

Orange County—1752-1952

Edited by

HUGH LEFLER AND PAUL WAGER

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Chapel Hill

1953

inhabitants of the State." The Comptroller apparently procrastinated, for a year later the General Assembly issued a similar directive to that officer.

Hillsboro, because of its location, was continuing to play a prominent part in the economy of North Carolina. It was the most convenient place for business men of the eastern and western areas of the state to meet and discuss their affairs. It was probably with this in mind that the General Assembly, on December 3, 1781, passed an act levying a tax on the residents of the Hillsboro District and the town of Hillsboro, the returns to be used in the repair of the court house and stocks, and for the repair of the streets within the town limits.

In 1788 an event of national importance occurred in Hillsboro. This was the convention which met in that place and which had been called to consider the ratification of the Constitution of the United States. Orange county was represented by Alexander Mebane, William Mebane, William McCauley, William Sheppard and Jonathan Lindley, while Absalom Tatom was the delegate from the town of Hillsboro. The majority of the delegates who attended the convention were Anti-Federalists, and were led by Willie Jones of Halifax. This faction controlled the convention, as their majority numbered an even 100, but they did elect a Federalist, Samuel Johnston, as presiding officer of the body. Prominent names among the Anti-Federalists were Timothy Bloodworth, Joseph Caldwell, Judge Samuel Spencer and Major Joseph McDowell. The outstanding leaders of the Federalists were James Iredell, Samuel Johnston, William R. Davie, Richard Dobbs Spaight and Archibald MacLaine. The Anti-Federalists hoped that their opposition to the ratification of the Constitution would give greater weight to the general demand for amendments to that document. Every important phase of the Constitution was discussed and argued, but when ratification was put to a vote it was revealed that there had been no changes in the original sentiments of the delegates—ratification was defeated by a vote of 184-84. The convention then recommended that a Bill of Rights be included in the Constitution and submitted a total of twenty-six amendments for consideration. They also recommended that retaliatory tariffs be in-

and trustee. The McCauley brothers, Matthew and William, gave 150 and 100 acres respectively. Immigrants from the north of Ireland, Matthew established a large holding on Morgan's creek, where he had a mill and a blacksmith shop, while William lived a few miles west of Chapel Hill in the district called the "Great Meadows." The former served as a lieutenant in the Revolution, while the latter represented the county in the House of Commons during most of the war, in the Senate from 1784 to 1788, and in the Hillsboro Convention of 1788 which refused to ratify the Federal Constitution.

Hardy and Mark Morgan, also brothers, donated 125 acres and 107 acres respectively, and were among the older inhabitants of this section. Mark lived three miles southeast of the village on land, bought from Earl Granville, which extended up to the summit of Chapel Hill. His brother's land lay along Bowlin's creek, east of the village.

Another deciding factor in the selection of Chapel Hill was the fact that the great roads or highways from Petersburg to Pittsboro and the country beyond, and from New Bern towards Greensboro and Salisbury crossed at this point. It might be added that at the northeast corner of the crossing there was a chapel of the Church of England, hence the name "New Hope Chapel Hill or the Hill of New Hope Chapel."

While these purely mercenary considerations had great weight with the selecting fathers, another factor surely had its effect—the idealness and enchantment of the "Hill" itself. Davie, in a graphic description, written the following September, in announcing the sale of lots, seems to have felt this charm:

The seat of the University is on the summit of a very high ridge—there is a gentle declivity of three hundred yards to the village; which is situated on a handsome plain, considerably lower than the site of the public buildings, but so greatly elevated above the neighbouring country, as to furnish an extensive and beautiful landscape, composed of the heights in the vicinity of Eno, Little and Flat Rivers.

The ridge appears to commence about half a mile directly east of the buildings, where it arises abruptly several hundred feet: the peak is called Point-Prospect; the flat country spreads off below like the ocean, giving an immense hemisphere, in which the eye seems to be lost in the extent of space.

the people of Orange. In spite of the fact that Congressman Willie P. Mangum was committed to the Crawford ticket the vote stood at 591 for Crawford and 638 for Jackson. In the election of 1828 Mangum was the Jackson elector and James S. Smith was the Adams elector, but again the county cast its vote for Jackson 1036 to 440. In 1832 the county was overwhelming for Jackson giving him a vote of 759 to only 170 for Clay. Between 1832 and 1836 many of the leading men of the county broke with the Jackson party and in that year the vote for Van Buren, the Democratic candidate, was 1103, and Hugh L. White, the Whig candidate, polled 905 votes.

