

# Battle of Raft Swamp and Minor Engagements in The Vicinity.

By A. W. McLean

There seems to be some conflict among North Carolina historians as to the different engagements between the Whigs and Tories in the Cape Fear section. Caruthers and Graham are vague about many incidents, and the former is often in error regarding locations and distances. Other writers confuse Raft Swamp, McPhaul's mill and Drowning creek so hopelessly that unless one is familiar with localities he is unable to say at what point an engagement really did take place.

This mistake of the historians is both natural and probable when one takes into consideration the fact that conditions here were different from those which prevailed in other parts of the State. There were so many skirmishes and short, sharp encounters that it is difficult to characterize the condition of affairs except as an intermittent warfare without much loss on either side but prosecuted with enough vigor and directness as to make it unsafe for either partisan faction. The whole region along Lumber river or Drowning creek, because of the dense swamps, became infested with bands of Tories and Whigs bent on harassing and plundering their enemies. When these bands met, there was a sharp encounter; or a "battle," as it was called.

Nothing like a decisive battle was fought, however, because the woods and swamps gave the weaker force, if surprised, an opportunity to escape without much loss. Besides, the Tories, who were the chief offenders, were never powerful enough in numbers nor organized sufficiently to offer much resistance. They were hopelessly outnumbered at all times and could only hope to wage a defensive and desultory warfare. Their hostility consisted not so much in open defiance and in definite campaigns as in sudden surprises and swift raids on defenseless Whigs. Their whole object was to terrorize their enemies. And the Whigs when organized always retaliated in kind. Their deeds were generally as merciless as those of their enemies.

This disordered state of affairs bewildered peace-loving Whigs and Tories alike. Therefore it is not surprising that historians are not able

to give a coherent account of operations. Most of the battles were mere skirmishes magnified by rumor and hearsay accounts until people lived in terror of imminent seizure. But there were a few engagements of some consequence and these, with the exception of the battle at Beattie's bridge, which is given elsewhere, will be included in this chapter with such additional evidence as has been procured from local sources.

The late D. P. McEachern, of Red Springs, asserted that a slight engagement was fought near his old home about one-fourth mile below Mill Prong, where the old revolutionary stage road crossed the Lowry swamp. A party of Whigs reconnoitering in this region came upon a larger body of Tories and put them to flight. There were casualties from this encounter, for bones and old war relics were recently dug up by workmen while grading the Red Springs and Bowmore railroad. Since this was near to McPhaul's mill the skirmish was known as the Battle of McPhaul's Mill, but in reality it was nothing more than an exchange of volleys.

The late Hamilton McMillan in his reminiscences of the early Scotch settlers makes mention of a short engagement at McPherson's creek, near the bridge known in the later years as Davis' bridge, in upper Robeson. A party of Whigs had seized three prominent Tories, court-martialed them, and had ordered them to be shot. Meantime they were being held as prisoners in their camp along McPherson's creek. The Tories, recruiting a large force, determined to rescue their friends. They fell upon the Whigs so suddenly that the latter were, for the instant, thrown into utter confusion, and started to retreat. Perceiving, however, that the Tories did not greatly outnumber them, they withdrew to higher ground and offered to give battle, in order to recover the prisoners who, in the excitement of the attack, had escaped to their friends. The fight was sharp, occasional firing continuing for some time. The loss was not heavy on either side, however, for the woods afforded good protection. The hottest fighting took place when the Tories, having secured the three prisoners and not caring to prolong the fight, withdrew to the open space near where their boats were tied. In the mass formation the Whigs killed eighteen Tories before the latter could get out of range. Among these was a young Tory officer who, together with the other dead, was buried by Mrs. Black and Mrs. Murphy a few days later (see Murphy sketch).

Captain Ashe in his History of North Carolina gives an account of two battles fought in this region—one at Beattie's bridge (P. 684) and the other on the "east side of Drowning creek" (P. 693). There can be no doubt that the latter was the engagement fought at Beattie's bridge near the present site of Gilchrist bridge. The date, the lay of the land, and the smaller details of the battle agree substantially with local traditions. But of the first battle of Beattie's bridge on August 4, 1781, in which Colonel Wade won a victory over Colonel McNeill and Ray, we have no authentic data. It is quite probable that Beattie's bridge inasmuch as it was an important Tory causeway was the scene of many such encounters and that this was merely one of them. Yet the Tories, many of whom came from northern and central counties, not being familiar with the section were likely to confuse names and to adopt such as were current. For example Emmet in his letter to Governor Burke (State Records, XV 590) refers to McFall's mill on Drowning creek whereas this mill is located over seven miles from the stream. Such errors as this—and we are constrained to believe that others were due to the fact that McPhaul's mill, Raft swamp and Drowning creek were used interchangeably

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A record of nearly fifty years service should convince you of the merit of Lydia E. Pinkham's Compound.

