

A PROFILE OF  
COLONIAL HALIFAX COUNTY,  
NORTH CAROLINA

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by  
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MARION PARKER SYKES, JR. A Profile of Colonial Halifax  
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The purpose of this study is to present a profile of the social, religious, economic, and political life of Colonial Halifax County. The period encompassed by this study ranges from the earliest settlements of Halifax County, around 1711, until the proclamation of the Halifax Resolves on April 12, 1776.

Prior to the settlement of the county, it may be surmised from available records that the area had twice been visited by whites. Ralph Lane's voyage up the Roanoke River in March, 1586, in all probability, carried him and his party into the present area of Halifax County. Edward Bland, of Fort Henry, Virginia, also reached the present area of the county in 1650 while on a trading venture with the Indians.

Although Halifax did not become a distinct county until 1758, it was settled largely between 1720-1740. The majority of the settlers came from the counties of lower Virginia or up the Roanoke River from the Albemarle settlements of North Carolina. The colonists cleared the land, made valuable use of the products of the forests, and began raising large quantities of corn, cotton, and tobacco. The livestock industry and the manufacture of naval stores were conducted

on a large scale. Despite the presence of the Roanoke River, the bulk of trade outside the county was conducted with the nearby Virginia towns by way of the overland route. The Roanoke River was too shallow and unpredictable for thriving water borne transportation.

Halifax County was created from Edgecombe County in 1758. The county seat was to be located at Enfield, founded in 1725 and site of one of the five superior courts of the colony. But, before the act creating the county became effective, the county seat and the court were transferred to the town of Halifax which was more centrally located. Halifax, settled around 1740, had been incorporated by the Colonial Assembly in 1757, and it rapidly developed into the leading social and commercial center of the county. Other communities and settlements of note were Weldon, settled in 1752 by the Weldon family; Littleton, settled in 1760 by Thomas Person Little; Crowell's Crossroads, settled in 1720 by John and Edward Crowell; and the Whitaker's Chapel Community, founded in 1750 by the Whitaker family of Warwick County, Virginia.

Religion played an important role in the activities of the county. Edgecombe Parish, established in 1756, and Elizabeth Parish, created in 1774, were the Anglican parishes in the county. The extent of Anglican activity was revealed in the establishment of four Anglican chapels, Kehukee, Conocornara, Quanky, and Halifax. The first recorded reference to Baptists in the county was made in 1742, when Kehukee

Baptist Church was founded by William Sojourner of Burleigh, Virginia. From this church, in 1769, was to come the Kehukee Baptist Association, the fourth such association to be founded in the colonies. This association included most of the General Baptist churches in the colony of North Carolina, as well as southern Virginia and northern South Carolina. The Methodists entered the county just prior to the Revolution, and possibly two Methodist churches, Eden's Chapel and Whitaker's Chapel were created prior to the Revolution.

Beginning with the "Enfield Riot" in 1759 and continuing until the Halifax Resolves of April 12, 1776, the county demonstrated a strong Whig attachment and developed a spirit of opposition and defiance toward county and colonial authorities. The Halifax Resolves, passed by the Fourth Provincial Congress of North Carolina which met at Halifax, in 1776, was the first official action for independence taken by any of the colonies. The Resolves had a notable effect on the movement for the national Declaration of Independence.

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## PREFACE

In writing the history of a Colonial county, there are many obstacles and hardships to be overcome. Primary sources are indeed restricted; many that would be useful to this study have been destroyed or lost. But what is lacking in authentic source material is overly compensated in legend, folklore, and tradition. Thus the writer is faced with the dilemma of evaluating fact from legend and deciding which materials have significance. In this work, I have attempted to construct a profile of Colonial Halifax County from the most reliable sources available. Sources that relate to religion overshadowed other materials and thus, in this study, a heavy emphasis is placed on the religious history of the county. The limitations of materials on other aspects of life in the county restricted their discussion. In this work, I have attempted to write an accurate study of Colonial Halifax County in so far as available sources would allow.

In the preparation and construction of this thesis I am deeply indebted to many people. To the staff of the Halifax County Public Library, particularly Miss Maude Fleming, a special note of thanks is due for their untiring efforts in securing materials, tours, and interviews for me throughout the county. I am also indebted to North Carolina Wesleyan College for allowing me the use of their

very fine Methodist Collection. Dr. Mildred D. Southwick and Mrs. Frankie Cubbedge of the Joyner Memorial Library, East Carolina College, rendered valuable aid in the collection of sources. Dr. Joseph F. Steelman deserves a special note of gratitude for his aid, advice, and invaluable assistance in the construction and preparation of this study. To the two other members of my committee, Dr. Lawrence F. Brewster and Dr. Richard C. Todd, a similar note of gratitude is expressed for their assistance and advice. I wish also to express my gratitude and thanks to Dr. Paul Murray and Dr. Ralph Hardee Rives, who were also of great assistance. To the many kind people throughout Halifax County who aided me in many ways, I am also deeply grateful.

This thesis is affectionately dedicated to my mother and father, "who gave me the courage to continue."



## CHAPTER I

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE COUNTY

Halifax County is bounded on the north by the Roanoke River and on the south by Fishing Creek. Along these bodies of water lived the first inhabitants of the county, the Tuscarora Indians. The Tuscarora's domain embraced virtually all of eastern North Carolina, with their principal settlements lying between the Neuse and Pamlico rivers.<sup>1</sup> Evidently, there was a sizable settlement within Halifax County. Indian Ridge and Magazine Springs in the town of Halifax, plus the discovery of numerous arrowheads, tomahawks, and other relics in various sections of the county afford conclusive proof of the presence of Indians.<sup>2</sup> The largest settlement was located near the town of Halifax along the lowlands of the Roanoke River. Here, on Indian Ridge, many remnants of this extinct civilization exist. Fragments of pottery, arrowheads, and tomahawks can be found along the ridge. Magazine Springs, skillfully and cleverly constructed, still trickles down the moss-covered rocks just as it did centuries ago. In the southern part of the county, along Fishing Creek, similar relics can be found.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley A. South, Indians in North Carolina (Raleigh, 1962), p. 45, hereinafter cited as South, Indians in North Carolina.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Hardee Rives, "Colonial Background" [of Halifax County] (unpublished manuscript in possession of author), hereinafter cited as Rives, "Colonial Background."

In the fertile lowlands, the Tuscaroras raised large quantities of corn, while hunting and trapping the plentiful game. The county was full of deer, turkey, and racoon, and the pelts and furs of these animals were used as well as the meat. The villages of the Tuscaroras were located among their fields of corn with houses scattered along the banks of the river.<sup>3</sup> Despite these favorable conditions, the total Indian population of the county probably never exceeded one thousand.<sup>4</sup>

It is not known when the Indians left the county, but available records make no mention of any hostilities between whites and Indians. Even during the Tuscarora War, no mention was made of any conflict between the two races. It may be surmised that this was due to the fact that the county was not densely settled at this time or that the great majority of the Indians had migrated elsewhere. The Ransoms, Oxendines, Cummingses, and Brayboys of Robeson and adjacent counties of southeastern North Carolina trace their ancestors to Halifax County.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it may be conjectured that at some unknown date, the red man left the county and moved elsewhere.

The Indians left their imprint in the numerous names they gave to creeks and towns of the county. Quanky,

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<sup>3</sup> South, Indians in North Carolina, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> W. C. Allen, History of Halifax County (Boston, 1918), p. 4, hereinafter cited as Allen, Halifax County.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas L. Rights, The American Indian in North Carolina (Durham, 1947), p. 146.

Chockayotte, Kehukee, and Conocanara are some of the principal creeks which bear Indian names.<sup>6</sup> The Indians called the Roanoke River, "Moratuck," which means "river of death." It may be surmised that the river was so named for two reasons. First of all, the river is known for its turbulent currents and sudden and disasterous floods, which in past years often brought devastation and death.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, the lowlands of the river bred mosquitoes in immense numbers and malaria was prevalent in earlier times. Thus, the mighty Roanoke was a danger as well as a great benefit to the county.

Halifax County was settled after the Tuscarora War of 1711-13, although it did not become a distinct county until 1758. From 1720 to 1740, a steady stream of settlers migrated there from Virginia. Possibly, the county had twice been visited earlier by whites. The support for what has been described as the first exploration of the county by whites is based upon Ralph Lane's narrative of a voyage made up the Roanoke in March, 1586, in search of copper. Lane with a party of forty men traveled 160 miles from his base on Roanoke Island up the Roanoke River.<sup>8</sup> If Lane's

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<sup>6</sup> Sidney B. Allen and R. Standford Travis, Halifax County: Economic and Social (Durham, 1920), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina (Raleigh, 1954), I, 157, hereinafter cited as Sharpe, Geography of North Carolina.

<sup>8</sup> David Beers Quinn (ed.), The Roanoke Voyages (London, 1955), I, 265-272.

account is accurate, his party probably reached the present-day area of Halifax County and perhaps the northeast corner of Warren County. A second group of adventurers, in 1650, led by Edward Bland, left Fort Henry, Virginia, and traveled southwest in hopes of establishing trade relations with the Indians. Upon reaching the Roanoke River, they traveled along its banks until they reached the falls and whereupon discouraged by hostile Indians, they returned to Fort Henry. Bland estimated his journey to have been 120 miles.<sup>9</sup> Such a course would have brought him into present-day Halifax County. These two narratives are very difficult to pinpoint as to exact locations, but it may be surmised that both groups did touch upon some parts of the county.

The first permanent residents came to the county in large numbers from 1720 to 1740. It is thought that a settlement existed in Halifax County as early as 1711, on the south bank of the Roanoke River near the present village of Tillery.<sup>10</sup> But from 1720 to 1740, there was a steady migration into the area from the lower Virginia counties,

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<sup>9</sup> Manly Wade Wellman, The County of Warren, North Carolina, 1586-1917 (Chapel Hill, 1959), p. 8, hereinafter cited as Wellman, County of Warren.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart Hall Smith and Claiborne T. Smith, Jr., The History of Trinity Parish, Scotland Neck, and Edgecombe Parish, Halifax County (Durham, 1955), p. 3, hereinafter cited as Smith and Smith, Trinity Parish.

particularly Surry and the Isle of Wight.<sup>11</sup> This area offered many tangible attractions to induce people to migrate. The availability of cheap lands for raising tobacco and livestock and dissatisfaction with the arbitrary government of Virginia were the two chief reasons.<sup>12</sup> The major settlements were situated on the Roanoke River and on the nearby creeks of Quanky and Kehukee. Among the earliest settlers were Philip Rayford, who received his grant in 1720,<sup>13</sup> James Milliken and Barnby McKinnie, Jr., in 1725, Thomas Haynes, 1731, David Hopper, 1731, and John Mulky, in 1732.<sup>14</sup> Along the many creeks of the county, settlers moved in to claim the land and clear it for raising crops.

In 1722, a group of Scotch-Highlanders came across the Roanoke from Virginia and settled a few miles north of the town of Scotland Neck, near Palmyra. They remained for only a few years as the reoccurring floods of the river forced them to leave; they migrated southward and settled on the Cape Fear River.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> John B. Boddie, Seventeenth Century Isle of Wight County, Virginia (Baltimore, 1938), p. 202-3.

<sup>12</sup> Theodore Oscar Barck and Hugh Talmage Lefler, Colonial America (New York, 1958), pp. 162-63.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, Halifax County, p. 10. Allen, in 1918, based this statement on information which has since been destroyed.

<sup>14</sup> Halifax County Deed Book I, 87, 184, 5, 2. Halifax County Court House, Halifax, North Carolina.

<sup>15</sup> Rives, "Colonial Background."

As the population increased in the northern part of the area, a similar development occurred in the southern part. A few miles north of Fishing Creek, along Huckleberry Swamp, the town of Enfield was settled around 1725. The town was probably named in honor of Enfield, England. Formally founded in 1740, it rapidly earned a place of distinction in Colonial North Carolina. In 1754, it was named, along with Edenton, Salisbury, New Bern and Wilmington, as one of the five superior courts of the province.<sup>16</sup> The Enfield District embraced Northampton, Edgecombe, and Granville counties and was supported by a tax of sixpence proclamation money, "per poll," collected annually by John Dawson, Robert Jones, and William Kinchen.<sup>17</sup> Jones reported to the Colonial Assembly in 1758, that three hundred and seven pounds, one shilling and five pence had been collected for the construction of a courthouse, prison, and other "general offices at Enfield."<sup>18</sup>

As the population of the county increased, its boundaries slowly evolved. The area had been part of Bertie County, but, with the creation of Edgecombe County in 1741 it was included within the boundaries of Edgecombe.<sup>19</sup> It

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Clark (ed.), The State Records of North Carolina (Goldsboro, 1906), XXV, 225, hereinafter cited as Clark, State Records.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Halifax County, at this date, 1754, was still part of Edgecombe County.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., XXIII, 164.

remained as part of Edgecombe until 1758, when Halifax County was created. A petition was presented to Governor Arthur Dobbs and the Colonial Assembly at New Bern by the inhabitants of the northern part of Edgecombe requesting that a new county be formed, due to the "divers inconveniences" arising out of the large size of Edgecombe and the great distance involved in travel. The petition was acted upon favorably in 1758; the act became effective on January 1, 1759.<sup>20</sup> The boundaries of the county were to be the same as those of Edgecombe Parish, created in 1756, with the Roanoke River the northern boundary and Fishing Creek the southern boundary.<sup>21</sup> Governor Dobbs decreed that the county be called Halifax and that the county seat and court be held at Enfield.<sup>22</sup>

The town of Halifax, settled in 1741, was incorporated by the Colonial Assembly in 1757, and by order of Governor Dobbs was made the county seat and site of the court before the act creating the county became effective. Thus, Enfield never became the county seat. Halifax, named in honor of Lord Halifax, a member of the British Board of Trade, had become by 1752 a bustling commercial center of traders and

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Ibid., 496.

