



# Mecklenburg Messenger

## OMGS Archives Hours

10-12 AM Tuesdays, 1-4 PM Thursdays  
Visit the website for additional information.

## Notes on July Meeting

by Mary Utting

Genealogists who have access to letters written by their ancestors consider themselves lucky indeed. These personal writings not only provide names and information about family members but they also tell far more about the lives and personalities of these people than most documents used in genealogical research.

Such a group of letters are among the Wilkes Family Papers at the Carolina Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library. Sheila Bumgarner, archivist and photo librarian, who spoke at the July meeting at the July meeting of Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society, described some things she learned in transcribing these papers

From her research she produced a genealogy of three families involved: Renwick, Smedburg, and Wilkes. Her focus was on one couple who lived in Charlotte, John Wilkes (31 March 1827-6 July 1908), known as Jack, and his wife, Jane Renwick Smedberg (November 22, 1827-19 January 1913), known as Jeanie.

A New York native, she was the daughter of well-to-do parents, Charles Gustavus Smedberg and Isabella Renwick. Her husband, who lived in Washington, D.C., for a time, was the son of Charles Wilkes and Jane Jeffrey Renwick. Jack and Jeanie were married 20 April 1854. As the speaker noted, names and nicknames tended to be repeated among these families, which makes research a bit more difficult.

How did the young couple end up in Charlotte? When it was decided to keep an interest in a gold mine in this area, which they had considered selling, Jack was sent here to look after the family investment. He and Jeanie moved to St. Catherine's Mill, but over time, because Jack was often absent on business trips or because Jeanie was in the North with her parents, they exchanged a number of personal letters that are part of the library collection.

Ms. Bumgarner passed around transcriptions of several of these, including some original with them, and she also read excerpts during her presentation.

## OMGS Meetings

The August 2006 meeting of OMGS will be held on Wednesday, 9 August 2006 at the **Ray Hall Community Center, Aldersgate**, 3800 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte. Remember the "social hour" begins at 7pm with the meeting following at 7:30pm. We will have Karen McConnell, Ann Williams, and Janet Dyer. Their program is on "A Life in Antebellum Charlotte – From the Private Journal of Sarah Frew Davidson." There will be a book available for purchase. In September we will have Mike Scoggins, author of several books, and he will talk about Huck's Defeat. Don't miss these great programs!

The Hopewell Branch will not meet in August. But come and join us again in September, and have a great summer!

There are some family papers elsewhere, but Jeanie's letters are only in the Charlotte collection.

The first letter, dated 15 October 1856, clearly shows that Jeanie often asked for goods to be sent her from the North if she could not purchase what she wanted in Charlotte. Ms. Bumgarner said that Jack had a lot of financial problems. For one thing, he faced the challenge of building a railroad during the Civil War, as he remained with the Confederates in spite of the fact that his father was an admiral in the U.S. Navy.

Jeanie had money in her own right, but according to terms of inheritance, it had to remain in New York State. They struggled to have this changed for 45 years. The first letter was written by Jack while Jeanie was away. She had been in the Catskills visiting her parents and was returning by ship when she had to stop in Virginia to give birth, and her husband teased her about her "exploit" appearing in the paper. A clipping about the birth was in the files with his letter.

Some letters tell about the health of their children. One, written 17 August 1868 from Cleveland Springs, discusses their infant daughter, Eliza Isabel "Lizzie," who was extremely ill. Jeanie begs Jack to join them quickly, as she fears the baby may not recover. Indeed, she died 19 August.

As was so often the case in the 19th century, four of the nine children did not live to become adults, and one died in his twenties.

Jack and Jeanie Wilkes left their mark on Charlotte. Jack was a devout Episcopalian, who served as a vestryman. Jane was instrumental in establishing, first, St. Peter's Hospital for white patients and then proceeded to raise money for Good Samaritan, a hospital for blacks.

Ms. Bumgarner said that it is hoped that these interesting and revealing letters can be published in a book.

## **New from the Carolina Room**

by Jane Johnson

6/22/2006 to 7/22/2006

Lloyd Bockstruck of the Dallas (TX) Public Library will be our guest lecturer on September 30, 2006. His four lectures will be: Records for Civilians in and after the Civil War Comparing Colonial Land Records in North and South Carolina Bridging the Atlantic: Finding Your Ancestral Home Indian Wars. The workshops will be at Main Library's Auditorium from 9:30 a.m to 4: 00 p.m. Call the Carolina Room at 704-336-2980 beginning September 1, 2006 to register for these free workshops.

To view the Public Library's catalog for a complete list of holdings, go to <http://www.plcmc.org/catalog/default.asp>.

Below are new titles of interest to genealogists in the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Main Library, 310 N. Tryon St., Charlotte, NC.

*Buncombe County North Carolina Death Records 1913-1989*

*The Erwins of Mecklenburg*

*Hyde Yesterdays: A History of Hyde County (NC)*

*Mayflower Families Through Five Generations, v. 16, pt. 3*

*The Only Land I Know, History of the Lumbee Indians*

*Perquimans County North Carolina*

*The Turner Chronicles*

*The Waldenses of Valdese*

## **Book Review**

by Tina Brown

In May Thomas E. Neel sent me a review copy of his novel, *From Crown to Glory: The Journey of a Carolina Family from Loyalty to the King to Revolution* and asked that I review it and mention it in the

*Messenger*. I'm a little late getting this done but I hope he will forgive me. Mr. Neel is a retired school teacher and school administrator, who states that this book began as a challenge from his father, Robert E. Neel, on his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. I am sure Mr. Neel has become an experienced genealogist since that time because even though the book is a novel it contains much of his family's history.