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We wish to beg of our good Farmer Friends that they forget not the drop in 1920, and the hard times we had in 1921. We have been favored this year as never before. We have made good crops, and have received high prices for same, but good crops and high prices will not help the condition of any but those who lay aside a part of the proceeds. You have worked hard to make money this year and you have succeeded, and we want to see you—

### KEEP YOUR MONEY

Remember the lesson of 1920 and save enough from 1923 to act as reserve against any loss we may have 1924. Do not spend all your cash, but keep enough to finance yourself on cash basis, and pay your losses which will surely come. To all our folks living within our district we wish to invite you to deposit in this SAFE BANK YOUR SURPLUS FUNDS. We promise to do as in the past, all in our power to make our relations pleasant and profitable to both sides.

4 PER CENT. INTEREST COMPOUNDED QUARTERLY PAID ON SAVINGS ACCOUNT.

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Pembroke, N. C.

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E. M. PAUL, Cashier.  
CAPITAL, SURPLUS AND UNDIVIDED PROFITS \$28,471.03

to denote any Tory activity in this entire region. Moreover as Raft Swamp bridge and McPhaul's mill are situated on branches of the same stream and are only a few miles apart, there would hardly be any distinction made except by one familiar with the country.

McPhaul's mill, situated about one and one-half miles west of Antioch church in Hoke county, was the base for Tory aggression during the Revolution. Captain Neil McPhaul, an officer in the British army, and an ardent, courageous Tory, lived here and looked after the interests of the King. The large tract of land just beyond the grist mill had been used for years as a sort of assembling-ground for the people of the section, and when war was declared Captain McPhaul made further use of it by allowing the royalists to use it as a rendezvous. Troops were recruited and drilled here; Whigs were made prisoners and "carried off to the Tory camp at McPhaul's mill," and hard-pressed Tories often fled there for protection. Fanning came there often either with prisoners or for the purpose of recruiting and spending while, in his narrative he locates different points by reference to the distance from McPhaul's mill. After the war the place became a voting precinct and county fair ground.

The rendezvous on Drowning creek (or Lumber river) besides the region around, what is now Gilchrist bridge, was at Floral College. Here the Tories met and drilled regularly. Elrod and Fanning, a few days prior to the battle of Raft swamp, reviewed their joint commands of 300 men while they were in camp on the slight elevation between the old Bethen ditch and the site of the present Center church. (The land where the forces were stationed is now owned by Henry Alford.)

Floral College, unlike McPhaul's mill, never became an important Tory stronghold. The Scotch of the surrounding country were too apathetic for the loyalists. The location did not afford as secure protection as did McPhaul's mill. Consequently they used it only to display their strength and as drill ground for raw recruits.

The Whigs kept a close watch on McPhaul's mill, being quick to attribute any new movement of Tories to the efforts of those who lived in that vicinity. They made no effort, apparently, to disperse the Tories until their activities became so flagrant that outside aid had to be summoned. This occurred in the fall of 1781 and was the direct cause of the battle of Raft swamp, the only considerable engagement, with the exception of Beattie's bridge, which was fought in this immediate locality.

Information had come persistently to General Greene that the Tories were stirring themselves, and by the first of October he had completed arrangements for moving against them. This force of 950 infantry and 200 cavalry had been drilled on Little river, Montgomery county, by such seasoned officers as Captain Simmons, of Rowan; Captain Graham, of Mecklenburg; and Major Smith, of Mecklenburg. By slow movements the Whig force arrived at Monroe's bridge on Drowning creek, where they remained a few days. Here they were joined by Captain Gillespie, of Guilford, with a troop of dragoons and several companies of mounted infantry. This increased the force, according to General Graham, to about 1400—a cavalry of 350 and infantry about 1050.

After crossing Drowning creek, the Whigs turned to the right, having as their objective point McPhaul's mill, and the Tory region along the Raft swamp. On October 15, 1781, the advance dragoons surprised a reconnoitering party under "Young Hector" McNeill and put them to flight. Advancing rapidly to McPhaul's mill the Whigs found that the Tories, numbering about 400, had broken camp about an hour before and were then in rapid retreat down Raft

(Continued on page 3)

### NOTICE OF COMMISSIONER'S SALE OF LAND.

Under and by virtue of an order of the Superior Court of Robeson County, made in the special proceedings entitled Mrs. Wincy Britt, administrator vs. E. H. Britt and others, the same being No. 4730 upon the special proceedings docket of said court, the undersigned commissioner, will, on Monday, the 10th day of Dec. 1923, at 12 o'clock noon at the court house door of Robeson County, North Carolina offer for sale to the highest bidder for cash at public auction the following tracts of land lying and being in the county of Robeson and in Britts Township, bounded and described as follows, to-wit:

Lot No. 2, being in two tracts:

First tract: Beginning at a stake, the S. corner of lot No. 1, and runs north 29 east 20.41 chains to a stake; McAllister's corner thence with his line north 71-4 west 10.11 chains to a stake and pointer, his corner; thence with his other line north 62-3-4 west 5.54 chains to a stake in his line; thence south 11 east 19.37 chains to the beginning, containing 11-1-4 acres.