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Ibid., 474.

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William L. Saunders (ed.), The Colonial Records of North Carolina (Raleigh, 1887), V, 1054, hereinafter cited as Saunders, Colonial Records.

merchants.<sup>23</sup> A committee from the settlement petitioned the Assembly in 1757 for the creation and incorporation of the town, and the Assembly provided for the purchase of one hundred acres of land from James Leslie. The town was created for "promoting the trade and navigation" of the Roanoke River, and Thomas Barker, John Gibson, Richard Browning, Alexander McCulloch, and Robert Jones, "the Younger," were designated as directors and trustees.<sup>24</sup> They were instructed to lay out a public landing, appoint a public quay, lay out four acres for a market place and other public buildings, and divide the remainder of the hundred acres into lots, streets, lanes and alleys, so there would be at least 120 lots. The money from the sale of these lots would be used to pay Leslie for the land and in "building and erecting" a bridge over Quanky Creek.<sup>25</sup> Leslie retained the right to operate his ferry and no other ferry could operate within ten miles of Halifax.<sup>26</sup>

With the creation of the town of Halifax, a movement was initiated to move the court to Halifax. On December 2, 1758, Robert Jones presented a petition on behalf of the

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<sup>23</sup> J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina (Raleigh, 1920), p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Clark, State Records, XXV, 354.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 355.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 354.



Northampton County citizens requesting that the court be moved from Enfield to Halifax. The reasons they cited were that Enfield was not centrally located to the said counties, but that the town of Halifax was "much more nearer to the center of said district," and court procedures could be carried on more effectively.<sup>27</sup> A similar petition was presented by Granville County stating that "attendance of Jurors, Suitors, and Evidence from the said county of Granville will be rendered much more easy and Agreeable than at present," if court were moved from Enfield to Halifax.<sup>28</sup> On December 7, 1758, Governor Arthur Dobbs appointed Halifax as the place for holding court and the bill was passed by the Assembly.<sup>29</sup> The directors and trustees of Halifax were empowered and required to remove the "Prison, Pillery, Stocks, and Clerk's Office" at Enfield to Halifax. A poll tax of sixpence was levied on the inhabitants of the district to finance this movement.<sup>30</sup>

In 1774, the Halifax Court District was enlarged so that it embraced Halifax, Northampton, Bute, and Edgecombe counties. Evidently, Halifax was the most populous of the above mentioned counties since it was given sixteen freeholders

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<sup>27</sup> Saunders, Colonial Records, V, 1053.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1053.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 1062.

<sup>30</sup> Clark, State Records, XXIII, 491.

"to be nominated as jurors," while Northampton was given twelve and Edgecombe and Bute, ten apiece.<sup>31</sup>

The streets of Halifax were named in honor of various saints and leading men of the mother country. Main Street, King Street, was named in honor of George III, while Saint Andrews, Saint Patrick, Saint George, and Saint David streets were named in honor of the patron saints of Scotland, Ireland, England, and Wales, respectively. Pittsylvania was named in honor of William Pitt, Dobbs Street in honor of Governor Dobbs, and Granville Street in honor of Lord Granville.<sup>32</sup> The town of Halifax was to develop into one of the leading commercial, social and political centers of Colonial North Carolina.

As Halifax rapidly developed into an important Colonial settlement, a few miles up the Roanoke River another town of Halifax County was slowly beginning. This was Weldon or Weldon's Orchard as it was known until 1819. The founder of the settlement, Daniel Weldon, migrated to Granville County about 1745, from Henrico County, Virginia. In 1752, he purchased from Marmaduke Kimbrough a tract of land lying along the southern bank of the Roanoke River in the northern part of Edgecombe County.<sup>33</sup> On the death of

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<sup>31</sup>

Ibid., 946.

<sup>32</sup>

Sterling M. Gary and Nannie M. Gary, "Interesting Things of Halifax and Halifax County," (unpublished manuscript, Halifax County Public Library, Halifax, North Carolina).

<sup>33</sup>

Halifax County, it will be remembered, was still part of Edgecombe at this time.

Weldon, his son, William, inherited the plantation and planted an orchard on the eastern part of it;<sup>34</sup> thus, the area became known as Weldon's Orchard. In 1787, William's son, Daniel, inherited the plantation and at his death in 1812, the estate fell into the hands of his two young daughters. It was divided into lots and put up for sale and by 1819, the town of Weldon was incorporated.<sup>35</sup> During the Colonial period Weldon's Orchard was an important commercial center of the county and a great deal of business was transacted with the nearby Virginia merchants.

In 1760, a settlement was made at the county's most western point, along the boundary between Halifax and Granville counties. Named in honor of the settlement's leading citizen, William Person Little, Littleton, by 1770, was an important rest stop on the stagecoach route. In 1770, Thomas Person founded Person's Ordinary, a colorful inn and a leading social center of the county at Littleton.<sup>36</sup> In 1823, the town was incorporated and had spread out on both sides of the line

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<sup>34</sup> The orchard was located a short distance west of the point at which the present canal flows into the Roanoke River.

<sup>35</sup> Stuart H. Hill Papers, Halifax County Public Library, Halifax, North Carolina.

<sup>36</sup> Dorothy Moore (ed.), Frontiers of Freedom, prepared by Halifax County Bicentennial Association (Roanoke Rapids, 1958), p. 11.

between Warren<sup>37</sup> and Halifax counties.<sup>38</sup>

Another settlement of note was Crowell's Crossroads, founded about 1720, by John and Edward Crowell. They were from England and were descendants of Oliver Cromwell.<sup>39</sup> They fled England in 1674 fearing persecution from the followers of the recently restored Charles II. They cut the letter "M" from their luggage while at sea and adopted the name Crowell. They lived for a while in New Jersey and about 1720, migrated to North Carolina where they settled about seven miles from Halifax in the community which today bears their name.<sup>40</sup>

Two other important communities settled at an early date were Whitaker's Chapel, a few miles east of Enfield, and Kehukee, located in the eastern part of the county. Kehukee evidently was a populous area because it had by 1742, two chapels, a Baptist and an Anglican, located within a few hundred yards of each other on Kehukee Creek.<sup>41</sup> Kehukee was settled largely by a group of immigrants from Burleigh,

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Warren County had been founded in 1779 from Bute, which had been formed from Granville in 1764. Clark, State Records, XXIII, 625; XXIV, 227.

<sup>38</sup>

Wellman, County of Warren, p. 97.

<sup>39</sup>

John H. Wheeler, Historical Sketches of North Carolina From 1584 to 1851 (Philadelphia, 1851), I, 199.

<sup>40</sup>

Ibid. See also Carl Goerch, "Halifax County," The State, IX (July 5, 1941), 3.

<sup>41</sup>

Smith and Smith, Trinity Parish, p. 15.

Isle of Wight, Virginia. They were led by the Reverend William Sojourner, a Baptist minister, and they came because of the opportunity to preach the gospel and of the many favorable reports concerning the fertility of the soil in the region.<sup>42</sup> Here, in the most fertile part of the county, farming was carried on extensively.

The Whitaker's Chapel community was settled for very similar reasons about 1750 by the Whitaker family, who moved to the province of North Carolina from Warwick County, Virginia.<sup>43</sup> This family was to play a large role in the affairs of the county and contribute many of the county's greatest leaders.

Brinkleyville, settled at an unknown date in the county's history, was another thickly-settled community by the time of the Revolution. The Mouzon Map of North Carolina printed in 1775 at London, shows a settlement, "Bringlyville," located in the western part of the county. The exact date of settlement is unknown, but it was evidently of some size since a chapel was located nearby.<sup>44</sup>

The permanent boundaries of the county had evolved by 1779. When the county was created in 1758, it included a large part of Martin and Edgecombe counties. In 1774,

<sup>42</sup> George Washington Paschal, History of North Carolina Baptists (Raleigh, 1930), I, 172.

<sup>43</sup> Smith and Smith, Trinity Parish, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> See Mouzon Map, Appendix B.

Martin was created out of Halifax and Tyrrell counties, thus setting the eastern boundary of the county, "beginning at the mouth of Kehukee Creek, on the Roanoke River, and running a direct line to Edgecombe County Line."<sup>45</sup> During the Revolutionary War, in 1779, "all that part of Halifax County lying below a Line beginning at John Wall's and Drewey Croker's dividing Corner Line on Fishing Creek," was annexed to Edgecombe County.<sup>46</sup> With these acts, present-day Halifax County was created. Its area is 422 square miles of widely diversified terrain ranging from the rolling hills of the Piedmont in the west to the flat, rich lands of the Coastal Plains in the east.<sup>47</sup>

The county, like most other counties of Colonial North Carolina, was primarily an agricultural area. Farming constituted the greatest part of the economy, but Halifax, particularly, and Weldon to a lesser extent were commercial centers. Halifax also became a leading social and political center.

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<sup>45</sup> Clark, State Records, XXIII, 976.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., XXIV, 249.

<sup>47</sup> Sharpe, Geography of North Carolina, p. 148.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE COUNTY

The economic and commercial life of the county centered around the town of Halifax for two reasons. First, it was located on the Roanoke River, the only navigable body of water in the county, and second, it was located near the towns of Virginia, which were important markets for the products of the county.

The Roanoke River both impeded and promoted the commercial development of the county. It was used for limited navigation by the earliest settlers. Many private landings were built along the river from Scotland Neck to Weldon.<sup>1</sup> Commodities were loaded at Weldon and Halifax and floated down the river to the Albermarle towns for export.<sup>2</sup> But the unpredictable flow of the river also hindered the development of great commercial activity. In places it was very shallow and thus shipping was limited to sloops or flat-boats. Another danger was the recurring floods and freshets. The river could rise very quickly and without warning. A traveler, in 1752, noted that the "Roanoke often

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Sharpe, A New Geography of North Carolina (Raleigh, 1954), I, 158.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Sharpe, "Water, History, and Peanuts," The State, XIX (February 23, 1952), 4, hereinafter cited as Sharpe, "Water, History, and Peanuts."

rises twenty-five feet above its usual level."<sup>3</sup> Another traveler, in 1784, noted that the Roanoke "rises two or three days after the rain has ceased, when the sky and sun are again bright and the bad weather is forgotten," and that the river rose with such "rapidity and violence," that it often swept away and destroyed all in its path.<sup>4</sup> The lack of adequate water transportation facilities forced the county to carry on the majority of its commercial activities with the towns of Virginia via the overland route.

The chief products of the county were corn, cotton, and tobacco. Naval stores, lumber, staves, pork, beef, and hides formed a secondary part of the county's economic structure.<sup>5</sup> Tobacco was raised in great quantities, for in 1760, the Colonial Assembly found it necessary to increase the length of time set aside for inspection and to build another warehouse in Halifax to accommodate the great quantities of tobacco raised in the area. The period of inspection was extended from the first day of October to the last day in July of the following year. Another warehouse was to be built because the existing warehouse was unable to handle

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<sup>3</sup> Adelaide L. Fries (ed.), Records of the Moravians in North Carolina (Raleigh, 1922), I, 39, hereinafter cited as Fries, Moravian Records.

<sup>4</sup> John F. D. Smythe, A Tour of the United States of America (London, 1784), I, 86, hereinafter cited as Smythe, Tour of America.

<sup>5</sup> W. C. Allen, History of Halifax County (Boston, 1918), p. 13, hereinafter cited as Allen, Halifax County.



the large volume and tobacco had been subjected to the "Injuries of the Weather."<sup>6</sup> Prior to the formation of Halifax in 1758, tobacco had been exported to Virginia and sold, mainly at Suffolk, Petersburg, and Norfolk. The tobacco was inspected by Virginia buyers; the best was bought and the remainder burned.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the North Carolina farmers had been at the mercy of Virginia buyers. The situation had been rectified somewhat with the establishment of a warehouse at Halifax, in 1758, but the farmer was still at the mercy of the buyer since the same purchasing procedure existed.

The surplus corn, along with some wheat and tobacco, was sent down the river to Edenton and sold.<sup>8</sup> This was probably a very small amount since little wheat and corn was left for sale after the needs of home consumption had been met.

The raising of hogs and cattle was also conducted on a large scale throughout the county. Hogs were allowed to roam the woods, feeding on the pine seeds and acorns which were "their only food."<sup>9</sup> The lowlands around the river

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Clark (ed.), The State Records of North Carolina (Goldsboro, 1904), XXIII, 513, hereinafter cited as Clark, State Records.

<sup>7</sup> Fries, Moravian Records, I, 38.

<sup>8</sup> Abel Doysie (ed.), "A French Traveler in the Colonies, 1765," American Historical Review, XXVI (July, 1921), 737, hereinafter cited as Doysie, "French Traveler."

