

The Chatham Historical Journal

Volume 6, Number 1

Chatham County, North Carolina

January 1993

A Letter from Chatham County*

Chatham County
Nov - the 3th - 1864

My dear Mother
and Sisters

Your letter has been recieved by me for some-time. I would of answerd sooner - but I have to send my letters to Raleigh to be mailed and have had no chance to send you one. So you see there was no use of my writing. I am here in the country about 36 miles from Raleigh and about 10 miles from Egypt. I am building very extensive shops and if I suceed in this undertaking my future, I hope, will be so I can help you all. I would like to have Jacob & Richard with me very much. But I suppose after the war they can come. We intend to manufacture Engines, Cars and/ and anything the government wants. We have capital of (\$500,000) five hundred thousand dollars. I am taking in as an eaqual partner - my knowledge and labor goes against capital. We have rented this place for twenty years. We have the finest watter power in the South. There are a flour-mill in the place. We get enough of toll corn to feed our hands and teams. I have just completed the drawings of the Buildings. At least of the ones that we intend to put up first. There will be five seperate buildings in all, the machine shop, Blacksmith shop

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and foundry is 300 ft long. The machine shop is to be two storys high, 100 ft long. The smith shop is 136 ft. The foundry 64. Those Buildings is a-going up now./ I intend to have six trip Hammers. I just bought out a large machine shop in Goldsboro which intend to move here right away. We have easy facility for manufacturing: Coal, Iron smelter, and grindstones. We still have our factory agoing on in Raleigh, but not adoing much. I have most of the hands at work here. I have about fifty Negroes in the woods cutting & hauling timber.

Now the 6th.

Well, I did not finish your letter the other night. Old, I guess. Harris came over for me to go a oppsum hunting with him, so I went. We caught 4 very fine ones, which make (16) I have caught. I got one kind yet that I have not killed yet I wish I could send them to you. I have/ a very fine Gobler for you all that I will Bring or send to you for Chrismas about which time I want to come and see you all. I am very glad you recieved your flour and that it suited you so well. When that is gone I will send you some more. My nearest neighbor is about 3/4 of a mile from here. There is a very nice gal there. Sometimes I go over - But it is only to talk to the old woman for she is so kind and gives me a good dinner and cooks my oppossum when I want her. You know I am getting old and the gals don't care for me anymore like they used to. They want to make me belive that I am young, but I know better. I wish Jacob was here to shoot ducks. The river is full/ of them. Geewilkers ain't this place lonesome. Pine Hills ain't nowhere. The people have to set the dogs on thier children when they want to catch them to change thier cloths. I have been here about two months. Expect two more before I get in civilize Society again. I am still keeping Bachlors hall, I eat by myself, sleep by myself. I think I will get so after a while that I will want to live this way allways. I have two cows both have calves, so I get plenty of milk. I have milk, corn bread, and finise midleing thrice times a day and roast possum on Sunday. I want you to write to me often. You can direct your letters to Lockville, Chatham County, N.C. via Pittsboro./ I will send you a letter or envelope with the right Direction on it. Tell Jacob to ask Mr. Burkhart to se if he can give me a couple of sheets of Drawing Paper - about 3 or 4 foot long by 30 in wide. Ask him if the patterns are there for the jobbing Hammers - Large size and if I can get a set of castings off of them. If so I will come down soon and see about it. I expect to bussie for some time. If you want

anything let me know and I will try and get it for you. I want to build a house here as soon as I can get the lumber saws. I will try and get the things as soon as I can get some one to go after them. I think we will get the Pistol Factory here. If so I can get them through easy as I will have a train on government account. Don't say anything about it as I may fail in the undertaking. But chances seems very favorable for us to get it.

Your affectionate
Son & Brother,
Rees. H. Butler

**Reese H. Butler was a trained, practical machinist who worked in the U.S. Armory at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, before the war. He was the foreman at the Bayonet & Mountings Department at the Richmond Armory in 1861; superintendent of the Spiller & Burr Pistol Factory in Atlanta; and employed at the Raleigh Bayonet Factory of Heck, Brodie & Co. He later became a partner in this firm, which moved to a location on the Deep River near Lockville in September 1864, attracted by the proximity of water power, coal, timber, and iron. It is apparently this site from which the letter is written.*

The letter was written by Reese H. Butler to his mother, Tamar Butler, and sisters, Anne Sponcler, Caroline Butler, and Hannah Clowe. Mr. Sponcler and Mr. Clowe lived and worked at the Fayetteville Armory during the Civil War, and it was to Fayetteville that the letter was mailed.