The book is as Mr. Neel says "based loosely on the lives and families of Thomas Christopher Neel, John Henry Neel and Andrew Neel." In his novel Mr. Neel gives these three men the relationship of brother even though it has never been proven.

Mr. Neel has taken a hard task and created a very readable novel. Turning historical facts and "pretend" into something that entertains and also educates is never easy. His characters from those that actually lived to the ones like Uncle Arthur and Artimas McGhee blend together and work well.

Hopefully soon Mr. Neel's book will be available in our local bookstores.

## **Upcoming Events**

August 17-20, Greensboro Highland Games, Greensboro, NC. For more information visit their website at [www.triadhIGHLANDGAMES.org](http://www.triadhIGHLANDGAMES.org).

October 21-22, Stone Mountain Highland Games; Stone Mountain, GA. For more information visit their website at [www.smhg.org](http://www.smhg.org).

October 28, Waxhaw Highland Games, Waxhaw, NC. For more information visit their website at [www.wshg.org](http://www.wshg.org).

Do you know of an upcoming genealogical event? Let me know and I can publish it here. My email is [raney1@earthlink.net](mailto:raney1@earthlink.net)

## **Want to Join OMGS?**

It's easy to join. Annual dues are \$20 for an individual membership, \$25 for a family membership, \$40 for a sustaining membership, or you can pay \$225 for a lifetime membership. Make a check or money order payable to Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society and send it along with your name, address, phone number, email address, and names you are researching to OMGS, P.O. Box 32453, Charlotte, NC, 28232-2453. Our email address is [omgs1775@yahoo.com](mailto:omgs1775@yahoo.com) and our website is <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ncomgs/>

Joan Raney, Editor

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**DATED MATERIAL INSIDE**

**OMGS Publications for Sale**

<i>Dr. J. B. Alexander's Medical Ledger &amp; Account Book, 1855-1871</i>	\$16.50 PPD
<i>Real Estate and Legal Notices from Charlotte, NC Newspapers, 1835-1847</i>	\$27.50 PPD
<i>Real Estate and Legal Notices from Charlotte, NC Newspapers, 1848-1862</i>	\$27.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 1: North Mecklenburg</i>	\$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 2: South Mecklenburg</i>	\$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 3: East Mecklenburg</i>	\$37.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 4: West Mecklenburg</i>	\$37.50 PPD
<i>1800 Census, Mecklenburg County, NC</i>	\$15.00 PPD
<i>1850 Census Abstract, Mecklenburg County, NC (Includes separate index)</i>	\$17.50 PPD
<i>Index to 1850 Census</i>	\$ 5.00 PPD
<i>OMGS Surname Index, 2000 Edition</i>	\$8.00 PPD
<i>OMGS Quarterlies: 1983-2003</i>	\$21.50 PPD (4/year) \$8.50 PPD (single) \$2.00 PPD (index)
<i>Cabarrus Revolutionary Patriot Roll, by Cabarrus Gen. Soc.</i>	\$19.00 PPD
<i>My Hometown Pineville, by Joe Howard Griffin, Sr.</i>	\$30.00 PPD
<i>The Presbyterian Gathering at Clear Creek, by Russell Martin Kerr</i>	\$27.50 PPD
<i>The Spirit of a Proud People, by Lois Moore Yandle</i>	\$40.00 PPD
<i>They Married Confederate Officers: The Intimate Story of Anna Morrison, Wife of Stonewall Jackson, and Her Five Sisters, by Kathy N. Herran</i>	\$24.95 PPD

**Books by Herman W. Ferguson**

<i>Mecklenburg County, NC—Minutes of the Court of common Pleas &amp; Quarter Sessions</i>			
<i>Vol. I, 1780-1800</i>	\$30.00 PPD	<i>Vol. V, 1841 - 1850</i>	\$27.50 PPD
<i>Vol. II, 1801-1820</i>	\$32.50 PPD	<i>Vol. VI, 1851-1860</i>	\$28.50 PPD
<i>Vol. III, 1821-1830</i>	\$27.50 PPD	<i>Vol. VII, 1861-1868</i>	\$28.50 PPD
<i>Vol. IV, 1831 - 1840</i>	\$25.00 PPD		
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Genealogical Deed Abstracts Books 10-14</i>			\$27.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC- Abstracts of Deed Books 15-23 1794-1830</i>			\$35.00 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Will abstracts, 1791-1868, Books A-J/Tax Lists 1797-1799, 1806-1807</i>			
		(transcribed by Ralph B. & Herman W. Ferguson)	\$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: A Petition, 1792; Tax Lists 1797-1799, 1806-1808, 1810-1811, 1815, 1823-1824</i>			
		(transcribed by Ralph B. & Herman W. Ferguson)	\$27.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg &amp; Cabarrus Counties, NC: Decedents for Whom Loose Estate Papers are Extant</i>			\$16.50 PPD

North Carolina residents please include 7.5% sales tax. Send name, address, order, and payment to

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