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 736. This practice of allowing hogs to roam the woods existed until a short time ago and the term "piney-woods rooter" is still in common usage when referring to the thin, long-nosed hogs which have descended from the hogs of Colonial days.

abounded in grasses and acorns which were used not only for hogs, but for cattle as well. Hogs and cattle were allowed to roam freely along the lowlands and often were swept away and destroyed when the river overflowed.<sup>10</sup> The livestock was sold almost exclusively in Virginia; and driven there in herds, usually twice a year. Here, once again, the farmer was at the mercy of Virginia merchants since he received pay only for the net meat, while the tallow, hides, and remnants were appropriated by the Virginia merchants.<sup>11</sup> Evidently Virginia buyers traveled throughout the section buying livestock on a contract basis, for in The Virginia Gazette in December, 1776, an advertisement appeared instructing Elisha Battle, John Whitaker, and Willie Jones, of Halifax, to deliver the hogs "previously purchased by John Hawkins" to Smithfield.<sup>12</sup> An advertisement of land for sale by John Geddy in the above mentioned paper in September, 1770, reflected the emphasis placed on the raising of hogs and cattle. Geddy stated that the land was "considered excellent range for cattle and

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Smyth, Tour of America, 86.

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J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina (Raleigh, 1920), pp. 32-33.

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Davis L. Corbitt, "Historical Notes," North Carolina Historical Review, IV (January, 1927), 110, hereinafter cited as Corbitt, "Historical Notes."

hogs."<sup>13</sup> A traveler in 1765 noted that along with fish from the river bacon was the chief food of the inhabitants of the county.<sup>14</sup>

Farmers supplemented their incomes by cutting timber from the forests and exporting shingles and staves in large quantities. Turpentine was also an important export and this, along with the other products of the forest, was sent down the river on flatboats.<sup>15</sup> Tar was evidently used as a means of exchange; in 1734, John Bryant sold William Gause 400 acres of land for 100 barrels of tar.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the plentiful forests of the county were a valuable asset to the Colonial economy.

With the emphasis on agriculture, the use of slaves for labor was a convenience. It can be surmised that the settlers of the county as they migrated from Virginia, or up the Roanoke River from the Coastal Plain, brought their slaves with them. According to the tax list of 1782, there were 4,386 slaves in the county which indicates that slavery was firmly established at the time of the Revolution. The leading

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<sup>13</sup> The Virginia Gazette, September, 1770, cited in Ralph Hardee Rives, "Colonial Background" [of Halifax County] (unpublished manuscript in possession of author), hereinafter cited as Rives "Colonial Background."

<sup>14</sup> Doysie, "French Traveler," 736.

<sup>15</sup> Sharp, "Water, History, and Peanuts," 4.

<sup>16</sup> Halifax County Deed Book, I, 172. Halifax County Court House, Halifax, North Carolina.

slave-owners at this time were Bridgeman Joyner, with seventy-seven, Henry Montford, with eighty-eight, Absolam Merritt, with seventy-seven, and Thomas Hill, with sixty-eight. There were fifty-three slave owners who held twenty or more slaves.<sup>17</sup> By 1790, there were 6,506 slaves in the county out of a total population of 13,965.<sup>18</sup>

The town of Halifax was the hub of commercial activities. As well as being the chief market and exporting center for goods produced in the region, it also had a goodly number of shops and stores. Many merchants and traders were located here. John Geddy was one of the leading merchants as is exemplified by the numerous articles which he offered for sale. Geddy advertised in The Virginia Gazette, in July, 1773, that he had an assortment of "Silver and Goldsmith works, Fine Paste Shoe, Knee and Stock Buckles, all sorts of Finger Rings, Stone Seals," and other luxury items.<sup>19</sup> Buchanans, Hastie, and Company, Merchants of Glasgow, Scotland, had a branch in Halifax which served as the collection center for their stores in Virginia and the Carolinas. It was under the direction of Robert M'Kettrich.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Halifax County Tax List, Legislative Papers of 1782, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C., compiled by Leon W. Anderson, pp. 1-20.

<sup>18</sup> Clark, State Records, XXVI, 620.

<sup>19</sup> Corbitt, "Historical Notes," 110.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

As well as being the commercial center of the area, Halifax was also the social center. Not only was it located on the Roanoke River, but Halifax was situated on one of the few principal roads of Colonial North Carolina. It was located on a north-south road running from Virginia through Halifax to Tarboro.<sup>21</sup> The location of Halifax on these arteries of transportation made it an important lodging place for travelers. A ferry which would accommodate a carriage and four horses was used to transport travelers across the river.<sup>22</sup> To provide lodging for the travelers, Halifax "could boast of tavern facilities far above the average in the colony." Three two-story buildings, owned and operated by the same man, were located adjacent to the Court House and provided the traveler with lodging, food, entertainment, and quarters for his horses and slaves.<sup>23</sup> Another inn, Eagle Tavern, was located on the bank of the Roanoke, and here, many politicians, travelers, and townspeople gathered to

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Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina: The History of A Southern State (Chapel Hill, 1963), p. 97.

22

John C. Fitzpatrick (ed.), The Diaries of George Washington, 1748-1799 (New York, 1925), IV, 162. Washington noted in 1791, when he crossed the river, that flatboats were used to transport passengers. The ferry, which he referred to was probably operated by James Leslie, who had been granted a monopoly on all ferries within ten miles of Halifax.

23

Blackwell P. Robinson, William R. Davie (Chapel Hill, 1957), pp. 147-48, hereinafter cited as Robinson, Davie.

discuss pertinent matters of the day.<sup>24</sup>

The principal and most important social organization in the county was the Masonic Lodge, Royal White Hart Lodge, Number 2, chartered in 1767, at Halifax. This lodge has the distinction of being the first lodge in America built exclusively and used continuously for Masonic purposes. It stands intact, today, with original furnishings.<sup>25</sup> The first Masonic meeting held in Halifax County, of which there is any record, was at the home of David Lowel, in Halifax, on April 20, 1764. At a meeting held on May 20, 1768, the charter was formally presented to the group and in the following year, the lodge was constructed.<sup>26</sup> Two stories high, thirty feet by thirty feet, the building provided a lodge room on the second floor and reserved the lower floor for use as a school. Joseph Montford was appointed Master, Joseph Long, Senior Warden, and Mathew Brown, Junior Warden, by the provisions included in the charter. The lodge was furnished by its members. The Master's Chair was made by Richard Hall, the floor cloth painted and presented by Joseph Montford, and a pair of

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<sup>24</sup> Dorothy Moore (ed.), Frontier of Freedom, prepared by the Halifax County Bicentennial Association (Roanoke Rapids, 1958). The main part of Eagle Tavern has been moved to main street and is used by the Gary family as a private home.

<sup>25</sup> Nannie M. Gary and Dorothy Moore, Historical Halifax, published by Historic Halifax Restoration Association, Inc., in co-operation with the State Department of Archives and History, N.D.

<sup>26</sup> Rives, "Colonial Background."

silver compasses was made and presented by Joseph Geddy.<sup>27</sup>  
 These items are now on display in the lodge.

Joseph Montford, on January 14, 1771, was commissioned by the Duke of Beaufort of the Grand Lodge of England as the "Provincial Grand Master of America"---the highest Masonic position ever held by a man on the American continent.<sup>28</sup>  
 Montford remained in this position until his death on March 2, 1776.<sup>29</sup> The Masonic Lodge at Halifax was the county's most prominent social organization and its members included some of North Carolina's leading citizens.

Other social activities of the town centered around the homes of two of the county's foremost citizens, William

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Information secured from personal tour by the author and from information supplied by present lodge.

28

The commission is the property of the lodge at Halifax and is on display there. The grave marker of Montford, on the grounds of the lodge, reads, "The First-The Last-The Only-Grand Master of America."

29

Grave marker of Montford, Royal White Hart Lodge, Halifax, N.C. Montford also served his county and province in other outstanding capacities. In 1759, he was elected as the first Clerk of Court of Halifax County and was re-elected each year until his death. He was also chosen Clerk of the Halifax District Court. He represented Halifax in the Colonial Assembly five times and in the Provincial Congress. He also served as a Colonel in the Halifax Militia.

R. Davie and Willie Jones.<sup>30</sup> Davie's "Loretta" is an excellent example of the architecture of this period with its graceful columns, finely engraved doors and ornate woodwork. In this elegant dwelling, many gala balls and parties were held. It stands today just as it did nearly two hundred years ago.<sup>31</sup>

Willie Jones' "Grove" was also a center of gay and gracious hospitality. Built in 1765, only the chimney and the nearby grave of one of his children remain today on the site. It was evidently an elegant dwelling according to a description given by his granddaughter, Mary Alston, who was born in the house and remembered it from days spent there. The materials used in the construction of the house were brought from "Jones' Castle," the home of Willie Jones' father in Northampton County. The materials had been brought originally from England. The house was noted for its large dining room, which was used not only for feasting, but also for balls and receptions.<sup>32</sup> The house was situated in a

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Davie, the "Father of the University of North Carolina," served his state as Governor, 1798-99, and as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. A strong Federalist, he was appointed as ambassador to France in 1799 by President John Adams. He represented Halifax in the General Assembly eight times and retired from public life in 1803, after suffering a defeat by Willis Alston for a seat in Congress. For a detailed study of his life, see Robinson, Davie.

A profile of Willie Jones is given in chapter IV.

31

From author's personal tour of dwelling, which today is a private residence.

32

Stuart H. Hill Collection, Halifax County Public Library, Halifax, North Carolina.



large grove of native white oaks and surrounded by beautiful shrubbery, crepe myrtles, and flowers. Jones so highly esteemed the trees that he made provision in his will that the grove "be held sacred from the axe."<sup>33</sup> The house was constructed with a large bay window which formed a semi-circle with one wide center window and two small ones on each side. The house was so constructed that Jones might watch his blooded horses on the private track behind the house. Many people, both neighbors and visitors, came to indulge in the sport on Jones' track. Thus, his fine ornate house was a "social mecca of northeastern North Carolina."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Halifax County Will Book, III, 355. Halifax County Court House, Halifax, North Carolina.

<sup>34</sup> Blackwell P. Robinson, "Willie Jones of Halifax," North Carolina Historical Review, XVIII (January, 1941), 1-26; ibid., XVIII (April, 1941), 133-169.

According to popular legend in the county, John Paul Jones spent considerable time at the home of Willie Jones and adopted the name "Jones" out of gratitude for the hospitality and friendship shown to him by Willie Jones. Samuel Eliot Morison, the leading biographer of John Paul Jones, disproves this legend, as do the other leading biographers of John Paul. Morison bases his views on the following facts: no letter to or from Willie Jones can be found in the John Paul Jones' manuscripts in the Library of Congress; John Paul Jones never mentions Willie Jones in his many letters to Joseph Hewes or to any others who knew Willie; although he had made, and sent as gifts to his American friends, several replicas of busts of him, he sent none to Willie Jones; and John Paul's coat of arms was adopted after the Welsh Joneses, and not the North Carolina Joneses. Morison concluded that in view of John Paul's consistent gratitude toward people that befriended him, this negative evidence is conclusive that John Paul's acquaintance, if it existed at all, with Willie Jones was only slight and his "obligations to him nil." For a further discussion of this question, see Samuel Eliot Morison, "The Willie Jones-John Paul Tradition," William

Around the homes of Davie and Jones, the social life of the town and county evolved.

Horse-racing and cock-fighting were other popular forms of recreation for the people of the county. The majority of the races were run on Jones' private race track. Jones owned one of the "finest stables in the South," and was the leader in fostering this sport in Halifax.<sup>35</sup> The sport developed to such a pitch after the Revolution that the Roanoke Valley became "the race region of America." Cock-fighting caused a heated rivalry to develop between Halifax and the neighboring counties of Virginia.<sup>36</sup>

Religion also played an important role in the life of the colonists of Halifax County.<sup>37</sup> Baptists and Anglicans dominated the religious life of the county. There were five Anglican churches in the county and two Baptist churches prior to the Revolution. The Methodists also were beginning to establish churches at two locations in Halifax. The extent of social control that the churches imposed upon its members at this time is very hard to estimate since few

and Mary Quarterly, XVI (April, 1959), 198-206; Samuel Eliot Morison, John Paul Jones, A Sailor's Biography (Boston, 1959), p. 420; and Lincoln Lorenz, John Paul Jones: Fighter for Freedom and Glory (Annapolis, 1943), pp. 41-43.

<sup>35</sup>

Robert Diggs Wimberly Connor, North Carolina: Rebuilding an Ancient Commonwealth (Chicago, 1929), I, 217.

<sup>36</sup>

Robinson, Davie, pp. 144-145.

<sup>37</sup>

A detailed discussion of religion in the county is found in chapter III of this thesis.

records are available on this matter. The Baptists generally opposed many of the vices of the period, such as cardplaying, lotteries, and cock-fighting, but the records are silent as to what actions they took against these evils. The Baptists did practice excommunication as a method of control over their members. The Baptists did not oppose slavery, but according to the minutes of the Kehukee Association believed in "liberty of conscience" for slaves.<sup>38</sup>

Judging from the many established and thriving churches in the county during the Colonial Period, religion occupied a large part of the colonist's life. But, it is very difficult to estimate the extent to which the church dominated their lives. It may be concluded that religion and religious activities occupied a large part of the social life of the county.

The establishment of the various religious denominations is an interesting and integral part of the county's history. The forces and factors which motivated the establishment and spread of religion throughout the county were many.

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George Washington Paschal, History of North Carolina Baptists (Raleigh, 1930), I, 426-433.