In the congressional elections of the period 1824-1836, as in local elections, there were no clear party lines. In 1825 Orange gave Willie P. Mangum 1553 votes to only 716 for Josiah Crudup, and in 1827 Archibald D. Murphey secured a huge majority over Daniel A. Barringer of Wake, who nevertheless was the successful candidate. Barringer defeated John Craig in 1829, but Craig had a good majority in Orange. The election of 1833 brought John G. A. Williamson into the fray against Barringer and Barringer again won even though Williamson received 1518 votes in Orange to only 908 for his opponent. Dr. William Montgomery, a tried and true Jackson Democrat, defeated Barringer in 1835 and received from his own county 1501 votes to 900 for Barringer.

In the field of state politics from 1824 to 1836 Orange was represented in the state Senate by Dr. William Montgomery for ten of the twelve years. James Mebane and Joseph Allison each served one term. Prominent members of the House of Commons were John Boon, John Stockard, William McCauley, James Mebane, Priestley Mangum, Joseph Allison, John Scott, Frederick Nash, Thomas J. Faddis, William Phillips, Hugh Waddell, and William A. Graham.

There were two questions on the state level that vitally concerned Orange in this period. One was state aid for internal improvements. Orange county being located above the fall line felt a great need for roads and river improvement in order to get her goods to market. Dennis Heartt, editor of the *Hillsborough Recorder*, constantly ran editorials favoring state aid and copied

them lived in Hillsboro, the others in the country round about. William Hooper with twenty-two was the largest slaveholder in Hillsboro, and Richard Bennehan, a planter of St. Mary's district, with twenty-four was the largest slaveholder in the county. Others who owned ten or more were George Allen, John Taylor, Matthew McCauley, John Hogan, and Thomas H. Perkins with ten each; Walter Alves with eleven; William Sheppard and William O'Neal with twelve each; Hardy Morgan with thirteen; William Cain with fourteen; Alexander Mebane with sixteen; and an unnamed person with twenty slaves.

The slave population of Orange county continued to increase more rapidly than the white during the nineteenth century. The figures for 1800 were white 12,222 and slave 3,327; for 1810, white 15,102 and slave 4,701; for 1820, white 16,777 and slave 6,153; for 1830, white 15,918 and slave 7,339; for 1840, white 16,772 and slave 6,954; for 1850, white 11,330 and slave 5,244; and for 1860, white 11,311 and slave 5,108. It is to be noted that both white and slave population declined during the latter decades, but the slave decline was less drastic and came later than the white. Some of the slave decline resulted from migration of slaveholders to other parts of North Carolina or to other states; to the loss of territory cut off to form new counties; to sale of slaves to non-residents of the county; or to the manumission of slaves. Some few slaves also bought their freedom. The free Negro population of Orange increased from 101 in 1790 to 631 in 1840, declined to 481 in 1850, and increased to 528 in 1860.

The slave population of the county was highest in 1830, but at that time it amounted to a little less than thirty-one per cent of the total population. Slave ownership was widely dispersed throughout the county. In 1860 forty-eight per cent of all land owners were slaveholders, but twenty-one per cent of the owners possessed only one slave, and only seven per cent possessed twenty or more. In 1860 the three largest slaveholders were I. N. Patterson with 106, Paul Cameron with 98, and Henry Whitted with 78. Cameron was reputed to have owned a total of 1,900 slaves in the 1850's, but all except the 98 were on absentee owned plantations. It is interesting to note that whites, free

existing form was continued. The county court retained its control over the administration of the affairs of the county. The court was composed of all the justices of the county, but any three justices could hold court. A common practice was for a majority of the justices to meet at the beginning of the year, appoint a chairman, and designate five of their number to hold the court for the year. As before, the justices were commissioned by the governor on the recommendation of the General Assembly to hold office during good behavior. They might be removed by the General Assembly for misbehavior, absence, or inability.

At the court held in May, 1777 the names of 22 persons who had been commissioned justices of the peace by Governor Richard Caswell are recorded. They were John Butler, Nathaniel Rochester, Thomas Taylor, Eli McDaniel, William McCauley, John Hawkins, Hugh Twining, William Courtney, John Steel, William Cain, Charles Abercrombie, Thomas Hart, Alexander Mebane, Sr., Alexander Mebane Jr., James Freeland, John Hogan, Robert Abercrombie Sr., Richard Bennehan, Richard Holleman, William Rainey, John Ray, and John Nichols. Of these, the first eleven listed, appeared, took the state oath and also the oath of a justice of the peace, 'subscribed the test', and took their seats. The others qualified later.

