

The Chatham Historical Journal

Volume 4, Number 3

Chatham County, North Carolina

July 1991

CHARLES MANLY LAW OFFICE Pittsboro, North Carolina

Jane Pyle

In 1842, Charles Manly purchased for \$699 the northwest corner of "the lot occupied by Joseph Ramsey as a Tavern."¹ This lot, No. 30 on the Pittsboro town plat, the present site of Central Carolina Bank at the intersection of Hillsboro and Salisbury streets, was 45' by 55'. On the north half of the lot was a storehouse formerly owned by the firm of Thompson & Hanks; on the south half Manly had local craftsman George Ellington build the one-room structure that tradition holds is the same building that is now restored and located north of the Masonic Lodge.²

Whether or not the building was his law office — when he purchased the property, Manly had been practicing law for more than twenty years and was also practicing law and living in Raleigh — it became a meeting place for area lawyers. Manly called it "Fort Snug," and it was reported later that "the wit and humor of these lawyers made 'Fort Snug' very popular, but none was more entertaining than Manly himself."³



Taken before renovation was completed, this photograph shows the west side of the Manly Law Office before steps or shutters were in place.

(Photo from "Since Then" by John Haughton London)

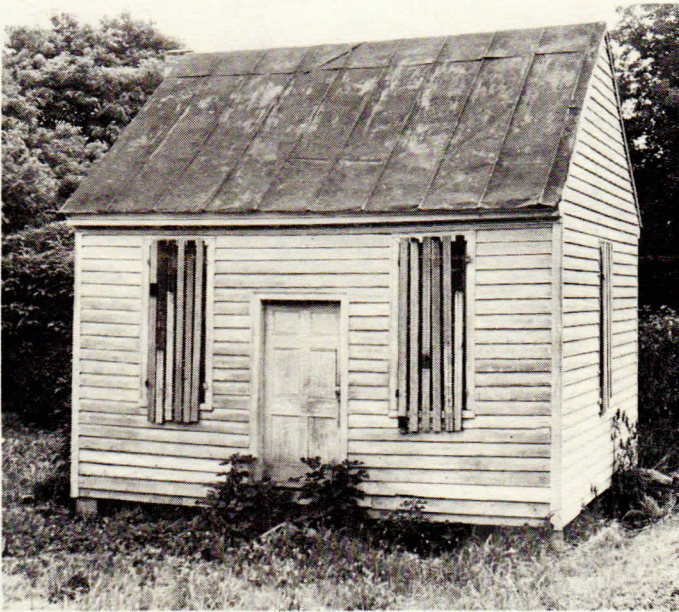
In 1857 Manly sold the two halves of his lot separately, for \$625 and \$525. The following year a court suit resulted in the lot with "the office formerly occupied by Governor Manly" being put up for auction, and its sale for \$10 was registered in 1860.

While there is no doubt about the original location of the office, there is considerable speculation about what happened to the office itself. An undated early photograph shows a building very similar to Manly's on the west side of Hillsboro Street,⁴ but in 1933 Mrs. Anderson³ wrote that the office had been "removed to Salisbury Street, and during the 60's it was used for making bowie knives for the war." In 1966 it was located near the rear of a lot on West Salisbury Street where the Sahara Restaurant now stands.⁵

Acquisition and Restoration by the Chatham County Historical Association

The earliest reference to the Manly Law Office in meetings of the Chatham County Historical Association appears in the minutes for 17 May 1966. At that time, A. L. Honeycutt of the Historical Sites Division of the State Department of Archives and History talked with the Association, saying ". . . I was most





Manly Law Office prior to restoration in 1969.
(Photo from N.C. Dept. of Archives & History)

impressed with Governor Charles Manly law office. . . We have very few public buildings. This building should be restored and furnished in about the 1842 period. . . .” During the business meeting, Mrs. Harry Horton reported that the executive committee had voted to accept the building that had been donated by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Blair, with the understanding that it would be moved to a new location, and had authorized the treasurer to spend up to \$200 to move it. The treasurer reported that there was \$125 in a restoration fund, and the president appointed a restoration committee: John London, Mrs. Henry Blair, Noah Wilson, Mrs. Edward Holmes, Mrs. W. B. Carroll, and Mrs. Jessie Ruth Seagroves.