### CHAPTER III

#### RELIGION IN COLONIAL HALIFAX COUNTY

Religious activity was developed to a high degree in Halifax County during the Colonial Period. Some of the oldest and most powerful churches of Colonial North Carolina were located in Halifax County. A number of these churches, notably Kehukee, which was situated in a bend of the Roanoke River near the present town of Scotland Neck, constituted a center of Baptist influence throughout the Province of North Carolina. Some of the best known and most influential ministers of the Colonies preached in Halifax County. Halifax County was advantageously located in the northern part of the Colony of North Carolina near Virginia. This geographical location made it possible for a number of the well-known Virginia ministers to come into the county and preach the gospel. This was particularly true of the Methodists. Another factor which influenced the religious life of the county was that many of its settlers came from Virginia and brought established religions and religious practices.

Two strong religious groups developed in the county prior to the Revolution. The Anglican Church led all other denominations in the number of churches established, while the Baptists developed the strongest over-all religious group. The Baptists were to play a significant role in the events leading up to the Revolution, and in the Revolution itself. The strength of the Anglicans waned during the

Revolution and gradually the denomination was reorganized as the Protestant Episcopal Church in the aftermath of the Revolution. The Methodists, during the closing years of the Colonial Period, were to gain considerably in strength and developed into a powerful group in the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Though other denominations may have been in the county at some time during the Colonial Period, no records can be found to substantiate this. The Baptists, Methodists, and Anglicans were the religious groups which played the major role in the county's religious history.

#### The Baptists in Halifax County

Baptists came to the Province of North Carolina in small numbers during the latter part of the seventeenth century. The Baptist historian of this era, Morgan Edwards,<sup>1</sup> states there had been Baptists in North Carolina since the first

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<sup>1</sup>Edwards was born in Wales, and had come to America in 1761, to be the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia. He remained pastor until 1771. In 1770, he began gathering materials for a history of the Baptists in America. In the pursuit of this study, he traveled through the province from New Hampshire to Georgia. In 1772, he spent several months in North Carolina, gathering materials in notebooks, one for each province. These notebooks are now in the library of the American Baptist Historical Society, at Chester, Pennsylvania. George Washington Paschal, "Morgan Edwards' Materials Towards A History of the Baptist in the Province of North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review, VII (July, 1930), 365-66, hereinafter cited as Paschal, "Morgan Edwards."

settlement in 1695.<sup>2</sup> The first organized Baptist Church in North Carolina was Shiloh, in present Camden County, founded in 1727, by Paul Palmer.<sup>3</sup> The next Baptist Church in North Carolina was established in Hertford County, at Meherrin, in 1729, by Joseph Parker. The date of establishment of this church is not clear, but it was known to have been organized prior to 1735, and most Baptist historians accept 1729 as the valid date.<sup>4</sup> The "most significant Baptist Church in the eastern part of the colony," Kehukee, in Halifax County, was organized in 1742, by settlers from Virginia.<sup>5</sup> A group of settlers, led by the Reverend William Sojourner, came from Burleigh, in the Isle of Wight County, Virginia, hoping to find a more healthy region. An epidemic, probably malaria, had

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Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina: The History of a Southern State, (Chapel Hill, 1963), p. 127, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina. George Washington Paschal states that he believes Edwards had been misled as to the date of settlement, which was forty years before, and that some Baptists, or "Dissenters" were among the first settlers coming to the province. George Washington Paschal, History of North Carolina Baptists (Raleigh, 1930), I, 124, hereinafter cited as Paschal, North Carolina Baptists.

3

Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 127, states that Cisco, in Chowan County, founded in 1727, by Palmer, is the oldest, but Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 142-43, states that this informal gathering soon ceased and Shiloh is the first Baptist Church, which "fully organized and equipped has come down to our day."

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Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 166.

5

Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 128.

ravaged the settlement at Burleigh and many of the people had been killed by it.<sup>6</sup> Paul Palmer had visited the church at Burleigh and had given such a favorable description of the fertility of the soil in North Carolina and the opportunity for preaching the gospel that the Reverend Mr. Sojourner and some of his followers came to North Carolina in 1742 and settled in Halifax County. Kehukee Church was organized in the same year and became the third Baptist Church organized in North Carolina.<sup>7</sup> The founder of this Church, William Sojourner, is known only by the short sketch that Edwards wrote in his notebook:<sup>8</sup>

Rev. William Sojourner ... is said to have been a most excellent man; and to have had the care of the church about seven years. He died Feb. 18, 1749/50, aged 43 years and 7 months. This date I found on a cedar rail put over his grave by his surviving friend, Rev. Josiah Hart. His wife was Mary West (alias widow Boykin) by whom he had children, Jacob, Ann, Tamar.

Sojourner and his band of followers developed this church from its humble beginnings into one of the most powerful and influential churches of the Pre-Revolutionary era in North Carolina. Edwards, in his visit to the church

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Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 172.

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Thomas J. Taylor, A History of the Tar River Association, (Prepared and published by order of the Tar River Association), p. 4, hereinafter cited as Taylor, Tar River Association.

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Paschal, "Morgan Edwards," 373.

during his stay in North Carolina in 1772, described it in the following manner:<sup>9</sup>

[ It is ] Distinguished by the name of a Creek emptying into Roanoke [sic] near to which the meeting house stands in the county of Halifax, 120 miles NW from Newburn [sic], and \_\_\_\_\_ miles SSW Philadelphia. The house is 40 feet by 20, built in 1742, on land given by the late William Sojourner. No estate, no salary, except presents.

By the time Edwards visited Kehukee, membership had grown to one hundred and fifty. The church had four ministers, including Sojourner, during the Colonial Period. Immediately after Sojourner's death, Edward Brown served until a regular minister could be found; Brown was not an ordained minister. The Reverend Thomas Pope, a Virginian, born at Blackwater, and baptized by Sojourner, became minister of the church after he was ordained in 1751. He served in this capacity until his death in March, 1762. A layman, Charles Daniel, supplied the congregation until the Reverend John Meglamre became pastor in 1768. Meglamre was born in Maryland in 1730. Originally a Presbyterian, he became a Baptist in May, 1765. He became pastor in 1768 and remained until May 2, 1772, when he resigned and was replaced by the Reverend William Burgess who served for the remainder of the Colonial Period.<sup>10</sup>

One of the greatest contributions made by Kehukee was

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 374.

<sup>10</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 239.



that it sent out many ministers and was instrumental in the founding of other churches.<sup>11</sup> Sojourner ordained many ministers and sent them out as missionaries throughout the Province of North Carolina. William Walker became the most noted of Kehukee's converts. Born in New Kent County, Virginia, January 24, 1717, he moved to North Carolina and was baptized by Sojourner in 1746. In 1748, he was ordained and became pastor of Fishing Creek or Reedy Creek in Warren County.<sup>12</sup> Reedy Creek led in the organization of churches in Franklin, Wake, Johnston, Bladen, and Sampson counties.<sup>13</sup> Walker's labors in the ministry were not confined to Reedy Creek, for he traveled and preached in a number of places. He was loved and esteemed by all ranks of people.<sup>14</sup>

Kehukee also exerted influence upon established churches. Lower Fishing Creek or Daniels Chapel was probably founded as early as 1748 and became the second Baptist Church in the county. It was under the care of Joseph Parker. A meeting house was built after the reformation in 1757, on land given by James Wyat. This church had previously subscribed to the Arminian plan, but under the direction of several members

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<sup>11</sup> George W. Purefoy, A History of the Sandy Creek Association (New York, 1859), p. 42.

<sup>12</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 444.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, Tar River Association, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 445.

of Kehukee, including the Reverend Thomas Pope, James Wyat, and the Spivey sisters, Francis and Sarah, it was reorganized on the Calvinistic order. This church consisted of three branches, the mother church near Fishing Creek, another on Swift Creek,<sup>15</sup> and the third in Rocky-Swamp. This church had no remarkable history except that it led to the establishment of many others in the area of the Roanoke River.<sup>16</sup> These were the only Baptist churches in Halifax County prior to the Revolution.<sup>17</sup> They were to form the nucleus of the Kehukee Association, an organization which was to grow at a phenomenal rate and embrace three colonies. This organization spread the gospel and ministered to settlers throughout the colonies of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. This association developed from the Charleston Association.

The Charleston Association had been organized in 1751 and soon nearly all the Regular Baptist churches in North Carolina belonged to it. The reason that so many of the churches in North Carolina joined was due to the fact that in 1755, the Association recommended a traveling missionary to labor in destitute places. Reverend John Gano of Philadelphia was secured for this job and labored dilligently for a number

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<sup>15</sup> This church is now located in Edgecombe County, a few miles from Battleboro.

<sup>16</sup> Paschal, "Morgan Edwards," 376.

<sup>17</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 483.

of years in the Yadkin settlement in North Carolina.<sup>18</sup> Due to distance and the time involved in travel between Charleston and the churches in North Carolina, it was decided in 1758, that an annual meeting should be held by the North Carolina churches. Their proceedings, however, were subject to revision by the regular meetings of the Association at Charleston. Whether any such meetings were held is not known, but the North Carolina churches withdrew entirely from the Charleston Association in 1762 to form an association of their own. The churches evidently did not form an association immediately, although the ministers might have met informally. The date of the first meeting is not clear, but Paschal states that the correct date of its organization is November 6, 1769.<sup>19</sup> The churches which assembled here were: Kehukee and Fishing Creek of Halifax County, Toisnot and Falls of Tar River of

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<sup>18</sup>

Ibid., 415.

<sup>19</sup>

Ibid., 417, Paschal bases his belief on the discovery about 1900 of the minutes of the first nine meetings of the Association. These minutes were found in the back of a book containing the minutes of the Red River Church, Mero, Tennessee. Evidently, these minutes had been taken to Tennessee by Elias Fort, and his wife, Sarah, formerly of Edgecombe County, when they moved from North Carolina to Tennessee. This discovery discredits the statement of Albert Henry Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States (New York, 1894), p. 289, who states the Association was formed in 1756, and of Charles B. Williams, A History of the Baptists in North Carolina (Raleigh, 1901), p. 27, who states it was formed in 1765, hereinafter cited as Williams, History of Baptists in North Carolina.

Edgecombe County, Reedy Creek of Warren County,<sup>20</sup> Sandy Run of Bertie County, Red Banks of Pitt County, and Shiloh in Camden County.<sup>21</sup> Modeled after the Philadelphia Association, it was the fourth association formed in the colonies and the second in North Carolina.<sup>22</sup>

The plan of association adopted at the first meeting was as follows: (1) the association would consist only of "ministers and judicious brethren" sent by the member churches and whose expenses were to be paid by the churches sending them; (2) the letters brought by the messengers, which, besides including their credentials, should indicate the state of their churches in reference to numbers received by baptism and letter as well as losses resulting from death, letter and excommunication; (3) questions, except interpretations of scripture, would be decided by vote; (4) churches were to be admitted on application accompanied by a declaration of faith; (5) the association was to meet annually at Kehukee Church on the Monday following the first Sunday

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Reedy Creek was represented, but was not formally admitted until 1772, Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 419.

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Joseph Biggs, A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association, (Tarborough, 1834), p. 27, hereinafter cited as Biggs, Kehukee Association.

22

Williams, History of Baptists in North Carolina, p. 27; Biggs, Kehukee Association, p. 282, was evidently in error when he stated it was the "third Baptist Association in the United Colonies." Probably, he was not aware of the formation of the Sandy Creek Association, in 1758, or he did not recognize it.

in August. A full record of the meeting was to be kept and a copy sent to every member church; and (6) the Philadelphia Confession of Faith was adopted.<sup>23</sup> The first meeting ended with the election of Jonathan Thomas, of Toisnot, as moderator, and Elisha Battle, of the Falls of the Tar, as clerk.<sup>24</sup> The association quickly became involved in political matters. Organized during the height of the Regulator Movement, the association was in the center of a "hotbed" of Regulator support. The election of 1769 had seen Halifax elect a solid slate of Regulator delegates and there had been a riot in Edgecombe County.<sup>25</sup> Halifax petitioned Governor Tryon and the Colonial Assembly to lighten their burdens and to pass laws regulating the payment of fees for the issuance of all legal papers, the collection of quit-rents, and the payment of taxes. No action, however, was taken upon the petition. Halifax also refused to heed the governor's call for troops in 1771 to march against the Regulators in Orange and Alamance counties.<sup>26</sup> The Kehukee Association, through its leaders, had supported the opposition to Governor Tryon. When Josiah Martin became governor following Tryon and

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<sup>23</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 419-20.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 420.

<sup>25</sup> Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 175.

<sup>26</sup> William C. Allen, History of Halifax County (Boston, 1918), p. 23.

adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the Regulators, the association felt obligated to show its appreciation. It adopted a letter in September, 1772, expressing its gratitude and sent it to Governor Martin:<sup>27</sup>

To his Excellency Josiah Martin, Esq., Governor and Commander-in-chief of the Province of North Carolina:

The Humble Address of all the Ministers and Elders of the Baptist Society, who associate annually in Halifax County in the Province aforesaid, in behalf of themselves and many hundreds of their brethren.

