

SCHOOLGIRL'S THEME PRESERVES STORIES

# Legends Of Scottish Settlers In Cape Fear Valley Recalled

The recent Homecoming at Old Bethesda Church near Aberdeen brings back memories of Mrs. Belle Pleasants to all those who knew and loved her. Born in an old house near the church, before "The War," she had many vivid recollections of those days and loved to talk about them. Most of the substance—fact and legend—in the following theme written by Miss Kate Stewart, now of Washington, D. C., and formerly of Pinebluff, when she was in school in Southern Pines, is the result of conversations with "Miss Belle" and older members of her own family. The Presbyterian postmaster of Solemn Grove and miller of Buchanan's Ford was her great-grandfather, Archibald Buchanan. The boy who had to go to war was his son, Jonathan E. Buchanan, father of the late Mrs. Robert F. Stewart, who died recently at the Pinehurst Nursing Home. The essay follows:

The Battle of Culloden had been fought and lost. "What next?" was the question uppermost in the minds of those scattered followers of Prince Charlie. "America" was the answer that came to their troubled minds. Land of their own—what a dream to poor Scotch crofters!

Hoping against hope, they found a sailing vessel bringing cattle to North Carolina, took passage in the steerage, and, after a hard journey made, harder, if possible, by smallpox, they landed at Wilmington, North Carolina. The men kept the vision of freedom—but were they free? No man, woman, or child could leave Scotland until each one had sworn a solemn oath not to fight against the king of England under any conditions. "I, do swear that I have not in my possession any pistol, gun or arms whatsoever, and never use tartan, plaid or any part of the Highland Garb; and if I do so, may I be cursed in my undertakings, family and property; may I never see my wife and children, or any relation; may I be killed in battle as a coward, and lie without Christian burial, in a strange land, far from the graves of my forefathers and kindred—may all this come across me, if I break my oath."

**They Kept Oath**

Did those Scotchmen keep that oath? The men who fought them at Moore's Creek Bridge could tell you. Years later this oath brought dismay to the heart of many an aspirant for D.A.R. membership. Search and research failed to find an ancestor on either

side who had not kept his oath. One of these Scotchmen followed the Cape Fear River to Cross Creek, looking for land. Finding a little stream where he could build his mill, he asked for this parcel of land and his grant from the King of England was soon in his hand. The hills toward Cross Creek only served as reminders of Bonnie Scotland. The great rocks for grinding had to be hewn out, and the dam built: a Scotchman's dam and a Scotchman's oath were alike—they were never broken by hard rains or by hard lives. This mill, known as Buchanan's Ford, near Solemn Grove Post Office, was soon ready for grinding. When the mill was finished, people came from miles around with their grain, the Buchanan home became a hospitable community center. Solemn Grove was one of the stops for the mail being carried from Cross Creek to Morganton.

Going to mill was an all-day job. One must wait his turn and while he waited for his corn, wheat or oats to be ground, the news of the neighborhood filled in the hours. Children begged to be taken to the mill—to see the whirling water turn the mill wheels and to gaze with wonder at the two long black king snakes that were kept at the mill to control rats and mice. How the cold shivers would run down a little girl's back as she watched their slithering bodies wind in and out along the rafters, but a ten-year-old boy was thrilled when a thick-bodied old moccasin dared to question the king snake's rule.

**News of War**

On one of the days when the farmers had gathered to have their grain ground, the news was spread in the community that there was a war. Passers-by told of South Carolina's hot-headed secession. The son of the mill owner was then fifteen, and he listened with restlessness at such news as came his way. His brothers were all away fighting, one in Lee's army in Virginia, another with the home guards at Fayetteville. It was hard for him to keep his mind on rabbit hunting when he heard so much about North Carolina's slowness. One day, giving vent to the talk about him, he found a piece of white clay and wrote in large letters on a board which he hung on his father's mill: "South Carolina and Secession!" His boyish enthusiasm almost resulted in the loss of the mill when some stragglers from Sherman's army came by. They were ready to burn the mill when the pleadings of his paralyzed father and a good rain from the Almighty saved the day. It was not long before the young fellow had his chance to prove

his enthusiasm. The call came for all over sixteen to join the Confederate army. His older brother, a captain in Wayne County, sent for the boy to join him at Fort Fisher, near Wilmington.

His clothes in a roll behind him, he rode his horse, a beautiful mare that he had raised, to Fayetteville, with a faithful servant, Jake, following to bring the horse back. These boys were such immature striplings that, as a company of them went into battle, a band with an attempt at humor played "Rock-A-Bye Baby." The boy was homesick; the volunteers made it hard for the drafted boys or "conscripts." At Fort Fisher they worked to the accompaniment of the booming surf; the hardening soldiers sang the song of the recruit:

Weep not, Conscript, weep not,  
But make yourself at home.  
Just take your mule and hardware  
And pick 'em one by one.

The lad was captured on that stormy Christmas at Fort Fisher and carried to a northern prison. His whereabouts were unknown to his family at home.

**Found Hiding Place**

In the meantime, stragglers from Kilpatrick's army had found the hiding place where Jake had hidden his mare. In the still night, broken by the whip-poorwill's lonely note and the screech owl's weird cry, Jake and the two little dogs left behind by their young owner slipped off to the woods to hide the mare while the soldiers were plundering the house. Jake was seen, but he gave the mare a sharp lick across the back and she escaped deep into the pines. Family legend holds that Jake was beaten by the soldiers until his nose bled. Upon seeing their adopted master treated thus, the two little dogs, with more loyalty than pedigree, are said to have added an incessant howl to the sounds of the night.

These same stragglers used almost every known method to persuade the faithful servants to tell where the meat and silver were buried, but no threats were fierce enough. They were burning the furniture—even the wooden churn—when word came that Wheeler's men were close behind them. Jumping on their horses, they fled—and the boy's horse was waiting for him when he returned home from Elmira prison. During this confinement he made a vow never to criticize food if the time ever came when he had enough to eat. He came home "after the surrender," broken in health and spirit, but overcame these and other burdens to become a planter and turpentine-distiller. He represented his fellow citizens in the State Legislature, and became influential in the development of the Sandhills. When he died, many of his close friends were "Yankees."

**Bullet Holes**

Over at Bethesda Church, where he rests, a group of old people who knew him were talking about him and others who had been of so much help to the Church and to the community. Conversation lagged, as it will sometimes when old people are busy with their memories. A big, shiny car stopped and a lady with a "Yankee twang" spoke to them where they sat under the trees, and asked, "Is this the church that has bullet holes shot by Sherman's army when it came through here?" One of the white-haired old ladies had been born near the Church and had spent all her life nearby and had a great love for it and its traditions. She answered, "No ma'am, it is not; the bullet holes are there but Sherman's army was a long way off when they were put there. One night, when my family and some guests were eating supper, a loud knock was heard at the back door. Liza, evidently much upset at having to disturb us, said that a man in gray was there and that he was asking to spend the night. Of course, we hated to refuse one of our soldiers, but we couldn't possibly take care of him. Several hours later we heard some shooting and were puzzled as no troops were known to be in the neighborhood. The next morning we found the soldier, huddled in a heap at the church steps, dead drunk. That is the real explanation of those bullet holes."

The cover plants, multiflora rose and sericea lespedeza, provide the necessary protection the animals need to get from one place to another to feed, to roost or to nest. They are planted around the edges of woods, along fence rows and ditch banks.



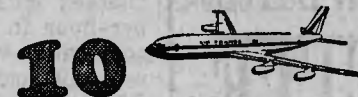
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