land here in 1802 from Thomas McCarroll, son of Dr. James McCarroll.

WILLCOX – Also Farris and Montgomery cemetery. Four stone markers are found, with inscriptions as follows:

John Willcox: 1728 - 1793/"Placed by Army & Navy Chapter of the D.A.R."

Mary A. Willcox - Wife of George Willcox of Moore County, N.C./Born 28 October, 1790 - Died 30 July, 1829.

John Montgomery/Died 14 February, 1818 in 86th year of his age.

Mrs. Mary Farris/Who departed this life 6 February, 1815.

The above Mary A. Willcox may have been Mary Ann Tysor before she married George Willcox (1784 - 1857). Wife of the above John Montgomery may have been originally a Miss Mary Willcox and may be buried here. There are eight to ten additional grave-stones without inscription.

The home of John Willcox may have been located nearby. A good outcrop of Cumnick coal seam is exposed immediately southeast of the overpass and railroad. This is probably the place where John Willcox opened a coal mine around 1774.

Wade Hadley

GROWING UP IN CHATHAM COUNTY

[The following narrative was taken from a taped interview of Ruth Waddell Horton on August 9, 1981. The tape is on file in the Pittsboro Memorial Library. 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.
Jane Pyle]

We came to Chatham County when I was one year old, from Randolph County, in 1923. I was the youngest of three girls. My dad was in the sawmill business and so every time the man moved the loca-

tion, the family would move also. [We lived] on Hanks Chapel road for maybe 20-odd years.

What I first remember, I *think* I can remember – they say I can't – we were carrying our clothes down a hill to a spring, washing in two tin tubs on a washboard, boiling in a big, black pot. Moleta was probably taking care of me and my older sister Mildred was helping Momma wash. One day I decided I wanted to eat some lye, and it ate my lips but they knew what to do. My momma didn't take me to a doctor; I got all right.

Grade school was this little school, Hanks Chapel, and it went to the seventh grade. Probably 20 - 25 students; just one large room but sort of sections. I loved school but I was a bad walker. We walked to school, maybe 2½ or 3 miles; then when we got into high school, we still had to walk – three miles there and three miles back. One year I didn't pass my grade because I stopped school. My mom said, "You just stay home." And then maybe it was during that summer she went to see the superintendent to talk about a bus down our way. She said she just laid it on the line, that she had a couple of girls and that there were lots of other children down our way that had to walk also. That would have been in the thirties.

We played ball. That was the major thing we did. We played in the woods a lot. We'd go out and climb trees and skin the cat, what we called it. We skinned cats, and we skinned knees and elbows. Didn't even put a Bandaid on it. If we got a deep cut – we went barefooted, you know, and we would step on glass – and we'd go bleeding foot to the house and Momma would say, "Wait a minute," and she'd go up the chimney pipe and get a whole lot of soot – pffft! that was the end of it. Stop the bleeding and actually cure it. Just soot.

We had cows and I had to do the milking. Maybe I was 12, 13, on up. [I didn't like it, but] they would have me to milk because I milked two hands. I was a two-handed milker and Moleta was a one-handed milker. My mom said I got more milk than anybody else. She would tell me, "Make sure you strip her good." Now this is how you get cream. Just pull those tits until you can't get anything. The cow will hold the milk up, and if you wait a while the milk would come down. And I waited. Evidently I had the touch, 'cause I had to milk. I remember I was so glad when the cow would go dry. [Then] my mom would have the milkman set us a quart on the porch. I think we got about two quarts a week. Wasn't that much money. My mom mostly churned but sometimes we would help churn. We used to churn with a dasher, and then we got enough money to buy us an electric churn. [My auntie kept her milk in crocks, but we kept ours in fruit jars.] For a time there I can remember when we only had this thing you called a coolerator. The ice man would come by the house. We'd buy fifty pounds of ice and it would last three or four days. We put it upstairs, close the door, and it would cool off things in the bottom. And when that gave out, we had to put the milk in the spring.