It is with unfeigned pleasure we acknowledge the happiness with which we are blessed in common with other inhabitants of this Province under your administration of government, but we beg leave in a more particular manner to express our gratified sentiments of the protection we enjoy in exercise of our religious and civil liberties, for which it is our duty and shall be our constant endeavor to distinguish ourselves as loyal subjects to our most gracious Sovereign, and useful members of society. We hope this address will not be considered for a customary compliment, but a tribute of acknowledgement due to your merit from the experiences we have had of your public conduct. It is our prayer to the Almighty that as He has placed you in a most distinguished station He would most eminently guide and direct you in all your actions and bless you with prosperity here and everlasting happiness hereafter.

Signed at our Association in Halifax County, September 17th, 1772.

Jonathon Thomas, Henry Abbott, William Horn, Elisha Battle, John Thomas, and William Burgess were appointed to present the letter to Martin. Martin "received with pleasure" this letter of appreciation and hoped for a continuation of "your pious good wishes."<sup>28</sup> Several of the men who presented this letter

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<sup>27</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 423-24.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 424.

to Martin were prominent patriots in the "days of '76" and helped frame the Halifax Resolves and later the state constitution.

The Kehukee Association also was quick to act upon the institution of slavery. It passed a resolution condoning "liberty of conscience" in regard to the religion of slaves. The resolution stated:<sup>29</sup>

We think it is the duty of every master of a family to give his slaves liberty to attend the worship of God in his family; and likewise it is his duty to exhort them to it, and endeavor to convince them of their duty; and leave them to their choice.

Available records mention no action with regard to the abolition of slavery. The association embraced the leading slave-holding counties of Colonial North Carolina and reflected the prevailing attitudes of the area.

The relation between the association and the Separate Baptist was a question which plagued the association during the Colonial Period and which ultimately caused a split in the association in the opening months of the Revolution. An attempt was made for communion with the Separates of Virginia and committees were appointed by both groups to investigate the possibilities. Delegates were sent to the

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Lemuel Burkitt and Jesse Read, A Concise History of the Kehukee Association (Halifax, 1803), p. 70, quoted in Guion Griffis Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History (Chapel Hill, 1937), pp. 544-45, hereinafter cited as Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina.

Separate Baptist Association of Virginia in 1771, and in the following year the Virginia group sent Elder Elijah Craig and Daniel Thompson to the meeting at Kehukee. They gave a number of reasons why they could not communicate with the Regulars. It was maintained the Regulars were not strict enough in receiving experiences when persons made application for baptism. Separates believed that faith in Jesus Christ was essential to qualify a person for baptism, yet the Regulars admitted members who acknowledged they were baptized before they believed. Separates also objected to the manner of dress worn by the Regulars and believed their clothing was too excessive.<sup>30</sup> The dispute between the Separates and the Regulars reached a peak in 1775, when Lemuel Burkitt of Sandy Run led a reformation based upon the conditions the Separates had insisted upon as a basis for union. The reforming churches broke with the old Kehukee Association at the annual session of 1775 and formed an association which also called itself Kehukee. Sandy Run, and three churches in Virginia, Sussex, Brunswick and Mill Swamp, withdrew to form the rival association. A great dissension arose over which was the rightful association and after a heated all-day debate, the reform churches secured the meeting house and forced the non-reforming churches to withdraw to a grove where they organized a distinct meeting.<sup>31</sup> The two

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<sup>30</sup> Biggs, Kehukee Association, pp. 36-37.

<sup>31</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 439-40.



associations continued to hold separate meetings until 1788, when they united under the name, "the United Baptist Association, formerly called the Kehukee Association."<sup>32</sup>

During the period from its establishment in 1769, until the split in 1775, the association had experienced a phenomenal growth. By the Revolution, the association had sixty-one churches and an estimated five thousand members.<sup>33</sup> The association embraced a great many Virginia churches, notably Burch's Creek, Amelia County, Sussex County, Pungo, Mill Swamp, and a church in Brunswick County in addition to most of the Baptist churches of eastern North Carolina.<sup>34</sup> Probably some churches in South Carolina also joined, but Paschal's History of North Carolina Baptists does not mention the fact that any South Carolina churches joined.<sup>35</sup> The association did a great deal in spreading the gospel to all parts of the Province of North Carolina.<sup>36</sup> Through the dynamic influence and leadership of this association, Baptist sentiments were

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 475.

<sup>33</sup> Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 128.

<sup>34</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 420-21. Of course, this statement refers only to the Regular Baptist churches, for the Separate churches were organized into the Sandy Creek Association.

<sup>35</sup> Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 128, state "even some of the South Carolina churches united with it," but no mention is made of any Virginia churches.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, History of Tar River Association, p. 5.

spread; valuable contributions were made by the many ministers who were trained under the direction of the association.

The Baptists of Halifax County played a key role in county affairs and in the contributions of Halifax to the Revolution. The Baptists were the largest denomination in the county and contributed a great deal to Missionary activity.

#### THE METHODISTS IN HALIFAX COUNTY

The Methodists were the last Protestant sect to enter Colonial North Carolina. They had no official church until after the Revolution, although a large number of Methodist societies had been organized.<sup>37</sup> One of these societies or circuits organized in 1774, included congregations "which extended from Petersburg to the Roanoke River some distance into North Carolina."<sup>38</sup> This circuit probably embraced Halifax County, because in 1775, George Shadford, "a celebrated minister of Halifax County" conducted a revival in Edgecombe County. Another fact which makes it evident that there were some Methodists in Halifax County is seen by the fact that the Baltimore Circuit in 1775 was enlarged

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<sup>37</sup>

Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 250.

<sup>38</sup>

Ibid., p. 132.

to embrace Halifax and Bertie counties in North Carolina.<sup>39</sup>  
 The Baltimore Circuit noted in its annual meeting in May, 1776 that North Carolina had 683 members of the society and three ministers were employed in the colony at this time. They were Edward Drumyole, Francis Poythuess, and Isham Tatum.<sup>40</sup> Evidently, numerous revivals had occurred in North Carolina in 1775, mostly in the counties bordering Virginia. Devereux Jarrett, in writing of the revival in 1775, stated: "This revival of religion spread through fourteen counties in Virginia and through Bute and Halifax Counties in North Carolina."<sup>41</sup> The revival entered Halifax County from Virginia, and spread over that part of the colony.<sup>42</sup> The scope and force of the revival is seen in the journal of the Reverend Thomas Rankin of Virginia, who preached in North Carolina, in July, 1776, and who can definitely be said to have ministered in Halifax County. Rankin recorded the following:<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> J. Kelly Turner and J. L. Bridges, Jr., History of Edgecombe County (Raleigh, 1920), p. 468, hereinafter cited as Turner and Bridges, Edgecombe County.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Hitt and Thomas Ware (eds.), Minutes of the Methodist Conferences Held in America; From 1773 to 1813, Inclusive (New York, 1813), p. 12, hereinafter cited as Hitt and Ware, Minutes of Methodist Conferences.

<sup>41</sup> W. L. Grissom, History of Methodists in North Carolina (Nashville, 1906), I, 44, hereinafter cited as Grissom, Methodists in North Carolina.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>43</sup> Grissom, Methodists in North Carolina, 43.

Monday, July 15-I rode toward North Carolina. In every place the congregations were large, and received the word with all readiness of mind. I know not that I have spent such a week, since I came to America. I saw everywhere such a simplicity in the people, with such a vehement thirst after the word of God, that I frequently preached and continued in prayer till I was hardly able to stand.

Sunday, July 21- I preached at Ronoaky [sic] Chapel to more than double of what the House would contain. In general, the white people were within the Chapel, and the black people without. The windows being all open, everyone could hear, and hundreds felt the word of God. Many were bathed in tears ... I preached to a large company in the afternoon, and concluded the day with prayer and thanksgiving.

Tuesday, July 23-I crossed the Ronoaky [sic] River ... and I preached to a large and deeply attentive congregation; although not without much labour [sic] and pain, through the extreme heat of the weather.

Tuesday, July 30-On Tuesday 30, was our Quarterly Meeting. I scarce ever remember such a season. No chapel or Preaching-house in Virginia would have contained one third of the congregation. Our friends knowing this, had contrived to shade with boughs of trees a space that would contain two or three thousand persons. Under this, wholly screened from the rays of the sun, we had our general Love-feast. ... About eight ... Watch-night began. Mr. Jarratt<sup>44</sup> preached an excellent sermon....

These are the only recorded references to Methodists in Halifax County during the Colonial Era. But, there must have been Methodist activity in the region, because in 1778, Jesse Lee, a noted Methodist preacher and historian,

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<sup>44</sup>Jarratt, of Dinwiddie County, Virginia, although never leaving the Anglican faith, is considered a fore-runner of Methodism in both North Carolina and Virginia. For the next decade, following 1776, Jarratt came regularly into Halifax County. Ralph Hardee Rives, "Religion", unpublished manuscript, in possession of author.

stated, "In North Carolina, the preachers divided the one circuit that was there before so as to form three circuits, and they were now called Roanoke, Tar River, and New Hope."<sup>45</sup> The Roanoke Circuit, as the minutes show, was the only one in operation until 1779. Further proof of the existence of Methodism in this area and the existence of the Roanoke Circuit is seen in the minutes of the Baltimore Conference of May 9, 1778, when "Roan-Oak" [sic] was mentioned for the first time and William Glendenning was acknowledged as the minister of this circuit.<sup>46</sup> The minutes of 1779 record 470 members as belonging to the Roan-Oak [sic] Circuit, and an increase of ten members for 1780.<sup>47</sup> The Roanoke Circuit was situated along the Roanoke River and probably included Bertie, Halifax, Northampton, and Warren counties.<sup>48</sup> It is also possible that another noted Virginia preacher, Joseph Pilmoor, visited Halifax County during this era

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>46</sup> Hitt and Ware, Minutes of Methodist Conferences, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 22, 27.

<sup>48</sup> Grissom, Methodists in North Carolina, 66. L.S. Burkhead, (ed.), Centennial of Methodism in North Carolina (Raleigh, 1876), p. 27, states the Roanoke Circuit included Neuse, Granville, Roanoke, Washington, Plymouth, Albermarle, Banks and Islands, Portsmouth, Pamlico, Mattamuskeet, and Halifax. He does not state whether this was the original circuit or an expanded one. It cannot be surmised since he does not give any dates.

for he visited in parts of Virginia and North Carolina,  
 "where he preached with success."<sup>49</sup>

Whether any Methodist churches existed in the county during this era is not known. It is thought that perhaps two Methodist churches did exist in some form. This statement is supported by these facts. Whitaker's Chapel, according to local legend, dates from the early 1750's. Judging from the date of influx of the Methodists, it was not originally a Methodist church. It is thought that Whitaker's Chapel was organized as an Anglican church, for the land on which it stands was owned by the Whitaker family, who migrated to North Carolina, from Warwick County, Virginia, in the late 1740's. They were closely related to the Reverend Alexander Whitaker, a prominent Anglican minister of Colonial Virginia.<sup>50</sup> Evidently some type of religious group gathered here, for in the oak-covered church-yard are graves dating from the 1760's. Further proof of its early existence is offered by the fact that in 1780, Bishop Francis Asbury spoke of "preaching at Whitaker's Chapel near Fishing Creek."<sup>51</sup> These facts support the

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<sup>49</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, Origins of American Methodism, Report of the Joint Commission, (Chicago, 1916), p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> Stuart Hall Smith and Claiborne T. Smith, Jr., The History of Trinity Parish, Scotland Neck, Edgecombe County, Edgecombe Parish, Halifax County (Durham, 1955), p. 15, hereinafter cited as Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish.

<sup>51</sup> Turner and Bridgers, Edgecombe County, p. 468.

statement that Whitaker's Chapel was one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Methodist Church in the county.

Another church which, according to tradition, dates from the Colonial Period is Eden Church. The substantiation of the establishment of Eden Church is obtained mainly from the Mouzon map of North Carolina, printed in London, in 1775.<sup>52</sup> This map shows an Anglican Church situated on Beverdam Swamp at approximately the site of the present-day Eden Church. During the Revolutionary War, the Anglican Church became completely disorganized. It is thought that during this period, the members of this church fell under the influence of the Methodist revival sweeping the county. Probably, one of the circuit-riding ministers of the Methodists visited this area and reorganized the church along the tenets of Wesley. It is known that it was reorganized during the first quarter of the nineteenth century along the lines of Wesleyan evangelism.<sup>53</sup>

Whitaker's Chapel and Eden Church are the only Methodist Churches which can trace their origins from the Colonial Era. Their existence can be supported only by the above mentioned facts. The activities of the Methodists were curbed and hindered by John Wesley's Calm Address which

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For reproduction of this map see appendix B.

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Ralph Hardee Rives, "History of Early Methodist Church Remains a Mystery to Many People," The Rocky Mount Evening and Sunday Telegram, July 31, 1960.

urged support and loyalty to England during the Revolutionary War.<sup>54</sup> However, Methodists established the foundation for their later crusades in the county, as was demonstrated in the activities of Rankin, Pilmoor, and Jarratt. The Methodists never exerted the influence that the Baptists or Anglicans did in the Colonial Era. The most important contribution of the Methodists in this period was to establish the foundation for the work that was to occur during the Great Revival of the nineteenth century.<sup>55</sup> The rise of the Methodist Church almost paralleled the decline of the Anglicans, as will be seen in the following discussion of the Anglicans.

