

Chatting About Chatham

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any old cedars in the woods. The idea was to find out whether the prolific growth of the present comes from primitive trees or from those taken into the hills by settlers. The cedar in those hills spreads rapidly. On the flats of eastern North Carolina the seeds lie where they fall. But up there the rains wash them down the hills and thus they are carried into the streams. The cedar is also easily scattered by birds. The inquiries were not satisfactory; yet I have seen no evidence in the woods of such aged cedars as those at the Jones homestead.

President Hooper of Wake Forest.

William Hooper, a son of the young couple that settled at Chapel Hill became one of the early presidents of Wake Forest College. The idea for the establishment of a Baptist college had its inception at a meeting of the Baptist State Convention at Rives Chapel church in western Chatham, just a little over a hundred years ago.

The Hoopers and Joneses were Episcopalians. In fact, Edward Jones was a descendant of Bishop Jeremy Taylor, one of the most famous and literary of all the English churchmen. But the younger William Hooper had become dissatisfied with the doctrine of infant baptism and become a Baptist. Thus Wake Forest College had as one of its earliest presidents, the second, I believe, a descendant of the great English churchman. But when I have heard Dr. Taylor and Dr. Wm. Royall quote Jeremy Taylor, I am wondering if they were aware that a descendant of his had been a predecessor of Dr. Taylor as president of the college.

After Hooper's service at Wake Forest, he returned to Chapel Hill. The mother of Louis Graves is his granddaughter; Louis his great-grandson. It was with them that I visited the site of the Edward Jones home in the Chatham woods, conducted there by my friend Zeb Dark, whose family was a neighbor of the Jones family. Louis Graves thus has within his veins strains of the blood of the great churchman Jeremy Taylor and of the Signer, William Hooper. And through the wife of Jeremy Taylor he is of English royal descent. Is there any wonder that he is making one of the most interesting papers in North Carolina and is one of the finest spirits in the State—even if he is not as saintly as his bishop ancestor?

The Alstons Again

If I had known that I should have the pleasure of spending a night the next week in the home of Mr. Lacy Alston near Pittsboro, I would have refrained from attempting a sketch of the Alstons in the April 1 number of The Voice, in connection with the name of Mr. Edward Alston of Warren county. By the way, I forgot to mention the fact that that gentleman prides himself upon being a member of the Sons of the American Revolution.

I had never before been a guest in the home of Lacy Alston. I had stopped once or twice and chatted with him and Walter Siler at Mr. Siler's rustic library building and office a few feet from the Alston residence. I had talked with him scores of times on the street of Pittsboro. But I had never realized that Lacy is a walking history of Chatham county. I was not aware of the rich store of heirlooms in that old home. There are the oil paintings of four ancestors, beginning with "Chatham Jack." The very cook that served the table is the sixth in descent from Bokara, a slave whom "Chatham Jack" bought from a slave ship at Charleston a century and a half ago.

In fact, I learned so many interesting things that I cannot refrain from again developing the Alston theme.

The original Halifax settler had moved from one of the lower counties. His home of stone with plastering as hard as flint still stands in western Halifax. His numerous sons settled in Halifax and Warren. Philip, probably the eldest, moved to the Horse Shoe Bend of the Deep, in Moore county. It was his home which was attacked by Fanning. But I am counting upon visiting that spot with Clerk of the Court Wilcox of Moore one of these days and writing an article upon the history of that Horse Shoe Bend. Suffice it to say here that Philip Alston later moved away to Tennessee, to a grant of 9,000 acres of land which had been given him by the National government. On that tract the City of Nashville stands and in the area the home of Philip Alston.

Another of the sons of the Halifax patriarch had settled at Pittsboro or thereabouts. His descent, if any, has also disappeared. That is the way of the Alstons. In England on the estate of Odell Castle, which was the home of Baron Alston, who attained that title in 1642, under Charles I, there are left just an old man of 85 and his daughter of 20 odd. Lacy is the only male of the line in Chatham, and Miss Hattie, his cousin, the only female, except

Captain Alston and his niece, Mrs. D. B. Noce, who are of the Warren branch and late comers to Chatham. Miss Hattie's brother lives elsewhere. The family of Governor Alston of South Carolina has seemingly disappeared also. Colonel Wm. Alston, whose possibly greatest of all South Carolina plantations lay on the Waccamaw River, on its course from our Lake Waccamaw to Georgetown Bay, was not only the father of Governor Thomas Alston, who married the ill-fated Theodosia Burr, but the father-in-law of Senator Hayne, the orator who so sufficiently, to the Southern mind, answered Daniel Webster's famous orations in the Webster-Hayne debate.