Alexander Mebane Jr., a son of the county's first sheriff, was commissioned as the first sheriff under statehood. His bondsmen, for 1,000 pounds, were John Butler, James Mebane and Nathaniel Rochester. He was also named treasurer, James Freeland and Eli McDaniel going on his bond for 2,000 pounds.

The court then proceeded to the choice of a clerk, Nathaniel Rochester being unanimously elected. He 'qualified agreeable to Law, and subscribed the test.' It then named no less than 33 persons, none being justices of the peace, as overseers of the roads, indicating the road for which each man was responsible. Other entries of that court include the following:

Charles Richardson being called upon by the court as a suspicious person, and refusing to take the oath of allegiance to this State agreeable to the directions of an act of General Assembly. Ordered that he be committed to the common gaol there to remain until he takes the said oath, and pays the lawful fees thereupon, and that the gaoler receive him accordingly.

such citation (Quakers excepted) or having appeared and failed to take the oath prescribed by such act, depart this State to Europe or the West Indies within sixty days from this present term, and that the clerk furnish the sheriff of the county with a copy hereof, together with the names of such persons, and that the sheriff when so furnished make known this order to them, and make a return thereof to the next court.

At this same term of court, the several assessors within the county exhibited an account of their assessments in the several districts, to wit:

The district of Hillsborough	£313	
The district of St. Thomas	80	
The district of Tryon	101	16s
The district of Orange	117	
The district of Chatham	68	
The district of St. Mary's	216	
The district of St. Mark's	94	13s
The district of St. Alops	87	12s
	<hr/>	
	£1078	1s

The following justices were appointed to take the lists of property for the next year's taxes.

William Courtney Esq.	Hillsborough
William Rainey Esq.	Chatham
Thomas Taylor Esq.	Orange
Charles Abercrombie Esq.	St. Mark's and St. Mary's
John Hawkins Esq.	St. Alops
John Butler Esq.	Tryon
William McCauley	St. Thomas

The constitution provided that there should be in each county a sheriff, one or more coroners, and constables, but it did not specify how they should be chosen. For some time all continued to be appointed by the county court. The court also appointed a clerk, a register, a county attorney, a standard-keeper, an entry-taker and surveyor, rangers for estrays, and overseers of the roads. In 1777, the office of clerk of the Crown was abolished, and thereafter each Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions had only one clerk and, as just indicated, he was appointed by the local court. The first clerk of court in Orange County to be appointed by the local magistrates was Nathaniel Rochester.

The office of county trustee (treasurer) was in existence in Orange county almost from the beginning, for in August, 1778 there is this entry in the minutes of the county court:

Ordered that John Hogan, Esquire, be appointed Trustee for this County, and that he enter into bond with William McCauley and William Cain securities in the sum of one thousand five hundred pounds, for the faithful discharge of the trust reposed in him.

There seemed to have been a general expectation that freedom from England would mean freedom from taxes. For this reason the state had to rely heavily on borrowing during the Revolution and for several years thereafter. Nevertheless the General Assembly of 1777, laid the foundations of a tax system whose most significant feature was an ad valorem tax on most types of property. The first state tax levy, in 1777, was at the rate of a half-penny on each pound valuation, or the equivalent of 21 cents on \$100 valuation. The rate increased steadily during the war years until it reached the staggering height of \$20.00 per \$100 valuation in 1781 for all taxables except money, on which the rate was \$1.67. Of course many could not pay their taxes, and those who could pay paid partly in continental currency which was rapidly depreciating in value. A shift to specie payment in 1782 was accompanied by a sharp reduction in rates, and in 1784 the ad valorem principle was abandoned and a land tax at a uniform rate per acre and a poll tax substituted.

The legislature which met in 1777 delegated to the counties the right to levy an annual tax to raise funds for paying the contingent expenses of the county government. The maximum rate was one shilling on the 100 pounds valuation of property, and all freemen who did not possess taxable property paid a poll tax of one shilling. Two years later the maximum rate on property was raised to five shillings per 100 pounds and unmarried men without property were required to pay a poll tax equivalent to the levy on 400 pounds valuation of taxable property. In addition to the taxes for contingencies there was a levy in each county to care for the poor. The maximum fixed for this levy in 1777 was 6 pence on the 100 pounds valuation and 6 pence on polls without property. To keep pace with inflation the rates

Some idea of the kind of matters which came before the county court in the post-Revolutionary period may be obtained by examining the minutes of the August term in 1786. The court which lasted nearly a week, was held by three justices—John Butler, William McCauley and William Ansley. A summary of the actions recorded follows:

The sheriff returned a venire for that term of court; a grand jury of fifteen was impaneled; trial juries were impaneled for several criminal cases as well as several civil cases; half a dozen persons were exempted from the poll tax; two children were bound to masters to serve until their maturity; more than twenty deeds were acknowledged and ordered to be registered; two or three administrators were appointed to settle estates; a jury was summoned to divide and lay off an estate; three persons were granted licenses to keep taverns; a jury was named to mark and lay off a new road (it to be the best and most direct from William McCauley's mill to Hillsborough); a tax collector for the District of St. Mark's was allowed insolvents for eleven polls and 433 acres of land; tax collectors were appointed for each of the seven taxing districts; several road overseers were appointed; and jurors were ordered summoned for the next term of court.

Throughout the whole period from the Revolution until the Civil War the county tax structure was closely geared to the state structure. Both relied heavily on the land tax and the poll tax assessed and collected by the same officials. The list-takers, assessors and collectors were all named by and responsible to the county court though the sheriff, as collector, also had a responsibility to the state treasurer with whom he settled for the state taxes. While at first both levels of government taxed the same objects, the state in time levied a variety of occupational or privilege taxes in addition to the taxes on property and polls.

For the purpose of listing and assessing property the county was subdivided into convenient districts, or according to the law of 1784 into captain's districts and towns. The first act regulating the listing of property authorized the county courts to divide the county into districts and appoint a justice for each district to secure a "just and true" list of all taxable property,

condition with many prominent and influential citizens on its roll. Among them might be mentioned the beloved Shepherd Strudwick, who has been a member of Eagle Lodge for fifty-three years.

Masonry has been active in Chapel Hill though with a less continuous record. University Lodge No. 80 was chartered in 1824. Names still familiar in the area appear on its rolls—McDade, Lloyd, Cheek, Barbee, McCauley, Freeland, Neville, and Henderson. It failed to add new members and the scant records state that its older members died, moved to other towns or traveled west. The lodge ceased to function in 1849. A group of its loyal members secured a new charter in 1855 as Caldwell Lodge No. 180, named for the late President of the University. This lodge like Eagle in Hillsboro increased in membership with the war years and functioned with some difficulty under Reconstruction. Among its officers are listed Professors Fetter and A. W. Mangum of the University and Solomon Pool, its President during those troubled times. With the closing of the University the lodge suffered as many of its members withdrew. It survived, however, until 1880. In that year a disastrous fire destroyed all the old records and the lodge surrendered its charter.

Again a few faithful members went to work and secured a new charter in 1888 as University Lodge No. 408. The leading spirit in this revival was W. N. Pritchard, its first Master. It met for many years above a store on Franklin Street. In 1931 it purchased the old Baptist Church which it converted into a lodge hall of which it is justly proud. The electric insignia which stands in front of it was erected in 1941 in memory of its distinguished Past Master, Dr. E. A. Abernethy. It has played a quiet yet active part in the affairs of the town and University. It shared in the laying of cornerstones for Alumni Building in 1898, for Grimes Dormitory in 1921, and for the Memorial Hospital in 1951. One of its members, W. E. Caldwell, was Grand Master for 1950-51 and the Grand Lodge held its annual meeting in Chapel Hill under his direction in April, 1951.

The Order of the Eastern Star is represented in both Hillsboro and Chapel Hill. The chapter in Hillsboro was established in

1810	Henry Thompson	1821	James S. Smith
1811	Henry Thompson	1822	Thomas Clancy
1812	John Street	1823	Thomas Clancy
1813	Thomas Ruffin	1824	John Scott
1814	James Child	1825	John Scott
1815	Thomas Ruffin	1826	John Scott
1827	John Scott	1831	Thomas J. Faddis
1828	Frederick Nash	1832	Thomas J. Faddis
1829	Frederick Nash	1833	William A. Graham
1830	William H. Phillips	1834	William A. Graham
		1835	William A. Graham

County Members of the General Assembly, 1777-1953

<i>Year</i>	<i>Senators</i>	<i>Representatives</i>
1777	Thomas Hart	Nathaniel Rochester (resigned) Thomas Burke John Butler
1778	John Kinchen	John Butler (resigned) Thomas Burke (resigned) William McCauley Mark Patterson
1779	John Hogan	William McCauley Mark Patterson
1780	William Courtney	William McCauley Mark Patterson
1781	John Butler	Jesse Benton Robert Campbell
1782	William Mebane	William McCauley Mark Patterson
1783	William McCauley	Alexander Mebane Thomas Burke
1784	William McCauley	William Hooper John Butler
1784, Oct.	William McCauley	Alexander Mebane John Butler
1785	William McCauley	William Courtney William Cain
1786	William McCauley	Jonathan Lindley John Butler William Hooper
1787	William McCauley	Alexander Mebane Jonathan Lindley
1788	William McCauley	Alexander Mebane Jonathan Lindley