#### THE ANGLICANS IN HALIFAX COUNTY

The Anglican Church or Church of England was established by law in the Province of North Carolina. It was encouraged by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and by government officials. But it was never popular with the masses in North Carolina. It was supported by a public tax and this was not popular.<sup>56</sup> Secondly, a great many of the settlers, who migrated to North Carolina, had been attracted by the prospect of religious toleration which the Lords Proprietors had held out to them, and resented the

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<sup>54</sup> Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 250.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, pp. 374-75.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 332.



Established Church of England.<sup>57</sup> But, despite the unpopularity of the Anglican Church, many vestry acts were passed in attempts to establish the Anglican religion in North Carolina. Despite the attempted passage of these acts, the state of the Anglican Church in the Province of North Carolina was "deplorable."<sup>58</sup> Vestry acts passed by the Colonial Assembly were frequently disallowed in England and this led to considerable confusion over the legality of vestries in the various parishes.<sup>59</sup> Only Governor Tryon, "a zealous churchman," was able to report progress by the Anglican Church in North Carolina and his report was perhaps too optimistic.<sup>60</sup>

Despite these shortcomings, the Anglicans were fairly well established in Halifax County. Records support the existence of four Anglican churches within the county, plus the two already mentioned in connection with the Methodists. The activities of the Anglicans in the county began in 1722, when the area of present-day Halifax County was included in Society Parish, Bertie.<sup>61</sup> The Reverend Thomas Newman, who

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<sup>57</sup> Paschal, North Carolina Baptists, 46-50.

<sup>58</sup> Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, pp. 122-23.

<sup>59</sup> Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 9.

<sup>60</sup> Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 123.

<sup>61</sup> Walter Clark (ed.), The State Records of North Carolina (Goldsboro, 1906), XXV, 182, hereinafter cited as Clark, State Records.

was assigned to this area by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, mentioned in a letter to the Society Secretary, on June 29, 1722, that "once every quarter I go up to a place called Ronoke [sic] about 80 miles journey."<sup>62</sup> Of course, it is hard to identify the place Newnam calls "Ronoke." But, it may be conjectured that this place was in Halifax County for two reasons. First, an area on a neck of the Roanoke River, around the present-day State Prison Farm at Tillery, had been settled prior to this date. Secondly, and perhaps more important, is the fact that this settlement was about eighty miles from Newnam's home on the Albemarle Sound.<sup>63</sup> Considering these facts, it is possible that Newnam did minister in the county and that some type of Anglican congregation was assembled here.

In 1727, Society Parish was divided and its western portion became North West Parish.<sup>64</sup> North West Parish included the greater part of Halifax County, since the boundary line passed a few miles west of Scotland Neck.<sup>65</sup> Halifax County remained under the jurisdiction of North West Parish until

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<sup>62</sup> E. L. Pennington, The Church of England in Colonial North Carolina (Hartford, 1937), p. 35, quoted in Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 5.

<sup>63</sup> Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, pp. 5-6.

<sup>64</sup> Clark, State Records, XXV, 210.

<sup>65</sup> Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 6.

1741, when it became part of Edgecombe Parish.<sup>66</sup> It remained under the care of Edgecombe Parish until another division in 1756. While the county was under the care of Edgecombe Parish, the Reverend James Moir, a Society missionary, was the minister. Moir had come to America in 1739 and had served in South Carolina. Since Edgecombe Parish had been without a minister since its creation in 1741,<sup>67</sup> Moir, in 1746, wrote a letter to the Society requesting that he be transferred from his position in New Hanover to Edgecombe. But, judging from his letter, he had other reasons for desiring the transfer. It seems that he had been plagued with malaria while serving in New Hanover and felt that the higher and cooler climate would be beneficial to his health. After complaining about his bout with malaria, he continued:<sup>68</sup>

In the northern parts of this province which are above the district of the Rev. Mr. Hall, the land is higher and the climate colder which makes it more healthy and there is ten times the number of white people to what we have at Cape Fear---They have offered me frequently all proper encouragement to find me a glebe and Parsonage House and pay my salary truly and faithfully ....

The request was granted and Moir was officiating in the parish

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<sup>66</sup>

Clark, State Records, XXIII, 164.

<sup>67</sup>

Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 8.

<sup>68</sup>

William L. Saunders (ed.), The Colonial Records of North Carolina (Raleigh, 1886), IV, 795, hereinafter cited as Saunders, Colonial Records.

the next year. Only after a year's service in the parish, Moir, in a letter dated Edgecombe County, November 22, 1748, expressed a desire to return to England. This letter gave a picture of the state of affairs of the church in some detail. Moir had desired to leave the previous spring, but the congregation "told me they thought it my duty to continue" and in order to induce him to stay had made some concessions to him.<sup>69</sup> The people elected a new vestry which called the "tax gathers to account and paid my salary faithfully," and also allowed him "more time to officiate in remote places than the former vestry had."<sup>70</sup> The letter also gave a good picture of the activity of the Baptists in the area and the strong competition that they presented to the Anglicans. Moir stated "a number in the county had turn'd Baptists for want of a clergyman" and "The people ofton [sic] complained of their being pestered with sermons of Baptist teachers: whom I have always found to be as grossly ignorant as those they pretend to teach."<sup>71</sup> Despite the concessions made to him and the people's evident need for him, Moir closed his letter with the hope of returning to England the next summer.<sup>72</sup> Evidently Moir did not return to England

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<sup>69</sup>  
Ibid., IV, 878.

<sup>70</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>  
Ibid.

for he became head of the new parish of St. Mary's when a division occurred in Edgecombe Parish in 1756.<sup>73</sup> This next division was the most important as far as Halifax County was concerned for it created within the present boundaries of the county a distinct parish, Edgecombe Parish. It took the name of the parish which previously had embraced both Halifax and Edgecombe counties, while Edgecombe took the name of the new parish, St. Mary's. Thus, the confusing combination of Edgecombe Parish, Halifax County resulted. The dividing lines between the two parishes were the same used in the division of Halifax County and Edgecombe County in 1759.<sup>74</sup> Fishing Creek was the boundary used in both cases.<sup>75</sup> Thus, Edgecombe Parish, as created in 1756, embraced the same area as Halifax County which was created three years later.

Since Moir chose to remain with the new parish of St. Mary's, a new rector had to be secured for Edgecombe Parish. In October, 1759, the warden and vestrymen of Edgecombe

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<sup>73</sup> Moir remained as rector of St. Mary's Parish until 1762. He bought a plantation on the Tar River and was one of the commissioners appointed to lay out the town of Tarboro in 1760. From 1762 to 1765, he served as rector of St. George's Parish in Northampton County, where he became quite a controversial figure. For a further discussion of Moir's activities, see Turner and Bridgers, Edgecombe County, pp. 434-38.

<sup>74</sup> Clark, State Records, XXIII, 496.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., XXIII, 472.

Parish called the Reverend Thomas Burges of Virginia to this position.<sup>76</sup> Burges had been born at Standon, Staffordshire, England, on September 6, 1712. He came to tidewater Virginia in 1741, and remained there, mainly in Southampton County, until his appointment to Edgecombe Parish in 1759.<sup>77</sup> The vestrymen agreed to pay him one hundred pounds proclamation money, yearly, and twenty pounds additional salary in lieu of a glebe.<sup>78</sup> Since Burges was not a Society missionary, he did not submit parochial reports to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Thus, little is known of his activities in Edgecombe Parish.<sup>79</sup> Only the date of his death, July 29, 1777, taken from his will, can be ascertained.<sup>80</sup> It is known that he served both Edgecombe Parish and Elizabeth Parish, which was created out of a division of Edgecombe Parish, in 1774. Edgecombe Parish, because of its

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<sup>76</sup> This appointment was confirmed by the North Carolina Assembly early in 1760. Ibid., XXIII, 511.

<sup>77</sup> Stuart Hall Hill Papers, Halifax County Library, Halifax North Carolina, hereinafter cited as Stuart H. Hill Papers.

<sup>78</sup> Clark, State Records, XXIII, 511.

<sup>79</sup> His four children were to be quite active in both North Carolina and Virginia in the period following the Revolution. His descendants were instrumental in the establishment of the Episcopal church in Halifax County, and one of his sons, Henry John Burges, served as rector of Newport Parish, Isle of Wight, Virginia. For further information on Burges' descendants, see Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> Halifax County Will Book, III, 223, Halifax County Court House, Halifax, North Carolina, hereinafter cited as Halifax County Will Book.

size, had been divided into two parishes, by act of the Assembly, in 1774. The Parish was divided virtually down the center of the county.<sup>81</sup> The eastern part retained the name of Edgecombe Parish, while the western part became Elizabeth Parish.<sup>82</sup> Burges evidently served both, since his will mentioned the fact that both owed him money.<sup>83</sup> Whatever activities might have occurred in the new parish of Elizabeth were halted soon after its creation by the Revolutionary War. Like the activities of Burges, very little is known of this parish.

But it is known that four Anglican Churches were established in the county. The first house of worship of which there is any record is Kehukee Chapel. The chapel was built on a small branch, known variously as Bryant's Mill Run, Chapel Run, or Steptoe's Mill Run. This branch merges with Kehukee Creek and is located in the great bend of the Roanoke River, in the eastern tip of the county. It was built on land deeded by William Fort, "Planter."<sup>84</sup> It was used

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Although the landmarks mentioned in the act have disappeared, judging from the starting point, "Richmonds' Old Place," on the Roanoke River and running through various points to the house of Thomas Daniels, on Fishing Creek, it may be surmised that the boundary ran close to present-day United States Highway 301.

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Clark, State Records, XXIII, 964.

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Halifax County Will Book, III, 223.

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Halifax County Deed Book, I, 257, Halifax County Court House, Halifax, North Carolina, hereinafter cited as Halifax County Deed Book.

throughout the Colonial Period, but by 1795, was reported as "falling into ruins."<sup>85</sup> It had been built in 1738, four years before construction of the historic Baptist church of the same name, a few hundred yards west. No trace of Kehukee exists today, although some of the bricks of the old chapel were used in the construction of Trinity Church, Scotland Neck, in 1885.<sup>86</sup>

The other three chapels are harder to pinpoint, as to date of erection. Quankey Chapel's existence in this period can be based upon two facts. But, exact date and location are impossible to ascertain. The facts which support the existence of this chapel are based on two early maps of North Carolina and a grant of land made on November 4, 1769, by Edward Crossland to John Alston and Nicholas Long, churchwardens of the Parish of Edgecombe. The two maps, both Collet's map of North Carolina, dated 1770, and Mouzon's map of 1775, plainly show a chapel about eight miles northwest from Halifax, near Quankey Creek.<sup>87</sup> The deed, in question, refers to a two-acre tract, "whereupon a chapel is erected," in the same locality as was shown on the above-mentioned maps.<sup>88</sup> These facts are the only proof of the

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<sup>85</sup> Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 15.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> For Collet's map see Appendix A, and for Mouzon's map see Appendix B.

<sup>88</sup> Halifax County Deed Book, X, 479.



existence of this chapel. The original site of this chapel has never been definitely identified, since the building was moved from its original site and burned about 1875.<sup>89</sup> It is known that after the Revolution, a Separate Baptist Church was located in the same region, and took the same name, Quankey Creek, as did the Anglican church before it.<sup>90</sup> Whether this Baptist congregation assumed possession of the church after the Revolution can only be surmised. But, judging from the fact that many of the Anglican churches were deserted after the Revolution, it is possible that this occurred.<sup>91</sup>

Another Anglican church, Conocornara, according to local tradition, was built around 1750. This church was located about a mile from Crowell's Crossroads on the road leading northeast to Tillery.<sup>92</sup> The basis for this belief is in the fact that on August 18, 1747, Stephen Cade, an innkeeper, deeded to John Haywood and William Kinchen, churchwardens of Edgecombe Parish, a tract of land for the use of the parish.<sup>93</sup> This grant is in the area where tradition

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Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 19.

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The Methodists did take over some of the Anglican chapels after the Revolution, as has already been seen. So, it is possible that the Baptists did use the chapel after the Revolution.

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Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 19.

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Ibid., p. 18.

93

Halifax County Deed Book, III, 156.

holds that Conocornara was located. This belief is further supported by a letter that the Reverend Clement Hall, the Rector in Edenton, wrote to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, on September 11, 1749: "Our church at Edenton is yet unfinished but one is lately built in Edgecombe County where Mr. Moir resides."<sup>94</sup> It is to be remembered that at this time, 1749, Halifax County had not yet been created from Edgecombe County. Judging from the land grant and the letter, it is entirely possible that the date, 1750, is very nearly correct. The land was evidently purchased for the erection of a church and the letter adds further proof that a church had been erected. Only a few scattered bricks remain at the presumed location of this church and a number of unmarked graves shed no light on this question. Only the deed and the letter remain as proof of the possible existence of a church.

It is likewise difficult to fix a date for the erection of the chapel in Halifax. A church in Halifax, prior to the Revolution, can be clearly proven by the fact that the Mouzon map of 1775, shows an Anglican church in Halifax.<sup>95</sup> The church was probably built between 1769 and 1775. The town of Halifax had been created in 1757 and in the act of

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<sup>94</sup> Saunders, Colonial Records, IV, 954.