The Chatham County Historical Association is indebted to Matthew Norman, great-great-grandson of Reese Helm Butler, for making available this letter for publication. Norman, who is currently researching his forebear's life, was born in Winston-Salem, graduated from the University of Virginia, and works in a psychiatric hospital in Atlanta. He received the letter from a distant cousin, Mrs. Eugene Tate, who had learned of his interest in Butler.

Slashes (/) indicate page breaks in the original letter.

Early Land Grants in Chatham County

by J. M. Cooper¹

The Assembly of the young State of North Carolina, meeting at New Bern in November 1777, passed the Confiscation Act of North Carolina.² By virtue of that Act, the State of North Carolina acquired all of the Earl of Granville's ungranted land in what was later called the Granville District of the state.³ Quite a few parcels of this land were in Chatham County.⁴ The grants range in size from very small (1.5 acres, for example, suggesting a parcel to fill in an irregularly-shaped piece of land) to 640 acres, the maximum size. Many of the small plots (up to 300 acres) may have been parcels left from the earlier grants of larger parcels.

In 1779, 1780, and 1781, Governor Richard Caswell began granting parcels of this land to, among others, Chatham County citizens who served in the state militia and lived in the general area of the county where the parcels of land were located. Many of these parcels were located within a 10-mile radius of present-day Silk Hope, and most of them were on the west side of the Haw River. Several grantee's names can be found on militia rolls of 1772.⁵ Others, like Henry Crutchfield, although not shown on the militia list, had probably located in that part of the county by the outbreak of the Revolutionary War and may have belonged to the militia in other years. In Chatham County, most of these early grants can be found in deed book B and the first part of book C.

To receive a grant, a person "entered" or applied for a parcel of land, had the land surveyed, filed the surveyor's report with the Secretary of State, paid a fee per acre, and received a grant.⁶ By 1815 the bulk of land grants had been made, but grants of odd lots of land in Chatham County were still being made by the State of North Carolina through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. In about 1800, the cost for this land was 50 shillings for 100 acres, and for a survey of 400 acres a prospective owner might be charged 5 pounds.⁷ Very few survey reports still exist and by a curious circumstance, a bookbinding error of county records many years ago resulted in the binding of 51 pages of survey plats in the back of Will Book 1 for Randolph County. [See Editor's Note below.]

One of these survey reports (p. 49) described a 600-acre tract of land lying just to the west and north of the Silk Hope crossroads (and, in 1780, could have included the crossroads) surveyed for Henry Crutchfield. Crutchfield married Millie Terrell, the daughter of Timothy Terrell, one of the earliest settlers in the Silk Hope area. Terrell's Creek, which heads near Silk Hope, was named after Timothy Terrell. It seems likely that Crutchfield reclaimed his wife Millie's old homeplace in his grant, as later deeds of his land mention that it contained the forks of Terrell's Creek and was on both sides of the old Hillsborough to Fayetteville road.