How "Chatham Jack" Came and Prospered.

"Chatham Jack" was a much younger brother, a half-brother, I believe, of Colonel Philip of the Horse Shoe Bend. Lacy's best figuring has fixed his coming to Chatham from Warren or Halifax in 1800. Colonel Philip had probably gone to Tennessee at that date. Anyway, in 1800 "Chatham Jack" listed nothing in Chatham county except \$20,000 in cash, which was, presumably, the funds received for his Warren or Halifax property. He was, however, acquainted in this section, having visited his brothers and made acquaintances among the elite of neighboring counties. A letter is extant which was written by Colonel Mebane to Jack Alston, in which the Colonel told of his capture by Fanning and his imprisonment at Wilmington. "Chatham Jack" must have been a mature man when he moved to Chatham.

A 25,000-Acre Estate.

That \$20,000 went into lands and slaves and a home. The time came a comparatively few years later when he listed 25,000 acres of land. He got grants on the Pittsboro-Siler City road and bought everything he could between the tracts. Only the Nettles and one other tract could not be added to his domain and broke its ten-mile stretch from four miles of Pittsboro to about the same distance from the present Siler City.

Bladen and Chatham Join Hands

I am writing upon the eve of the bicentennial celebration of the founding of Bladen county and it is fitting to show how Chatham reached down into that county and brought some of its finest treasures back. The grandfather of Lacy Alston and of the deceased Mrs. Walter D. Siler went down into Bladen and married a Miss Lloyd, who was a granddaughter of General Brown, of the Battle of Elizabethtown and "Tory Hole" fame. One of the most notable features of the grand pageant preparing for the celebration at Elizabethtown on April 27 features the Brown story. And yonder in that Alston home is the picture of the General and of his magnificent home on the west bank of the Cape Fear in the lower tip end of Bladen, for which the brick were brought from England. And there stands a great four-poster bedstead of mahogany which a century and a half ago stood in the Brown mansion. I was tempted to ask to be let sleep in that bed. In the dining room is found the very dining table that the large family of Lloyds, daughter and grandchildren of General Brown, used in their Bladen home.

That table is a treasure in itself. It is divided into three sections, totaling 15 or 18 feet in length. Only one of the sections serve as a dining table for the Alston home at present. The other sections sit in other quarters of the dining hall. Readers, the mahogany boards of that table measure two-feet in breadth! I measured them.

That bedstead and table should be on exhibit at Elizabethtown on April 27.

But all the treasures are not of Bladen origin. See this sitting room furniture—bought by Lacy's grandfather in 1826 in Philadelphia. Imagine now, if you want to contrast these days with those of a hundred years ago, see Young Alston driven down to Fayetteville in his carriage or riding down horseback and there taking a boat for Wilmington. In Wilmington he must find shipping to Philadelphia. There, having bought the furniture, the finest of mahogany, and a tall glass vase-like concern in which to set lighted candles when used in the wind, the purchases are billed to Fayetteville by boat. Home by the same route, those things are conveyed by wagon from Fayetteville to the Chatham home. There is the mahogany and there the candle vase—a fragile thing of glass that has endured 108 years without a shiver.

General Cotten.

A little to the south of the present Alston home stood the residence of General Cotten. Even some of the Pittsboro folk locate the home of the General at the Carney Cotten place, two miles north of Pittsboro. Carney Cotten was a son of the General, who got his title from being adjutant-general of the State. He served as a colonel in the Mexican war. The late Mrs. Williams was the general's granddaughter. Fred C. Williams and sisters, Mrs. Gregory and Mrs. Duncan, are his great-grandchildren.

General Cotten married a sister of Lacy Alston's grandfather, a daughter of "Chatham Jack."

