

County Court Met in Old Union Church After Winton Burning

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And, in Hertford County, there were war preparations and scares.

The County Court met in special session on June 12, 1862, and dealt solely with war matters.

It resolved that "whereas this county is invaded by the Government of the United States, it is the court's opinion that it is unsafe for the sheriff to attempt to collect the present state taxes while the present invasion continues."

Federal gunboats were roaming the Chowan River and Hill. Federal cavalry was crossing the river to reconnoiter down dusty Hertford roads.

In another resolution, the Court recognized another growing problem growing out of this federal military activity.

It resolved that "whereas many negro slaves have been running and gone to the U. S. gunboat cruising up and down the Chowan River, it is resolved that any caught doing so may be arrested 'dead or alive.'"

Another growing problem that was to become a nightmare was indicated by the court's action in naming a "self commissioner."

Watson L. Daniel was given the post and ordered to proceed to Wilmington and purchase salt to be distributed to Hertford families.

He was ordered to borrow funds at six per cent for the salt supply.

The court levied a direct tax for government during the year. It levied \$1,700 for county purposes, \$1,000 for the poor, \$500 to pay off county bonds, and \$300 for the state asylum.

More Salt Troubles
But Daniel could get little salt at Wilmington.

On July 21, 1862, the County Court met in special session and ordered Daniel to "visit various salt works in Virginia."

He was ordered to purchase 3,500 bushels of salt from Virginia. The salt was to be sold to Hertford families at cost.

He had been able to get but 140 bushels of the vital commodity at Wilmington. It was ordered deposited at three points in the county for sale—at Lewis Spiers' in Murfreesboro, Starkey Harrell's at California Crossroads, and Joseph Soull's at Harrellsville.

The Court stipulated that no family could purchase more than one peck of the salt supply.

(It is worth note that salt was vitally important in these days because it was used for the curing of pork, the staple meat in the diet.)

Routine Matters
With the defeat of McClellan's army in Virginia, many of the federal units that were harassing eastern North Carolina were called northward and the local situation became more stabilized.

In August, 1862, the court met and attended only to routine matters.

In November, it held another routine quarterly meeting. It appointed committees to build a new ferry flat for Hill's Ferry on the Meherrin and examine the ferryboat at Wicacoan Ferry near Harrellsville.

It ordered that \$90 be paid for timber used in repairing Hill's bridge and \$110 for repairs to Wicacoan Bridge.

fought at Boone's Mill in Northampton County, and retreated back through the county.

The force had burned the Murfreesboro bridge and looted many areas of the county.

A committee was named to decide whether to build a new bridge at Murfreesboro, and the sheriff was ordered to summon all road overseers to a meeting at the next meeting.

Abner Harrell agreed to continue as keeper of Tar Landing Ferry for \$139.50 per year for three years.

No jury was called, since most of the county's men were either off in the army, retreating from the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, or in hastily-assembled local regiments formed to resist increased federal military action in eastern North Carolina.

By November, the county was hunkering down to what was to be a hard winter, a winter of increasing despair.

The Court met and ordered old iron salvaged from the burned county jail to be sold.

A ferry flat was ordered constructed to take the place of the

burned Murfreesboro Bridge, \$300 was appropriated for the boat.

\$146 was paid for a keeper who had already acted as ferryman there for 73 days. \$51 was appropriated for materials for a new bridge at Murfreesboro, and \$30 for repair of Hill's Bridge between Murfreesboro and Winton, where federal cavalry had brushed with local troops in July.

In December, 1863, the court met to take care of routine matters. It ordered a committee to employ someone to keep Wicacoan Ferry and paid \$180 for 90 days keep at the temporary Murfreesboro ferry.

Mrs. Harrell was paid \$100 for keeping Wicacoan Ferry and paid \$100 for new rope for the ferry.

John Main, a free negro, was given the task of keeping the temporary Murfreesboro bridge.

Purchase Cotton Cards
A committee was named to go to Raleigh and purchase the cotton cards which had been allowed Hertford County for distribution to the wives of soldiers.

F. L. Roberts was issued a whiskey license for his store in Mur-

reesboro, and school and tax boards were renamed.

Finally, the county asked that holders of county bonds appear at the temporary courthouse to receive their yearly dividends.

In May, the Court was still enacting routine business. By this time, the new crop was in and the area had been heartened by wintertime Confederate activity aimed at clearing federal troops from eastern North Carolina. (Although unsuccessful, the attempts had had temporary success. In any event, most Union forces had been called north to join the giant army of General U. S. Grant, moving on Richmond.)

The Court paid free negro John Main \$225 for keeping the temporary Murfreesboro Ferry, and \$82 went for materials for a new bridge there. Henry Griffith got \$156 for keeping Hill's Ferry for 89 days. Abner Harrell got

\$150 for keeping Tar Landing Ferry.

Inflation Begins
For the next nine months, the minutes of the County Court indicate the worsening money situation in the despairing Confederacy. Huge sums were voted to accomplish tasks which were once routine.

In August, the Court paid Main \$150 for keeping the Murfreesboro ferry for three months. John Vinton got \$63 for keeping the same ferry for 21 days.