<sup>95</sup> See Appendix B.

the Assembly, there was no mention of a lot reserved for the use of the church.<sup>96</sup> Further proof that a church did not exist in Halifax prior to 1769, is seen in the fact that Sauthrie's map of Halifax in 1769, designates no church or chapel in the town, while plainly showing the court house and other buildings.<sup>97</sup> One other fact supports the belief that the church was built in the early 1770's, and not before, as some maintain. The church at Halifax was built upon the grave of James Milner,<sup>98</sup> who died in 1772.<sup>99</sup> These facts support the premise that the church was built in the 1770's and actually narrow the date down to 1772, or thereafter. This building stood until its collapse in 1911. Photographs show a small wooden structure, with four windows on each side. The old chapel had a rear gallery and an octagonal sounding board over the pulpit.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Clark, State Records, XXV, 354.

<sup>97</sup> For a reproduction of this map see Francis Benjamin Johnston and Thomas T. Waterman, The Early Architecture of North Carolina (Chapel Hill, 1941), p. 112. Also, the date on the graves in the churchyard, one dating back to 1766, indicates the area was set aside for religious purposes at an early date, and this fact makes it even more difficult to establish a date.

<sup>98</sup> Milner was a Halifax attorney, who was elected to the Assembly in 1772. But, shortly thereafter, he was thrown from a horse and died of a fractured skull. Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>100</sup> Stuart H. Hill Papers.

The churchyard, at Halifax, contains some of the oldest graves in this section of North Carolina. The oldest stone is that of William Alexander, merchant of Halifax, who died in 1766. Many other notables are buried there, including Abraham Hodge, who died in 1805, the publisher of The North Carolina Journal, and Sarah Davie, the wife of William R. Davie.

The existence of the previously mentioned four Anglican chapels of Kehukee, Quankey, Conocornara, and Halifax, can be authenticated by records, maps, and deeds. Possibly two other Anglican chapels existed during this period, as has been seen from the discussion of the Methodists earlier. These two were Whitaker's Chapel and Eden Chapel.<sup>101</sup>

Thus, it is reasonable to assert that the Anglican Church was fairly successful in Halifax County. On the eve of the Revolutionary War, it had two parishes in the county and was served by a resident clergyman who was paid by the parishes. He did not have to rely on the services of the Society for his support.<sup>102</sup> It had four chapels which can be authenticated by records, deeds, and maps, and possibly two others, whose existence was not quite as clear. Following the Revolution, the Church of England ceased to exist and its property and parishes passed into other hands. Many of the

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<sup>101</sup>

For further information on these two chapels, see *supra.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>102</sup>

Smith and Smith, Edgecombe Parish, p. 23.

chapels were used by the Baptists and Methodists. The Anglican Church had been an integral part of Colonial Halifax County.

Religion made a vital contribution to the lives of the people in Colonial Halifax County, as it did to most North Carolinians. During the Colonial Period Halifax County was the center of one of the most influential Baptist Associations in the Province. The Kehukee Association exerted a great influence, both in political and religious matters, throughout the entire Province. Some of the ablest Methodist ministers preached in Halifax County. Methodism spread from Virginia, throughout the northern part of the Province of North Carolina. The Anglican Church was as strong in the county as it was in any other county in the Province. Thus, Halifax County was blessed with a diversified and active religious culture throughout the Colonial Period.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DAYS OF '76

Shortly after its creation, Halifax County became involved in a series of political disturbances that were to culminate in the American Revolution. The first disturbance, in 1759, grew out of the quitrent problem in the Granville District.<sup>1</sup> The people of the county grew increasingly impatient with the fraudulent and corrupt practice of Granville's agents, Thomas Child and Francis Corbin. Petitions of grievances were addressed to Lord Carteret, but their efforts were futile as Carteret, in England, was too engrossed in personal matters to heed the requests.<sup>2</sup> Appeals to the Colonial Assembly also were futile, since the matter was beyond its jurisdiction. The Assembly noted that Corbin was "exacting exorbitant fees

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The Granville District was created as compensation to Lord Carteret, Earl of Granville, who refused to sell his share of Carolina to the Crown in 1729. The District included the upper half of present North Carolina, and embraced about two-thirds of the colony's population. Halifax County was included in this district. Granville's agents failed to prepare accurate rolls or to keep satisfactory account of the monies collected. They were also accused of exacting illegal fines and exorbitant rates. Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, North Carolina: The History of a Southern State (Chapel Hill, 1963), pp. 145-46, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina.

2

J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, Jr., History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina (Raleigh, 1920), p.74, hereinafter cited as Turner and Bridgers, Edgecombe County.

on all grants," but nothing was done to redress the grievances.<sup>3</sup>

The citizens of Halifax and of neighboring Edgecombe County, when it became evident that no action would be taken by Lord Carteret or the Colonial Assembly against Corbin and Child, decided to take more drastic steps. On the night of January 24, 1759, a large group of mounted horsemen from the two counties went to Edenton and seized Corbin, along with Thomas Bodley, a principal subordinate of Corbin. The two men were carried to Enfield, where Corbin had an office. The two agents were then forced to post bond that they would return at the following session of court and return all the fees "unjustly taken from the people." After Corbin and Bodley posted bond, they were allowed to return to Edenton.<sup>4</sup>

Governor Arthur Dobbs took action against the group and several of their number were arrested and jailed at Halifax. As a result of these arrests, the "Enfield Riot" occurred on May 14, 1759.<sup>5</sup> The companions of the jailed

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<sup>3</sup> William L. Saunders (ed.), The Colonial Records of North Carolina (Raleigh, 1887), V, 1088-94, hereinafter cited as Saunders, Colonial Records.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., V, lvii.

<sup>5</sup> Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 170. The name, "Enfield Riot," is used to denote this disorder because it stems originally from the seizure and the taking of the two agents to Enfield.

group, in broad daylight and in open defiance of the authorities, stormed the jail and freed their colleagues.<sup>6</sup> Records make no mention of any further action against the "roisters." The "Enfield Riots" are regarded as forerunners of the Regulator Movement which swept Orange, Alamance, Rowan, and Anson counties in 1768-1771.<sup>7</sup> As can be seen from the actions of Halifax County toward Carteret's agents, a spirit of opposition was present at an early date.

For the next decade, the situation in the county appeared calm. Records make no mention of any action taken by the county with regard to the Stamp Act. In the neighboring county of Edgecombe, closely allied with Halifax in political affairs, the Sons of Liberty was formed as a group in opposition to the Stamp Act.<sup>8</sup> Although riots and demonstrations occurred throughout the colony, none occurred in Halifax County.

Signs of discontent were again manifested in the county during the so-called Regulator Movement of 1768-1771.<sup>9</sup> To

<sup>6</sup> Saunders, Colonial Records, V, viii.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., ix; State Historical Marker, E-69, located just north of Enfield on United States Highway 301 states that the Enfield Riot "was forerunner of Regulators."

<sup>8</sup> Turner and Bridgers, Edgecombe County, p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> It is not the purpose of this study to discuss the Regulator Movement; only Halifax County's attitude toward the Regulators will be discussed. For a detailed study of the Regulator Movement see Archibald Henderson, "Origin of the Regulation in North Carolina," American Historical Review,



show that they were in sympathy with the Regulators, the inhabitants of Halifax County petitioned the Colonial Assembly for a similar redress of grievances. The petition was presented by William Branch, and asked for laws to regulate the payment of fees for legal papers, the collection of quitrents, and the payment of taxes.<sup>10</sup> No action, however, was taken on the petition. But its introduction reflected the fact that Halifax County had similar grievances and was in accord with the Regulators. Further sympathy for the Regulators was evidenced by the fact that when Governor William Tryon called for troops from the counties to suppress the Regulators, Halifax refused to heed his call.<sup>11</sup> The county refused to send any troops to march against their fellow-colonists, and thus, once again reflected their sympathy with the movement.

A brief lull occurred in the county at the end of the Regulator Movement in 1771. But a chain of events throughout the entire thirteen colonies were soon to transform the town of Halifax into one of the leading political centers of North Carolina. As the breach between England and the colonies grew greater in the early 1770's, Halifax once again demonstrated its predominant Whig sentiment. With

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XXI (January, 1916), 320-32; or Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, pp. 173-78.

<sup>10</sup>

Saunders, Colonial Records, VII, 927-28.

<sup>11</sup>

W. C. Allen, History of Halifax County (Boston, 1918), p. 23.

the passage of the Intolerable Acts of 1774,<sup>12</sup> the slumbering spirit of resistance and opposition within the county was rekindled.

On August 22, 1774, a meeting of the "Inhabitants and Free-holders of the town of Halifax" was held in opposition to the Intolerable Acts. John Webb was elected moderator of the group and a fifteen-point proclamation was adopted by the body. This proclamation, while it declared "our loyalty to King George III," stirringly denounced the Intolerable Acts as "unconstitutional and oppressive" and an "illegal exercise of arbitrary power." The group also pledged unanimously a non-importation policy against any article, either directly or indirectly, from England and urged that exports to England be halted after all debts were paid.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Halifax, like so many other counties and towns throughout the colonies rallied to the aid of their fellow-colonists in Massachusetts. It was evident that the spirit of opposition and resistance had become more defiant.

Three days later, on August 25, the First Provincial Congress of North Carolina met at New Bern and marked the

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The Intolerable Acts were four measures passed by Parliament in retaliation against the Boston "Tea Party." These acts were designed to punish the colony of Massachusetts, as well as an intended rebuke to the theory "held by some colonists that the British Parliament had no right to legislate for the colonies." Throughout the colonies, these acts were bitterly resented.

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Saunders, Colonial Records, IX, 1038-41.

beginning of the colony's separation from the mother country. In this meeting, the county was represented by Nicholas Long, and Willie Jones, and the town of Halifax by John Geddy.<sup>14</sup> The appearance of Willie Jones, often called the "Sam Johnson of North Carolina", marked the beginning of his illustrious career in North Carolina politics. Jones was elected to represent Halifax at all of the Provincial congresses and exerted a great deal of influence at them. When the Provincial congresses met at Halifax, Jones' home served as the meeting place for the prominent men of the congress to discuss the pertinent issues and to map strategy for the conduct of affairs during this transition period from colony to statehood. Jones also served on the important committee appointed to draw up a bill of rights and a constitution for the new state. He also was elected as president of the Council of Safety in April, 1776, and remained in this position, until replaced by Richard Caswell in December of the same year. Since the Council of Safety was in charge of affairs during this transition period, Jones was the top official in North Carolina. Jones advocated a "simple democracy," of a strong legislature, a weak executive subordinate to the legislature, and religious freedom with no

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1042-43. Joseph Montford had been selected by the town of Halifax as their representative, but illness forced him to withdraw, and John Geddy, a leading merchant of the town, replaced him. Ibid., 1041.

established church as the type of government for the new nation. So strong were Jones' feelings against a strong federal union that he fought bitterly the ratification of the Federal Constitution in 1789, and after its ratification he retired in disgust from public life.<sup>15</sup> Jones served his county and state well during the Revolution. He was an active and influential leader of the state during the turbulent Confederation Era.

Halifax County was represented by Benjamin McCulloch, Nicholas Long, and Jones, and the borough of Halifax by Joseph Montford and John Webb in the Second Provincial Congress which assembled at New Bern on April 3, 1775.<sup>16</sup> When the Third Provincial Congress convened at Hillsboro, on August 20 of the same year, the county was represented by Nicholas Long and by the newly-elected James Hogan, David Sumner, John Webb, and John Geddy. The town of Halifax was represented by Jones and Francis Nash.<sup>17</sup> By 1775 the spirit of revolution was rampant throughout the colonies. The opening battles, Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill had been fought, and the Second Continental Congress was

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<sup>15</sup>

For a detailed study of the life of Willie Jones, see Blackwell Robinson, "Willie Jones of Halifax," North Carolina Historical Review, XVIII (January, 1941), 1-26; ibid., XVIII (April, 1941), 133-169.

<sup>16</sup>

Saunders, Colonial Records, IX, 1179.

<sup>17</sup>

Ibid., X, 165-66.

busily at work in Philadelphia. The spirit of independence although increasing every day, was still somewhat restrained by conservatives who desired one last appeal to George III for a redress of grievances. The colony of North Carolina would be the first to take the drastic step and recommend to its delegates that independence be proclaimed. This action was taken by the Fourth Provincial Congress, which began its work on April 4, 1776, at Halifax.

The choice of Halifax as the site for the Fourth Provincial Congress was an appropriate one. The area was so thoroughly Whig that after the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge on February 27, 1776, the Loyalist prisoners captured at the battle were sent to Halifax and jailed.<sup>18</sup> Among the forty-one prisoners placed in the Gaol at Halifax was General Allen McDonald, the husband of the Scottish heroine, Flora McDonald, who pleaded for her husband's release on the steps of the jail at Halifax.<sup>19</sup> Prisoners taken off British ships at Wilmington were also sent to Halifax and imprisoned.<sup>20</sup> The area had a long heritage of opposition and resistance, as has been seen by the "Enfield Riots" and the support of the Regulators.

The rebellious spirit was strong among the Baptists

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<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid., 477.

<sup>19</sup>  
Ibid., 486.

<sup>20</sup>  
Ibid., 470-71.

of North Carolina. Halifax County, since the formation of the Kehukee Association in 1769, was the center of Baptist sentiment in the province. The Baptist had a strong tradition of democratic ideals as they were trained under a democratic plan of church government. The Baptist believed that religious freedom was possible only when there was civic freedom, with the complete separation of church and state. Thus, the Baptists had long been disgusted with the established church in the colonies. Through the Kehukee Association, protests had been made to the Royal governors, particularly William Tryon. But the protests had met with little success. Baptists who constituted a large segment of the population of the county were ripe for a change. The democratic ideals of the Baptists, along with their feelings of discontent, were wide-spread in the county and represented another element in the county's spirit of resistance.<sup>21</sup> It was in this environment and climate of opinion that the Provincial Congress convened in the courthouse at Halifax on April 4, 1776.