1812	Archibald D. Murphey	Duncan Cameron Isaac Holt
1813	Archibald D. Murphey	Duncan Cameron John Craig
1814	Archibald D. Murphey	John Craig Frederick Nash
1815	Archibald D. Murphey	Frederick Nash John Craig
1816	Archibald D. Murphey	William Holt Frederick Nash
1817	Archibald D. Murphey	William Holt Frederick Nash
1818	Archibald D. Murphey	James Mebane Willie P. Mangum
1819	Duncan Cameron	W. Barbee Willie P. Mangum
1820	Michael Holt	Willie Shaw James Mebane
1821	Michael Holt	Willie Shaw James Mebane
1822	Duncan Cameron	James Mebane John McCauley
1823	Duncan Cameron	James Mebane John McCauley
1824	William Montgomery	William McCauley John Boon
1825	William Montgomery	William McCauley John Boon
1826	William Montgomery	John Boon John Stockard
1827	William Montgomery	John Boon John Stockard
1828	James Mebane	Hugh Waddell John Stockard
1829	William Montgomery	Thomas H. Taylor John Stockard
1830	William Montgomery	John Stockard Joseph Allison
1831	William Montgomery	Joseph Allison James Mebane
1832	William Montgomery	Joseph Allison Priestly H. Mangum
1833	William Montgomery	Joseph Allison John Stockard
1834	William Montgomery	Joseph Allison John Stockard

1941		E. T. Sanders	John W. Umstead, Jr.
		E. C. Brooks, Jr.	
1943		E. T. Sanders	John W. Umstead, Jr.
1945		W. Dennis Madry	John W. Umstead, Jr.
1947	16th	James Webb	John W. Umstead, Jr.
1949		James Webb	John W. Umstead, Jr.
1951		Ralph H. Scott	John W. Umstead, Jr.
1953		Ralph H. Scott	John W. Umstead, Jr.

Members of Constitutional Conventions

Borough Members from Hillsboro

1788	_____	Absalom Tatam
1789	_____	Samuel Benton

County Members

1788	_____	Alexander Mebane, William Mebane, William McCauley, Jonathan Lindley
1789	_____	James Christmass, Alexander Mebane, Thomas H. Perkins, William F. Strudwick, Joseph Hodge
1835	_____	James S. Smith, William Montgomery
1861	_____	William A. Graham, John Berry
1865	_____	John Berry, Samuel F. Phillips
1868	_____	Edwin M. Holt, John W. Graham
1875	_____	Josiah Turner, William A. Graham (died before meeting of Convention)

SHERIFFS OF ORANGE COUNTY

Alexander Mebane	1752 to 1754
John Gray	1754 to 1756
Lawrence Thompson	1757
Josiah Dixon	1758 to 1760
William Reed	1760 to 1762
Thomas Hart	1763
William Nunn	1765
Thomas Hart	1768
Tyree Harris	1768
John Lea	1769
John Butler	1770
Thomas Donaldson	1772
Alexander Mebane, Jr.	1777 to 1780
John Hawkins	1780
James Mebane	1782 to 1784
James Freeland	1784 to 1786
John Nichols	1787
William McCauley	1789 to 1790
John Sloss	1791 to 1793
John Willis	1793
Joseph Hodge	1794 to 1796
Andrew Murdock	Apt. by Governor June 4, 1796 to 1799
Samuel Turrentine	1799 to 1809
David Ray	1809 to 1810
Josiah Turner	1810 to 1818
Edward Harris	1818
Thomas Clancy	1820 to 1822
Thomas D. Watts	1823 to 1832
James C. Turrentine	1833 to 1852
Richard M. Jones	August 23, 1852 to August 26, 1862
Hugh B. Guthrie	August 26, 1862 to August 22, 1864
Richard M. Jones	August 22, 1864 to July 4, 1865
Hugh B. Guthrie	July 4, 1865 to 1867
E. H. Ray	1867
John Turner	August 15, 1868 to September 5, 1870
Thomas H. Hughes	September 5, 1870 to December 6, 1880
John Knox Hughes	December 6, 1880 to September 5, 1904

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