By November 1966, the restoration fund had grown to \$516 but nothing had been done about moving the building, the only free location at that time being one near the jail. John London reported that the Manly graveyard had been found on the old Milliken place and that some clearing had been done. In May 1967 the treasurer reported a balance of \$850.62, of which \$826 was for restoration. He said \$60 had come from the Durham-Orange Colonial Dames and \$220 from descendants of Gov. Manly.

Finally, at the September 1969 meeting, Mrs. Laura Blair reported that the office had been moved, painted, essential repairs made, and the roof painted. The treasurer reported expenses of \$850 for the brick chimney, from the \$994 in the fund. He said that the Department of Archives and History had estimated a cost of \$5000 for restoration, but the committee had estimated about \$2000 and he thought another \$500 would suffice. He reported that the shutters and hinges were from the 1840 period, that an original style flooring had been put down, and that the painter had donated the paint job. He also reported that

the committee expected to use asphalt shingles made to look like wood shingles.

Already by this time, county bicentennial plans had begun to dominate Association business, but at the March 1970 meeting when the treasurer reported a balance of \$541.26, of which \$207.14 was for the Manly office restoration, a motion carried to use undesignated funds for the restoration project.

Furnishings in the restored building are on loan from Harvey Gunter, a native of Pittsboro now residing in Durham. The furniture is of Manly’s period and many pieces were made in Chatham County. One of the fine articles is a schoolmaster’s desk made by Green Brewer, master cabinetmaker. Old books were the gift of Mrs. Fred Jerome.

Since its completion in 1971, the Manly Law Office has been opened for special occasions and on request. Visitors are charmed with its dollhouse-like intimacy, period furnishings, and historical associations.

NOTES

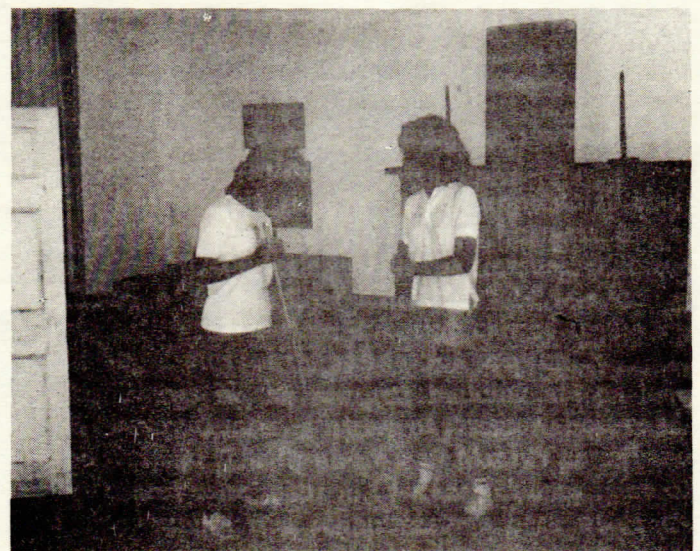
¹Deeds recorded in the Register of Deeds office, Chatham County Courthouse, Pittsboro, N.C., relevant to the Manly Law Office are found in books AF, p. 259; AK, p. 363; AK, p. 236; and AL, p. 214.

²Osborn, Rachel, and Selden-Sturgill, Ruth, *The Architectural Heritage of Chatham County, North Carolina*, 1991, pp. 99-100. Both this reference and Anderson, below, draw on an article, “Chatham Reminiscences,” by J. J. Jackson in the *Chatham Record*, 13 March 1897.

³Anderson, Lucy London, “Old Pittsborough People and Homes,” *News & Observer*, Raleigh, N.C., 6 August 1933.

⁴Hadley, Wade H., Horton, Doris G., and Strowd, Nell C., *Chatham County, 1771 - 1971*, (Durham, N.C.: Moore Publishing Co., 1976), photo insert following page 168.

⁵Much confusion exists over when and where the office was or was not moved. Much of this confusion arises from reports that the office had been on the old or new location of the *Chatham Record*. According to an article of 20 September 1962 by William B. Morgan, then editor of the newspaper, the *Chatham Record* was begun in 1878 by Henry Armand London (son of Henry Adolphus London, who bought the former



Angela Brooks and Caroline Henley prepare for visitors.
(Photo courtesy of Becky Henley)



Jack, Jean, and Mary Justice prepare to greet visitors during the bi-centennial celebration. (Photo courtesy of Laura Blair)

Manly property). In 1918 the *Chatham Record* was on the second floor of the old W. L. London (another son of Henry Adolphus London) & Son store, which in 1962 was the location of the J. M. Odell Manufacturing Company (which site is now part of Central Carolina Bank and indeed the former Manly lot). In 1924 the former W. L. London & Son store burned to the ground, forcing the move of the *Chatham Record* to a building that had been a knitting mill owned by Arthur H. London (one of W. L. London's sons). These moves seem to account for the confusing references to the Manly office being on the site of the "new Record office" or the "old Record office."