When the Congress convened at Halifax "all the delegates favored independence, with not one dissenting voice."<sup>22</sup> The Congress was composed of eighty-three men and included many of the outstanding leaders of the province, such as Cornelius

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<sup>21</sup>

George Washington Paschal, A History of the Baptists in North Carolina (Raleigh, 1930), I, 446-48.

<sup>22</sup>

Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 204.

Harnett of Wilmington, Samuel Johnston of Chowan, Richard Caswell of Dobbs [Lenoir] and many others.<sup>23</sup> Halifax County was represented by John Bradford, James Hogan, David Sumner, John Joseph Williams, and Willis Alston, while the town of Halifax was represented by John Webb.<sup>24</sup> Willie Jones had been elected but he was appointed by the Continental Congress as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern Department, at Fort Charlotte, Georgia, and was therefore replaced by Webb.<sup>25</sup>

After the seating of the delegates, Samuel Johnston was elected chairman, James Green, secretary, and Francis Lymaugh and Evan Swann, "doorkeepers."<sup>26</sup> On April 8, a committee composed of Cornelius Harnett, chairman, Allen Jones, Thomas Burke, Abner Nash, John Kinchen, Thomas Person, and Thomas Jones, was appointed to take into consideration "the usurpations and violences attempted and committed by the King and Parliament" against the colonies.<sup>27</sup> On April 12, the committee made its report and from this report, the

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<sup>23</sup> For a list of the members of the Fourth Provincial Congress, see Saunders, Colonial Records, X, 500-01.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 500.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 502.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 504.

famous Halifax Resolves emerged. The last paragraph of this document read:<sup>28</sup>

RESOLVED, That the delegates for this Colony in the Continental Congress be empowered to concur with the delegates of the other colonies in declaring Independency, and forming foreign alliances, reserving to this Colony the sole and exclusive right of forming a Constitution and laws for this Colony, and of appointing delegates from time to time (under the general direction of a general representation thereof) to meet the delegates of the other Colonies for such purposes as shall hereafter be pointed out.

The report was unanimously adopted.

The Halifax Resolves were the "first official state action for independence;" it was not a declaration of independence, but a recommendation to the Continental Congress that independence should be declared by all the colonies.<sup>29</sup> The Resolves preceded the action by the Virginia Convention by more than a month and were the first open and public declaration by the proper authorities of any of the colonies.<sup>30</sup>

The difference between the Virginia Resolution and the Halifax Resolves is that Virginia "instructed" her delegates to "propose" independence, while North Carolina "empowered" her delegates to "concur" with other delegates for the proclamation of independence. It is for this reason that

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<sup>28</sup>

Ibid., 512.

<sup>29</sup>

Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 204.

<sup>30</sup>

Joseph Seawell Jones, A Defence of the Revolutionary History of the State of North Carolina From the Aspersion of Mr. Jefferson (Raleigh, 1834), p. 252, hereinafter cited as Jones, Defence of North Carolina.



Richard Henry Lee of Virginia was empowered to propose independence at the Continental Congress.<sup>31</sup>

A copy of the Resolves was immediately sent to Joseph Hewes in the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. Hewes placed the document before many of the leading members of Congress, such as John Adams, Sam Johnson, and Elbridge Gerry, and all considered it "a noble and decisive measure." The newspapers of the colonies gave it wide coverage and publicity.<sup>32</sup> The Halifax Resolves had bearing on the drafting of the national Declaration of Independence. The Continental Congress needed an impulse to take the final drastic step and the Halifax Resolves supplied that impulse.<sup>33</sup>

The news of the Declaration of Independence, as drawn and ratified by the Continental Congress, reached Halifax on July 22. It was resolved that the Declaration be officially proclaimed to the state on August 1, at Halifax.<sup>34</sup> Cornelius Harnett, former president of the North Carolina

<sup>31</sup> Robert Diggs Wimberly Connor, North Carolina: Rebuilding An Ancient Commonwealth, 1584-1925 (Chicago, 1919), I, 399.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, p. 204.

<sup>33</sup> George Bancroft, IV, History of the United States of America (Boston, 1876), 238.

<sup>34</sup> Saunders, Colonial Records, X, 638.

Council of Safety,<sup>35</sup> read the document to a large throng gathered in the village. The shouts of joy, the waving of flags, and the booming of cannons marked a tumultuous ending to Harnett's words "pledging the lives, the fortunes, and the sacred honor of the people to the declaration."<sup>36</sup> The new nation had been created.

Halifax County, in 1776, had the typical heritage of most of the counties of the new state.<sup>37</sup> The settlement and growth of the county stemmed from its location on one of the leading rivers of the state, the Roanoke. This too, followed the general pattern of settlement of North Carolina. Economically, the products of the area were typical of the colony. Cotton, tobacco, naval stores, beef, pork, and corn were exported to the nearby Virginia merchants or down the Roanoke River to the towns of the Albemarle Sound. Halifax and Weldon developed as important commercial centers of the region.

As in the other counties of North Carolina, religion

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<sup>35</sup>

For a further discussion of Cornelius Harnett, one of the state's outstanding Revolutionary leaders, see Robert Diggs Wimberly Connor, Revolutionary Leaders of North Carolina (Greensboro, 1923), pp. 49-78.

<sup>36</sup>

Jones, Defence of North Carolina, pp. 268-69.

<sup>37</sup>

North Carolina, from the ratification of the Halifax Resolves in April, 1776 until the creating of the state constitution in November, 1776, was in a state of transition. The state of North Carolina officially began with the meeting of the first General Assembly at New Bern on April 4, 1777.

played a major role in the lives of the colonists. Baptists migrated to the county in large numbers and were instrumental in its settlement. Kehukee the first Baptist Church in the county was organized in 1742, and from this church was to spring the second Baptist Association in the colony. Kehukee Association formed in 1769, exerted tremendous influence in the establishment of other Baptist churches throughout the colony and in the propagation and spread of Baptist doctrines. The Anglicans, judging from the five chapels in the county, were also very important. Edgecombe Parish, under the direction of Thomas Burges, was formed in 1756 and embraced the five Anglican chapels in the county. These two religious groups dominated the county until the Revolution, when the Methodists also began to make progress in the county. Halifax County had the typical religious life and heritage of the other North Carolina counties.

The county made its greatest contribution to the colony in politics. Its opposition to the abuses of power in local government was expressed as early as 1759, when the "Enfield Riot" occurred. Further evidence of its spirit of resistance and opposition was exemplified by its sympathy and concern for the Regulator Movement of 1768-1771. The county was also quick to express its feelings and reflect its opposition to the Intolerable Acts passed by Parliament to coerce the colony of Massachusetts.

The colonists of Halifax County were no different from

the colonists of the other counties of North Carolina. The settlement, the economic life, the religion of the county were typical of the colony. But, in its development, a spirit of opposition and resistance emerged and the county became thoroughly Whig. With the outbreak of the Revolution, the county was so thoroughly Whig that Tories and British prisoners were sent there for safekeeping. Few counties in North Carolina were as thoroughly Whig as Halifax. The democratic ideals of the Baptist Church, the disgust with the corrupt practices of public officials, and the nature of the colonists in Halifax County combined to make the area thoroughly Whig. The colonists of Halifax had migrated to the area from Virginia or from the Albemarle Sound and thus, were not directly connected by birth with the mother country. The colonists of the county were of a generation that had been born and bred in the colonies, and thus the close affiliation with England was somewhat removed.

It was amidst this atmosphere, at the Fourth Provincial Congress at Halifax, on April 12, 1776, that the first "state" action for independence was taken. The Halifax Resolves, "empowering" the North Carolina delegates to "concur" with other delegates for independence, was the first official state action for independence and served as an impulse to the Continental Congress. After the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed by the Continental Congress, Halifax served as the capitol of the new state. It was quite appropriate

that Halifax, with its heritage of defiance and resistance, should be the site of North Carolina's proclamation of independence and that the small village should take its place in the annals of North Carolina history with Edenton, New Bern, Wilmington and Hillsboro as a birthplace of freedom.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A  
COLLET'S MAP

Collet's map of North Carolina printed in 1770 at London is very useful in determining chapels, public buildings, and settlements of Colonial Halifax County. A verifax reproduction of the section of this map which deals with Halifax County is found on the following page.





## APPENDIX B

## MOUZON MAP

The Mouzon map of North Carolina, printed at London in 1775, is an important aid in determining settlements, chapels, and towns of Colonial Halifax County. A verafex reproduction of the section of this map that deals with Halifax County is on the following page.

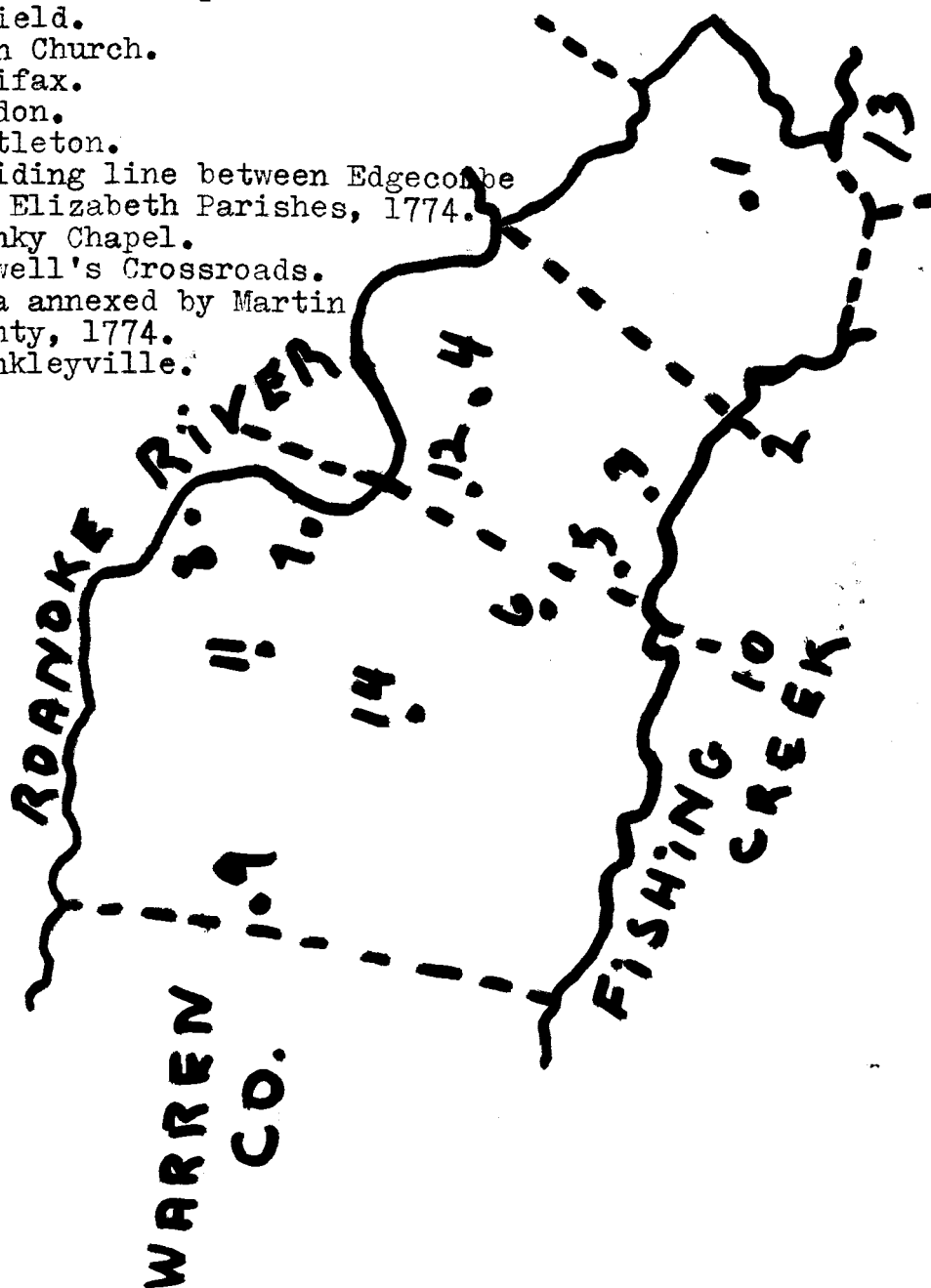


## APPENDIX C

A map of Halifax County showing important parishes, chapels, and settlements, 1776, is on the following page.

## LEGEND

1. Kehukee Chapel and Kehukee Baptist Church.
2. Dividing line between Society and Northwest Parishes, 1727.
3. Whitaker's Chapel.
4. Conocanara Chapel.
5. Enfield.
6. Eden Church.
7. Halifax.
8. Weldon.
9. Littleton.
10. Dividing line between Edgecombe and Elizabeth Parishes, 1774.
11. Quanky Chapel.
12. Crowell's Crossroads.
13. Area annexed by Martin County, 1774.
14. Brinkleyville.



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301.

Grave marker of Joseph Montford, Masonic Lodge, Halifax, N.C.

Personal tour of Masonic Lodge, Halifax, N.C.

Personal tour of old "Davie home," Halifax, N.C.