



# Mecklenburg Messenger

**Website:** <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ncomgs/>

**Email:** [omgs1775@yahoo.com](mailto:omgs1775@yahoo.com)

## OMGS Archives Hours

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

## News of the Archives

Our latest donation is a copy of the Mecklenburg Heritage Book. One of the indexes we are able to search on our computer is Elmwood Cemetery, Historic Section. It is at present the most complete and accurate source for this information available anywhere. Another of the indexes is the 'expanding' Quarterly surname index now including over 10,000 names.

## Notes from November Meeting

by Mary Utting

"Who was the first white settler of Charlotte?"

That question came from Dr. James Sasser, speaker at the November 14 meeting of Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society. Dr. Sasser, who taught history in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and at Central Piedmont Community College for many years, also wrote the history of Providence Baptist Church after his retirement. His talk was about the early history of Charlotte.

He managed to stump his audience with this question. The first listed settler in what is now Charlotte was neither Thomas Polk nor Thomas Spratt, but a man named John Lederer, who gives the first account of this area in 1731.

Spratt, who came about 1751-52, settled on land where Presbyterian Orthopaedic Hospital is now located. After his arrival from Pennsylvania, he selected this site because it had a "nice spring." His 15-year-old daughter Susannah had a sweetheart back in Maryland. This young man, Tom Polk, decided to follow the Spratts after they had settled here and stayed with them briefly.

Then Polk decided to build his own log cabin, at the intersection of two Indian trails, now known as Trade and Tryon streets in the heart of uptown Charlotte. In 1755, he and Susannah were married. Polk, who became known as "the first citizen of

## OMGS Meetings

The December 2007 meeting of OMGS will be our annual Christmas Party, and it will be held on Wednesday, 12 December 2007 at the **Ray Hall Community Center, Aldersgate**, 3800 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte. I hope you have made your reservations for this annual festive event! Festivities begin at 6:15p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. We will also be installing our new officers for 2008. Come on out and celebrate with us!

The Hopewell Branch will meet at 11am on Saturday, 8 December at Hopewell. It is our annual Christmas luncheon. Come out and join us and bring some food to share.

Charlotte," was a far-sighted young man who saw what the area might become.

He managed to secure a charter for 360 acres from the land agent for the Crown. The area was still part of Anson County, which was eight to ten times larger than it is today. Mecklenburg County was three times its modern size when first formed out of Anson.

A man named John Phifer wanted the county seat to be located at Rocky River, but Polk had other ideas. To forestall this effort, he built a court house in the middle of the Square, then let the legislature know "we have a court house" and thus should be the county seat. The legislature agreed in 1767. A rock wall was also constructed 200 yards each way from the court house.

The settlement was modest, with the typical dwelling a 20 by 20 log cabin. There was no church in Charlottetown until after 1823, but there were seven Presbyterian churches out in the county. People in town had to trek out to Sugaw Creek until First Presbyterian Church was established between 1825-30.

The first Baptist church in the area was established in Flint Hill, near Fort Mill, S.C. Members were sent from that congregation in 1835-40 to form First Baptist Church of Charlotte.

Dr. Sasser said the first settlers in the Piedmont were mainly Scots-Irish and German. When the poor Scots migrated to Ireland and found conditions almost as

bad there as in the home country, they crossed the Atlantic and generally settled in Philadelphia. From there many followed the Great Wagon Road to Piedmont Carolina. From 1715 to 1775, he said that more than 65,000 Scots-Irish and about 20,000 Germans headed South to this area.

The two groups kept more or less to themselves. The Scots-Irish were rough and tough, heavy drinkers and not too religious.

The Germans were more conservative and quite religious. In 1720, they sent a bishop to negotiate the purchase of 100,000 acres in Piedmont, North Carolina. They called their settlement Wachovia, and there are traces of their history today in such locations as Salisbury and Granite Quarry.

Those of the Presbyterian faith were supposed to be married and buried by an Anglican priest, representing the official state church of England, so Dr. Sasser said that most of them therefore got married "in sin." Most Charlotte-Mecklenburg people did not like the British, as they had come to America to get away from them. The Sugar Act and the Stamp Act angered them, and then the Intolerable Acts finally took away local government and replaced it with martial law. The infamous Tea Act meant that only one company could sell them tea.

In 1771, Charlotte asked the legislature to give the city a charter for a college. The institution, known as Queens College, lasted about one year until King George told them to close. The reason? Dr. Sasser said this was where opposition to the Crown developed; it was a hot bed of rebellion.

The college continued without the Royal blessing as Liberty Hall.

Dr. Sasser declared, "Nothing happened without the Thomas Polk footprint." During April-May 1775, he divided the county into 14 militia districts. In mid-May he asked each district to send two people to Charlottetown, and 27 showed up at the court house on the Square. A courier announced to the group that the battles of Lexington and Concord had been fought in Massachusetts.

Thomas Polk, Ephraim Brevard, William Kennon and the Rev. Hezekiah Balch worked from about midnight until 2 a.m. on a response to the Crown's activities, and Thomas Polk read the statement at noon, May 20, 1775. This document, of course, is the famous Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. This means Charlotte was the first place in the country to declare its independence from Britain. Dr. Sasser said that Balch, a scholarly man, is credited with the final wording.