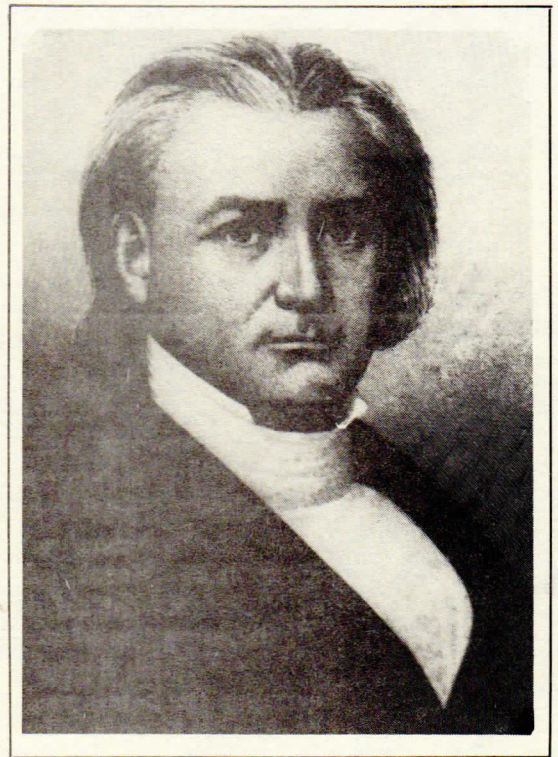
Anderson wrote that the office had been torn down, and there were other reports of its destruction; however, Henry Blair affirms that the building was known as the Manly Law Office when the property came into his possession, in 1946. In my opinion, it is likely that the office was moved only three times: once to the front part of the lot on Salisbury Street, next to the rear of that lot, and finally to its present location on Masonic Street, north of the Masonic Lodge.

The *Chatham Historical Journal* is an occasional publication of the Chatham County Historical Association, the purpose of which is to further the aims of the Association by publishing original articles related to the history of the county. The purposes of the Association are to collect and carefully preserve historical materials connected with the history of Chatham County. These materials may include historical relics, museum materials, copies of local county papers, old church records, private papers, letters, or monographs. The purposes of the Association also include the collection, preservation, and diffusion of information about genealogy of Chatham County families. Articles for the *Journal* may be sent to the Secretary, Chatham County Historical Association, P. O. Box 913, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312.

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CHARLES MANLY
1795 - 1871

Doris Goerch Horton *

Charles Manly was born in Chatham County May 13, 1795. His father was Basil Manly and his mother was Elizabeth Maultsby of Bladen County. His grandfather was Thomas Manly who was born in Maryland and his grandmother was Mary Ford.

The Manly land lay northwest of Pittsboro about three miles. Later they moved one mile nearer town to the site known as "Oak Mount." Charles had three brothers and two sisters. He and his brothers attended school at William Bingham's Pittsborough Scientific Academy.

Charles' father, Basil, prepared a family burying place on his land which he surrounded with a rock wall. Here he was buried in 1824. A son and daughter are also buried there.

Charles entered the University of North Carolina in 1811 and graduated there in 1814 with honors, at the age of 19. Later he received a MA Degree. He was one of the best declaimers in his class and was a member of the Dialectic Senate, a debating society. His portrait hangs in the Di Hall as does an etching in the law school.

* [The late Doris Goerch Horton presented the program, this biography of Charles Manly, at the 21 November 1966 meeting of the Chatham County Historical Association. The initial page of her presentation is bound with the minutes of the Association. Mrs. Horton was a co-editor of *Chatham County, 1771 - 1971* and chaired the committee that prepared that history.]

John Haywood of Raleigh hired him as a tutor for his children, and Manly studied law under him for two years. He was admitted to the bar in 1816 and to practice in the Superior Court in 1817. He probably practiced law in Pittsboro during these years. Soon after coming to the bar, he was elected by the Justices county attorney for Chatham, the duties of which he discharged very acceptably to all concerned for many years, and until he resigned. It is assumed that he traveled to Pittsboro from Raleigh to discharge these duties.