Second tract: Beginning at a stake in the edge of the Gurrum Road near a lightwood stump, and runs north 10-1-4 west to a stake in J. A. McAllister line; thence nearly west with the said McAllister line to a stake, the corner of Reddin Rice's line; thence his line south east to the public road; thence said road to the beginning, containing 15 acres, more or less.

This the 9th day of Oct. 1923.  
E. J. Britt, Commissioner

### TRUSTEE'S SALE OF LAND

Under and by virtue of the power and authority contained in a certain deed of trust from J. M. Sellers and wife, to W. F. Bristow, for W. O. Sellers, same being dated the 4th day of October, 1920 and registered in Book 51, page 176, Public Registry of Robeson County, (default having been made in the payment of the obligation secured thereby) the undersigned trustee, will on Saturday, December 22nd, 1923, at 12:00 o'clock Noon, at the Court House in the Town of Lumberton, N. C., offer for sale at public auction, to the highest bidder for cash, the following described lands and premises, to-wit:

All that tract or parcel of land lying and situate and being in the County of Robeson and the State of North Carolina near the Town of Fairmont and being farm No. "A" 1, on plat of land formerly owned by W. O. Sellers, plat of which is on record in \_\_\_\_\_ County, Register of Deeds' office in Book \_\_\_\_\_ Page—\_\_\_\_\_ to which said plat for a more perfect description reference is here made.

Being part of the W. O. Sellers subdivision as surveyed and mapped by A. C. Bishop, Civil Engineer, and said tract containing 20.82 Acres.

This the 22nd day of November, 1923.  
W. F. BRISTOW, Trustee  
Johnson & Johnson, Attorneys. 11-26-4 Mors.

### NOTICE OF SALE OF VALUABLE LAND AND TIMBER.

Under and by virtue of the power and authority vested in the undersigned executor by the will of the late Margaret McCormick, deceased, will at 10 o'clock a. m., December 15, 1923, on the premises near the town of Rowland, N. C., offer for sale and sell for cash, to the highest bidder, the following land and timber situate, thereunto to-wit:

In and near the town of Rowland, and within a short distance of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, on both sides of Mitchell Swamp and on both sides of Tyra's or McCormick's Branch, adjoining the lands of Ida McQueen, Samuel Rowland and W. H. McCallum, containing 200 ACRES, more or less.

The timber on this land consisting of long short leaf pine, gum, oak and poplar which is now being carefully measured so as to determine the quantity thereon, will first be offered for sale separately from the land.

The above lands are now being surveyed and subdivided and will be offered for sale in small parcels and lots without the timber situate thereon, and the whole farm will then be offered for sale both with and without the timber and the purchaser may exercise either way will control as to the purchaser.

Persons desiring to see this land and timber thereon, will be shown the same by the undersigned executor at any time.

The sale of the timber and land will be made subject to the approval of the undersigned.

This the 15th day of November, 1923.  
A. T. MCKELLAR, Executor.  
McIntyre, Lawrence, & Proctor, Attorneys for the Executor. 11-15-4 Thurs  
Junius J. Goodwin attorney for some of the legatees.

### NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF LAND

Under and by virtue of the power contained in a certain mortgage deed executed on the 24th day of December 1919, by M. N. Folger and wife, to the undersigned mortgagee, same mortgage being registered in Book 46, page 165 in the office of the register of deeds of Robeson County, default having been in the payment of the note secured by said mortgage, notice is hereby given that the undersigned mortgagee, will, on Monday the 10th day of November 1923, at 12 o'clock noon, at the court house door of Robeson County, North Carolina, offer for sale at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, to satisfy the terms of said mortgage the following tract of land lying and being in the county of Robeson and in Lumberton Township bounded and described as follows, to-wit:

First Tract: On the North side of the Elsiebeth Road, located about 1-1/2 miles north east of the town of Lumberton, and being lot No. 6 as subdivided by the Atlantic Coast Realty Company, November 1917, a map of which said property or lot is duly recorded in Book of Maps No. 2, page 36 in the office of the register of deeds of Robeson County, to which map reference is hereby made for a more particular and complete description by metes and bounds thereof, the same containing 6.55 acres.