In the same community, lived the DeGraffenreids. Just when they came to Chatham and how they are connected with the Baron who settled New Bern, I haven't learned. The Baron left no children in North Carolina, I believe. Probably all the DeGraffenreids in this country are of the Chatham stock. The editor of the Shreveport morning paper when I lived in Louisiana was a DeGraffenreid and he told me that his ancestry lived back in North Carolina. After the extinction of the Chatham family, there has come from another State one to reside in the old home through marrying Mrs. Jordan, one of the Peay sisters, whose father came up from South Carolina and bought the old DeGraffenreid home.

The Home of Small Farmers.

But, after all, the wealthy families of Chatham, as in all parts of the South, were far outnumbered by the poor. Chatham has been and is the home of small farmers. They have caught zip in recent years, but the old county is the natural habitat of the small farmer and here one will find a prosperous people, on a small scale, when other sections have problems we know not of as yet, as many as are the present ones. Chatham is surrounded by thriving towns. Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Burlington, Graham, Greensboro, Asheboro, Sanford—are all within an hour's drive from the heart of the county. One hundred and fifty thousands of urban population will afford a market for the poultry, dairy products, and other produce of the county.

Other Old Chatham Names.

I am taking up too much space with the past of the old county, but one cannot get the flavor of Chatham without knowing that here at Pittsboro arose the history-making family of Manlys; the Stedmans, the Mannings, the Londons, Jacksons, Tomers, Haughtons, Ihries, and Hills. Mrs. E. W. Pott was an Ihrie. Mrs. H. A. London a Jackson; her mother a daughter of Governor Worth. Chatham is said to have been the residence of Captain Blakely, of naval fame, whose fate and that of his vessel is one of the unsolved problems of the U. S. Navy.

Chatham a County of Diversified Industries.

Chatham has no large town. Consequently, one cannot readily conceive the variety of industries harbored in the county. It was Chatham's coal that brought the railroad north from Fayetteville during the war of the sixties to old Egypt, now Cunnock. However, that mine and village are now in Lee. After the war of the sixties the railroad was pushed across the Deep to Gulf, and that village became a depot of supplies for a large area. Among the prosperous merchants of that heyday of Gulf was young John M. McIver. About 46 years ago he, then classed as an old bachelor, married Miss Lois Anderson, a teacher of the writer, who was a sister of the Rev. Neill A. Anderson, one of the South's notable Presbyterian ministers before his death three or four years ago. When I went to Chatham it was a pleasure to meet John M. McIver, Jr., who succeeded his father as merchant and planter at Gulf. During my residence in Chatham both Mrs. McIver and Dr. Anderson died. The latter gave me my first lesson in Latin fifty years ago next fall. Gulf is still a high-toned community. It is about the most distinctly Scotch in the county. Here live the Murchisons, Hills, Devereux, Knights, Oldhams, Rev. George L. Merrill, who was a dignified senior when I entered Wake Forest in 1888, D. Y. Tyner, a native of Robeson, and the Palmers. Gulf has the best railroad facilities of any town in Chatham, being the junction point of the Norfolk Southern and the old C. F. & Y. V. Coal is at hand and a great brick and tile plant, but both the mines and the plant are out of commission. But one day Gulf should be the site of factories.

On the southwest corner is another great brick plant, at Brickhaven. Nearby towers the highest smoke stack in the State, that of the great auxiliary steam plant of the Carolina Power & Light Company, erected at a cost of millions before that company had a surplus of water power. Only in very dry seasons can it be worth a cent, but Chatham gathers big taxes from it. These water power plants produce electric current, but like the steam plant, the company does not need them since the erection of the Yadkin River plant. Up at Siler City as fine bedroom and parlor furniture as any of us need is produced in quantity, and chairs and office equipments galore, wash boards, brooms, and cotton yarns in abundance. At Bynum also is a yarn mill that has lost as little time in the last ten years as any cotton mill in the State, I believe. This is under the oversight of Mr. A. H. London, with Mr. George Moore as superintendent. At Pittsboro a label plant produces millions of clothing labels, but another story is in mind for that plant. Chatham reproduces timber faster than any other section I

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