He married Miss Charity Hare Haywood in 1817. She was the niece of John Haywood. Manly settled down permanently in Raleigh at this time and continued the practice of law.

Mr. J. J. Jackson wrote that Manly built an office long before the war on a lot covered by the Chatham Record office (and the present site of Central Carolina Bank). The office he called "Fort Snug." It was built by George Ellington. At the close of the day, when he was not engaged, his office was a "free resort" for the members of the profession.

Manly held office on the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina. He was secretary-treasurer from 1821 until 1848 and as governor was ex-officio president of the Board. He returned to his former position until 1869, when the University temporarily closed its doors until 1875. A dormitory on the UNC campus is named in honor of Manly and his brothers.

In 1823 he was elected reading clerk in the House

of Commons of the Legislature. He continued in this position for several sessions and was chief clerk for seventeen years. The Democratic Party dismissed him with the other Whig officers of the House in 1842, but he was re-elected chief clerk, resigning in 1848 to run for governor.

Also in 1823, Manly was appointed clerk of the Commission of Americans and British relative to claims of American citizens for slaves and property taken away by the British during the war of 1812. He held this place for twelve months.

In 1840, Manly was elected a presidential elector and was a member of the Whig Central Committee. He served as a Commissioner of North Carolina to sell Cherokee lands in the state and collect the proceeds.

Manly was elected governor in 1848 and was inaugurated January 1, 1849, for a two-year term. During his term of office he was interested in helping the insane, and at this time Dorothea Dix asked the legislature for aid for them. He procured the stone for the Washington monument; it is white marble from Lincoln County.

His home in Raleigh stood next door to the Governor's Palace, the present site of Memorial Auditorium. He also owned a plantation, "Ingleside," northeast of Raleigh. He was the father of eleven children, six girls and five boys.

Manly died May 1, 1871, after a long and painful illness resulting in the loss of his eyesight just before his death. He is buried in the City Cemetery in Raleigh.

"POISONED" WELL CLAIMED THREE LIVES

Wade Hadley

Up until about fifty years ago, many water wells were dug at homes and other places. The digging and cleaning out of these wells occasionally resulted in casualties attributed to what was commonly termed "bad" or "dead" air. An example of such a tragedy was recorded in the *Chatham Record* of September 18, 1884, and both my grandfather and father were living nearby at the time. Later, they told me of this mishap at what they called the "poisoned well."

In the fall of 1884, John Campbell was living on a farm located about six and a half miles west of Pittsboro. He recently had cleaned out the rock-lined well at his house, but found the water still had a bad taste. On Saturday, September 13, he decided to bail out the well. While he was doing this, the bucket dropped into the well and he went down to get it.

While in the well he called for help, and Tom Dorsett went down to get him. After Dorsett got to the bottom of the well, he did not call or make any sound. A boy was then let down on a rope to investigate. He reported that Campbell and Dorsett were unconscious or dead. Dan Mauldin then went down into the well. Upon reaching the bottom, he immediately called to be pulled up. When he was about ten feet

from the top, he lost his grip on the rope and fell back. After this, no one else would go down to continue the rescue effort.

A blacksmith at Hadley's Mill, about one mile south of the well, made grappling hooks with which the three bodies were pulled out of the well.

The well, when I saw it in 1971, was near the south side of County Road 2167 close to where it joins Road 2165 to the east. By 1985 the well could not be seen and probably had been filled up or covered over.

AN EARLY BOTANICAL NOTE

... *Wild silk-worms, which hang their cocoons on sassafras and white oak trees, and eat those leaves. They are exactly like the Silk-worms that are raised, and the cocoons are as large as a hen's egg, but the trouble is that no one has been able to learn how to unwind the silk from the cocoon; they are stronger than the usual Silk-worms, and the English have offered a large bounty to anyone who will find out how to unwind this silk.*

From Records of the Moravians in North Carolina, edited by Adelaide L. Fries, Vol. II (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, reprinted 1968), p. 583. The article (p. 557 - 587) from which this paragraph was drawn is identified by the editor as a translation from a manuscript entitled Wachau or Dobbs Parish, unsigned but dated 1764 in the heading. The editor says that it "can have been written by no other than Christian Gottlieb Reuter, the surveyor of Wachovia. It contains his observations as to the native trees, shrubs, plants, animals, birds, snakes, insects, etc., which he found in this section of North Carolina..."