James Jack carried this document to the Continental Congress and presented it to the North Carolina delegates in Philadelphia. The men were trying to

work out a compromise with England, however, so this document was premature. Of course, it is also controversial, because no copy survives. It was never printed in the newspapers, nor can it be located in any library, so Dr. Sasser said he has never been able to prove its existence.

On May 31, the men in Charlotte held a second meeting during which they drafted the Mecklenburg Resolves, a system of government to replace the British system. There is no controversy here, as copies are on display. Both events took place one year before the Declaration of Independence. Mecklenburg County was ahead of the other colonies by a year, and its men continued to be very active during the Revolution. They sent militia to South Carolina to fight the Tories, many were at Valley Forge with Washington. They did not just sign papers but were ready to back up their words with their lives.

Dr. Sasser described how William R. Davie, a cavalry leader, tried to slow down Cornwallis's progress toward Charlotte. When the British leader finally arrived, he made the Polk home his headquarters. The British soldiers were running low on supplies and sent troops to the McIntyre Farm on Beatties Ford Road to get provisions. At this location, it is said that 14 Patriots managed to hold 600 British in a skirmish. The speaker said it may be a legend, but the story goes that the 14 men shot the beehives on the farm, and the angry swarms drove the British away.

Dr. Sasser said that the Battle of Charlotte destroyed British morale, thus contributing to the final end of the war at Yorktown.

Once the Revolution ended, he said cotton became significant, with the invention of the cotton gin to remove the seeds. Farms grew larger, thus making slavery feasible. The average slaveholder in this area owned perhaps six to eight slaves; the largest number recorded for one owner was 39.

In 1900, Dr. Sasser said two-fifths of the area was devoted to cotton growing and about half of the industry around Charlotte was textile manufacturing. At that time the influential men were a South Carolina engineer, Daniel (D.A.) Tompkins and Joseph Caldwell, editor of *The Observer*.

He stated that the South essentially ran the U.S. government until 1860, but as the west was settled, there were arguments about whether the new states should be slave or free. Northern men decided they wanted to wrest the government from Southern control. Charlotte-born President James K. Polk, the first dark horse president, decided he wanted to make the United States reach across the continent. He succeeded. This was one of six campaign promises,

and he kept them all, including limiting himself to one term. He died three months after leaving office.

According to the Charlotte Democrat, the people were "joyous" to leave the Union, when they seceded on that special date, May 20. Dr. Sasser said 2,800 Mecklenburg men fought for the Confederacy. The Mint, established here in 1836 by Andrew Jackson, became the Confederate Headquarters. The Great Seal of the Confederacy was stored there, but it cannot be found.

The Naval ordnance facility, which was moved from Norfolk during the Civil War, became the genesis of the area's industrialization in the area after the war.

## **Hopewell Branch Meeting**

by Tina Brown

Don't forget our December meeting is our Christmas party. Plan to bring a dish to share at 11:00 AM (instead of 10:00) and come out for fellowship and good food. Please Pray for Jeff's Family, Vickie, Autumn & Drew.

## **Dear Cousin**

by Cousin Sally

I hope you have been well, genealogically speaking. I was just reading about birth records, and was saddened to learn that many states have very limited access to their birth records. Unless you are the person in question or the legal guardian of the person, getting a birth record is nigh to impossible these days, with the onslaught of identity thieves who want to steal your identity. Those thieves sure are making it harder and harder for us budding genealogists, who just want to fill in a few blanks here and there, and answer a few questions about our families.

However, obtaining birth information may not be as hard as you think it is. After all, birth information is not only recorded on a birth certificate, it is listed in various other places as well! Family letters, a family Bible, birth announcements, newspaper announcements, obituaries, church records, military records, and online indexes all contain some birth

information, and it may contain the information you need.

Cyndi's List, [www.cyndislist.com](http://www.cyndislist.com), can help with what is online. You can also check for the heading Vital Records at the FHLC. ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), click on Library, then click on Family History Library Catalog, Place search) Films and fiche can be ordered from your local Family History Center. I believe you can also order films from the genealogy room of your local public library, if you have one. Take a look at [www.heritagequest.org](http://www.heritagequest.org). Even if you don't have a genealogy room in your local public library, they may be able to obtain microfilm for you through an interlibrary loan. Ask a librarian for the details on that.

As you peruse these paths, you may find pieces of information that you weren't looking for, but discover that you need, or will need later. I'm sorry to cut this letter short, but Christmas is coming and I haven't even started yet!

I hope you will have a wonderful Christmas and genealogically prosperous New 2008! Keep on researching! I'll write again when I have time.

## **Upcoming Events**

**July 26, 2008**, OMGS is cosponsoring an all-day workshop with the North Carolina Genealogical Society at Aldersgate. Plans are well under way. The speaker will be David Rencher, director of the Records and Information Division of the Family and History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He also was director of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City for a number of years. You don't want to miss this workshop!!!

## **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 to OMGS, P.O. Box 32453, Charlotte, NC, 28232-2453.

Joan Raney, Editor

Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 32453  
Charlotte, NC 28232-2453

**DATED MATERIAL INSIDE**

**OMGS Publications for Sale**

<i>General Order Book, 11th "Bethel" Regt., NC Troops</i>	\$27.50 PPD
<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>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 5: Elmwood Cemetery</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: 1983-2006</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>Minutes, 1774-1780</i>	\$16.50 PPD		
<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. Abstracts of Deed Books 24-28 &amp; Books 1-3</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

Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 32453  
Charlotte, NC 28232-2453