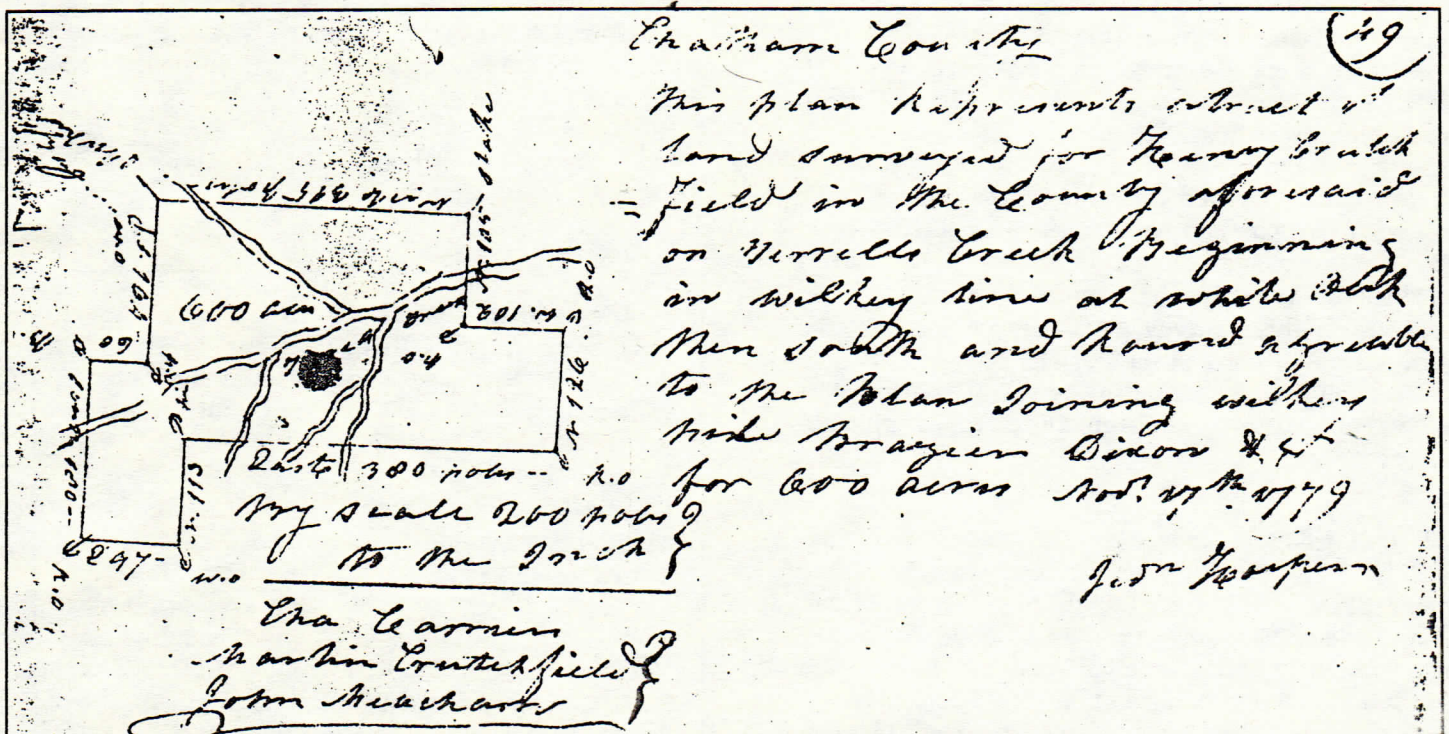
[Editor's Note: Bound at the back of Will Book 1 for Randolph County are 51 pages of survey plats for Chatham County. This binding error has fortuitously preserved records of 135 surveys for 100 different persons. No other surveyor's plats are known to exist for the

Chatham County

This plan represents a tract of land surveyed for Henry Crutchfield in the County aforesaid on Terrells Creek Beginning in Wilkey line at white oak then south and round agreeable to the plan joining Wilkey Fike Brazier Dixon & for 600 acres Nov'r 27th 1779.

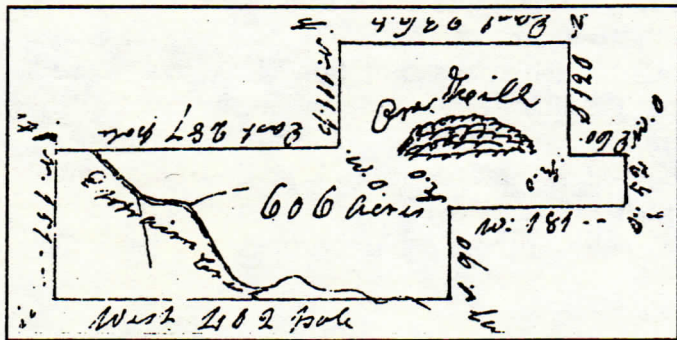
Jed'n Harper

*My scale 200 poles
to the inch
Cha Carriers
Martin Crutchfield
John Meacham*



Survey report for Henry Crutchfield, 27 November 1779.

county, although a few deeds include a plat. Five surveys are recorded that are not included in Bailey's (see note 3 below) compilation of land grants in Chatham County: 121 acres for Thomas Brazier, 200 acres for Boston Hart, 100 acres for Hugh Newlin, 460 acres for Connan Dowd, and 56 acres for Elizabeth McCarrell.



Map in the report of a survey for John Wilcox, 11 Dec 1778.