Second Tract: In Lumberton Township, about one and one half miles north east of the town of Lumberton, and being lot No. 10 in the division of the estate of T. N. Higley, deceased, as shown on a map of the T. N. Higley property, subdivided by the Atlantic Coast Realty Company, in November 1917, a map of which said property or lot is duly recorded in Book of Maps No. 2, page 36 in the office of the register of deeds of Robeson County, to which reference is hereby made for a more particular and complete description by metes and bounds thereof, the same containing 6.82 acres. And adjoins lot No. 6 which is described above. The two lots or tracts of land being the same as described in a deed from M. G. Lee and others to Ethel H. Folger said deed is registered in Book 6-R, page 634 in the office of the register of deeds of Robeson County, North Carolina.

This the 9th day of November 1923.  
First National Bank of Lumberton, E. J. Britt, attorney. Mortgagee. 11-15-4 Thurs.

### SUMMONS BY PUBLICATION.

North Carolina, Robeson County. In the Superior Court. Edward Hunt vs. John Hunt and wife, Julia Hunt et al.  
To the defendants, Lula Horne, Estell Horne, Leonard Horne, Beulah Horne, and Effie Horne, or any other person, or persons having any claim or interest in this action: You and each of you will take notice that an action was instituted, as above entitled, on December 14, 1922, for the purpose of making sale of the lands hereinafter described, to make assets to pay certain indebtedness se-

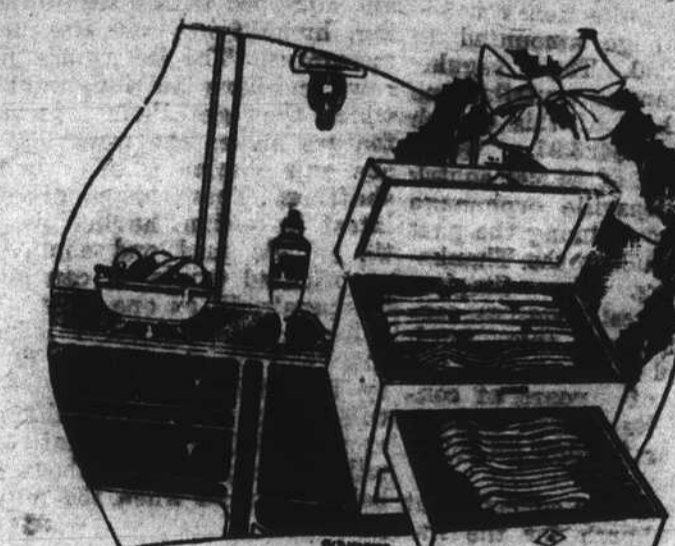
cured by a mortgage deed against the said lands, and that by virtue of a decree entered in said action the lands described as follows, to-wit:

In Pembroke Township: On the western side of the public road leading from St. Anna Church to Neil Revel's dwelling, adjoining the lands of the Indian Normal High School, B. W. Lowery, W. H. Lowery and others; Beginning at a stake by a pine in upper edge of the said road, the corner of said Normal High School land and runs as that line and beyond as B. W. Lowery's line north 65 west 11.65 chains to a stake in a ditch by 2 gum pointers; B. W. Lowery's corner; thence north 45 3-4 each 5.94 chains to a stake in center of the Canal in Watering Hole Branch by a maple and 2 gum pointers; thence down the Canal in said branch, its various courses to a stake in upper edge of the said public road in north bank of the Canal by a large gum pointer; thence as the upper edge of said road south 19 west 4.23 chains to the beginning, containing 6 acres, more or less, were sold by a court commissioner on June 27, 1923, at 12 o'clock noon at the courthouse door in the

Town of Lumberton, N. C., and that the Trustees of the Indian Normal School of Pembroke, N. C., became the last and highest bidder at the purchase price of \$1900.00, and that the commissioner reported the sale to the Clerk of the Superior Court on June 27th, 1923, and that pursuant to said report the said sale was confirmed as to the defendants John Hunt and wife, Julia Hunt. And you will further take notice that you are required to be and appear before the Clerk of the Superior Court on or before December 21st 1923, and show cause, if any you have, why the said sale should not be confirmed as to each of you; and you will further take notice that if you fail to appear before the undersigned Clerk on or before December 21st 1923, and show cause why said sale should not be confirmed that a decree will be entered, barring you from any further claim or interest in the lands hereinbefore described, and the relief demanded by the plaintiff will be granted.

This the 21st day of November, 1923.  
C. E. SKIPPER,  
Clerk Superior Court Robeson County. 11-25-4 Mors.

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is naturally your foremost thought. Are you preparing now for them?

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Are you waiting until you have a fortune to invest?

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A. J. FLOYD, President.  
T. L. Johnson, Vice Pres. J. F. Johnson, Cashier.  
A. R. Bullock, Vice Pres. Mrs. C. D. Baker, Asst. Cashier.  
J. W. Burns, Vice Pres. J. R. Bracey, Asst. Cashier.