New rates for ferries (applying to nonresidents—the ferries were free to county citizens) were ordered, indicating the inflationary trends.

A man and horse had to pay fifty cents; buggies, sulkeys, carts and other one-horse vehicles were to pay one dollar, two-horse chaises were to pay \$1.50 and

four-horse units to pay \$2. Carriages were to cost \$2.50.

The Court ordered some steps put on the temporary courthouse-church, and ordered the well filled. Repairs were ordered to Cuttawhisky Bridge and a committee named to let the ferry at Hill's Bridge.

Financial Crisis
In November, financial matters were in the spotlight, and the spiraling inflation that was destroying confidence and causing economic life to grind to a standstill was the striking point in actions by the Court.

The Court ordered that the Confederate bonds owned by the county be sold at 70 cents on the dollar. It ordered taxes collected for provisioning of soldier's families and the total levy came to \$34,584 which was ten times what

the total cost had been only two years earlier.

Prices for materials to build bridges and ferries indicated the worsening condition of Confederate money. The court ordered \$380 paid for cotton to make rope for the Murfreesboro ferry. Joseph Weaver was paid \$350 for keeping the Murfreesboro ferry for three months, and \$50 for making rope for the ferry.

In February, 1865, the court met with need and despair gathering on every hand.

It named W. D. Pruden as an agent to purchase cotton to be used in exchange for provisions for soldiers' families. The Court had despaired of using deflated Confederate currency for that purpose.

Miles Mitchell, a member of the Home Guard, asked the court to be relieved of his duties of guarding the provision of work. He said the

supplies needed to be constantly guarded and that he was "nearly 50 years old," unfit for the constant vigil.

A petition was sent to the Governor asking that Mitchell be discharged from the Home Guard.

In routine matters, the Court paid large sums for a few days of ferry keeping. Over \$450 was paid to various keepers of the Murfreesboro bridge, they were now getting four dollars a day, twice as much as a year previous.

Abner Harrell was paid \$500 in deflated currency for keeping Wicacoan Ferry for a year.

Rope for Hill's Bridge was purchased for \$135.

Keepers of the Murfreesboro Bridge included S. Williams, Perry Carter, Emma Burgess and Thomas Weaver.

John Newman was issued a

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Wheeler's Report

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The following report from Wheeler, in the colorful language which characterized military communications of Confederate civilian-soldiers, tells much of the story of the Roanoke-Chowan during the Civil War.

It is a report of tiny actions between unprepared local soldiery and overwhelming federal power which rode the river in the form of heavily-armed gunboats.

It also gives an inkling of the hopes and ideas which many military authorities had about the strategic significance of the Chowan River line.

Many felt that the Confederacy should mount an attack across the river and clear federal troops from this enclave on the flank of the Confederate armies in Virginia.

On the federal side, plans were always being discussed to launch a major attack across the river to cut the railroad line only a day's march beyond the west bank of the river.

Further notes follow the report of Major Wheeler.

HDQRS. TWELFTH NORTH CAROLINA BATTALION
Hertford County, N. C., June 20, 1863.

Maj. ARCHIE ANDERSON
Petersburg, Va.

MAJOR: A dispatch from Capt. C. G. Wright, commanding battalion near Coleraine, was received on the 18th instant, at 5 p.m., stating the enemy was landing at that place from, five gunboats and transports, and asking my immediate assistance.

My mounted force was in the saddle in a few minutes, and before daylight we were within reach of Captain Wright, who had posted himself advantageously 5 miles north of Coleraine. But the bird had flown; the gunboats pushed off, and have gone down the Chowan River.

Thus were we again disappointed in our anticipation of a brush with the cowardly invader.

We were in the saddle nearly all night and ten hours today, and the dullness of my communication may be attributed to fatigue and loss of rest.

After the affair of the 17th at the rifle-pits near Jordan's Fishery, the two gunboats proceeded up the Chowan River as far as Manny's Ferry, near the Virginia line, evidently intimidated, having done no damage save wounding three of my men; two slightly, one severely in the right side by a Minie ball. His case is critical, and as I cannot rely upon the prompt attention of local physicians, allow me to hope that you will order Dr. C. E. Worrall to my immediate assistance.

Prominent citizens are urging me to employ cannon, and I am more than ever satisfied of the necessity of its use. The enemy is now driven from our waters, and I wish to attack him on land in counties east of Chowan River, but, as suggested before, unless our crossing be protected by artillery, a single boat could cut off our retreat.

If you will let me have the use of Woodbury Wheeler's artillery for a short while, and I do not render you a good account, I will trouble you no more.



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Pace-Setters in Our Field...

We opened our operation here in 1950 and installed the most modern in sawmill equipment... being the second in North Carolina to install debarking and chipping equipment to conserve natural resources. Since that time we have constantly improved and enlarged our mill. We try to stay ready to meet the needs of a growing area and a growing state. Thanks to the folks in this area that have given us friendships and patronage.

We Join in Celebrating the Milestone Year
HERTFORD COUNTY'S 200th ANNIVERSARY

FREEMAN Lumber Company

MANUFACTURERS
Ahoskie, North Carolina