The surveys were concentrated in the north-central part of the county, on Terrell's Creek, Dry Creek, and Rocky River, and on their tributary streams. Some nine of the surveys were made on New Hope Creek and its tributaries, and other surveys were near Deep River, Bear Creek, and Love's Creek. All but seven of the surveys were conducted by Jeduthan Harper, who played a prominent role in early county history. Harper, a captain of the militia in 1772, surveyed 14 tracts of land for men of his company (see note 5 below), including two tracts for himself. Seven of these 14 tracts were on Lick and Terrell's Creeks, four were described as being on Hickory Mountain, and three were on Love's Creek. The surveys not made by Harper were made by William Buzby and were near Deep River.

The earliest survey was dated in May of 1778 and the last date recorded was in March of 1780. The lands surveyed vary in size from less than 100 acres (8 surveys, the smallest being 32 acres) to over 500 acres (22 surveys, of which six were 640 acres). Eighteen tracts were 100-200 acres; 34 were 200-300 acres; 28 were 300-400 acres; and 11 were 400-500 acres.

Several of the survey plats show cultural features of interest. Land surveyed for John Wilcox included Ore Hill, where Wilcox had constructed a small furnace in 1776. Another survey report, for William Cage, carries drawings of a house and mill on Rocky River.

Copies of these survey plats may be found at the courthouse, Asheboro; in the Register of Deeds office in Pittsboro; and on microfilm in the N.C. Department of Archives and History in Raleigh. The originals appear to have been lost.]

NOTES

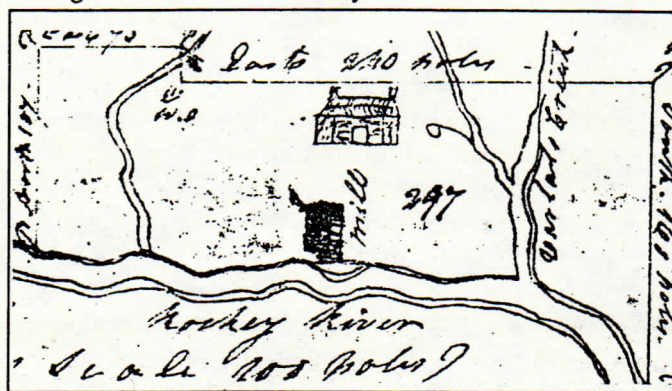
1. J. M. Cooper is retired and now lives in Kannapolis, N.C. After ten years of intensive work in family history (Fox, Wright, Crutchfield, Stewart, Moser, Teague, Isley, Waggnor, Perry, and Cooper, from Orange, Chatham, and Alamance counties), he pursued other interests but maintains an avid interest in history. Seven articles, "Abstracts of Court Minutes, Pleas &

Quarter Sessions of Chatham County, N.C., May 1774-May 1778," were published in the *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*, beginning in Vol. III, No. 1 (Feb. 1977). A recent publication is "The Indian Trading Path and Great Wagon Road Across North Carolina." Some of the materials in the historical files at Pittsboro Memorial Library were donated by Mr. Cooper when he moved from the area. He is a member of the CCHA.

2. *State Records of North Carolina*, collected and edited by Walter Clark, (Goldsboro, N.C.: 1905), Vol. 24, pp. 209-215, 263-264.

3. Containing about half of North Carolina, with about 2/3 of its population, the Granville District extended from the Virginia Line to an east-west line near the southern boundary of Chatham County. [*Land Grant Records of North Carolina; Vol. II, Chatham County, 1778-1928*, compiled by Pat Bailey (Graham, N.C.: 1991), p. i]

4. Bailey lists over 2,400 surnames, showing entry and grant numbers and dates, deed book and page, acreage, and a brief summary of location.



Map in the report of a survey for William Cage, 19 Jan 1780.

5. Hadley, Wade, H., et. al., *Chatham County, 1771-1971*, 2nd Ed., 3rd Printing (Pittsboro, N.C., Chatham County Historical Association: 1992), pp. 447-456. [Editor's Note: Of the approximately 767 names listed in eight militia companies, 283 are found in Bailey's compilation of land grants.]

6. Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. i.

7. Surveyor's notes bound with survey reports, Will Book 1, Randolph County, N.C.

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 sources of information.

Back issues are available while they last: Vol. 1 (1988, No. 1, 2), \$2.00; Vol. 2 (1989, No. 1, 2), \$2.00; Vol. 3 (1990, No. 1, 2), \$5.00; Vol. 4 (1991, No. 1 - 4), \$5.00. Correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary, CCHA, Box 913, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312.