



Mecklenburg Messenger

OMGS Archives Hours

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

Notes on June Meeting

by Mary Utting

It's common knowledge that gold was mined in Mecklenburg and surrounding counties during the early 19th century, but Linda Blackwelder, the June speaker for Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society, wonders why history books say very little about this topic.

Did people think it was a less than respectable way to make money? Did they want to conceal the fact that they had made money from gold or that gold had started them on the road to success?

Mrs. Blackwelder starting digging into the subject and found information in a number of wills. Some mention their mines, stipulating how the money is to be spent or what is to become the mining properties they own. For example, in October 1829, Jonathan Harris added a codicil to his will, which was probated in November, saying the mining proceeds would pay his debts. Amazi Alexander's 1831 will lists his property including the McKibben gold mine of Paw Creek and the Brown gold mine near Steele Creek. In 1833, Thomas McCord's will left instructions to sell his interest in the Simpson gold mine. She found gold mentioned in wills as late as 1868.

She also found evidence that mining may be the reason that Charlotte grew from "the trifling place" that George Washington found it shortly after the Revolutionary War to a prosperous center by the mid-19th century. Although Cabarrus County's Reid Gold Mine gets a lot of mention today, Mecklenburg County had a large number of mines. The largest were probably at Gold Hill in Cabarrus County and others in Montgomery County.

But gold from Mecklenburg County was the first U.S. gold to be minted in Philadelphia. Before that, all gold came from foreign sources. Mrs. Blackwelder said that the first gold rush in America was in Mecklenburg County, not California. The Charlotte Mint was still producing coins when California gold was discovered in 1849.

At first, North Carolina farmers searched for the precious metal in creeks after they had harvested their crops. Life became easier for them, as they

OMGS Meetings

The July 2006 meeting of OMGS will be held on Wednesday, 12 July 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 Sheila Bumgardner, and her topic is "The Wilkes Papers." In August 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 Frue Davidson." There will be a book available for purchase. Don't miss these great programs!

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

could count on this extra money. This gold was retrieved by placer mining, panning it from the creeks. Because actual money was scarce, people started carrying quill pens filled with gold dust and weights. They measured out this gold to pay for purchases.

During the 1820s, when the price of cotton dropped, farmers sent slaves out to pan for gold or hired men to do this. Some of the gold stayed in the laborers' pockets, however. The North Carolina State Geology Department says that Mecklenburg contained more mines than any other county. The chief mines in this county were the Capps, Rudisill, and St. Catherine (also known as the McComb).

When word about the gold got out, foreigners came here from European countries where mining was prevalent. Charles Roth, a mining engineer from Saxony, was the first to find North Carolina gold in veins and quartz. In 1825, Samuel McComb followed one of the first veins in Mecklenburg after Matthias Barringer found the first vein in quartz in what is now Stanly County. After that, many real mines were developed, requiring more expertise than panning for gold in a creek.

McComb's mine was a half mile from Charlotte. He became an industry leader and later commissioner of the Charlotte Mint. In 1828, he sold part of his mine to J. Humphrey Bissell, a Connecticut native and

Yale graduate, for \$6,000. Bissell brought men and new technology from South America and began a tunnel, which was extended more than 400 feet in a year.

Many men of wealth invested here. An interesting arrival in 1830 was Count Vincent Ravafanoli (supposedly an Italian count), who brought 50 miners with him. He operated the Rudisill, St. Catherine, and Dunn mines. That year, there were 717 Charlotte residents, 61 of whom were foreign citizens. Townspeople resented these intruders, resulting in conflicts.

The Count, who lived at the corner of South Tryon and West Morehead Street, gained a reputation for dishonesty. On 10 November 1832, he gave a deed of trust for a long and impressive list of household items. Later, when he "slipped" out of town, the list of items to be auctioned was much longer. He had lived well here.

In 1831, a nest of gold weighing 120 pounds caused a lot of excitement. Congress sent a delegation to see the activity in North Carolina and Georgia. A Professor Renwick from New York said that only about half of the gold was being saved at the St. Catherine mine; the rest was being washed down Sugar Creek. The professor was not impressed with the Count's methods.

Improved mining operations finally made the mines more profitable. Instead of the placer method, some mines used the arrastra method. They crushed the ore with stones, operated by a mule or horse attached to a wheel. Or, they used a stamp mill, which had a long shaft operated by a steam engine. The ore was crushed with the metal stamps.

The St. Catherine mill had 12 water-powered stamp mills that ran 24 hours a day. It took eight workers to keep them running.

Many who had little money realized considerable profit from the gold. A Rowan County miner, Henry David Plyler, is supposed to have found a hunk of gold that sold for enough money to buy each of his sons a farm.

In 1827, the Philadelphia Mint received \$21,000 worth of gold from this area, 11 percent of the gold they received from all sources. In 1828, it increased to \$46,000, in 1829 to \$124,000, in 1830 more than \$200,000 (including Georgia), in 1831, \$294,000, and in 1832, \$458,000. Those last two figures were for North Carolina only. By 1830 domestic gold was 80 percent of the metal at the Mint.

No one knows the actual amount of gold taken from North Carolina or Mecklenburg County. It is estimated that only about half went to the Mint. Many small farmers pocketed their gold and never reported it to avoid taxes. Gold from Count

Ravafanoli's mine interest was shipped to European investors, and a lot was purchased by jewelers.

It was finally decided to build mints in Charlotte, Georgia, and New Orleans. Charlotte's opened on December 4, 1837.

Probably the largest concentration of mines, about 15 or 20, was in the Paw Creek area. Mecklenburg had 56 mines registered with the state. This did not include people panning in streams or digging placer mines on their property.

During the 1830s and 1840s, many new people came to the area, and Charlotte became a boom town, Mrs. Blackwelder said. By 1840, only a few of the mines operated fulltime. By the 1850 census, there almost no miners listed. Cotton prices began to rise, and landowners needed their slaves in the fields.

But mining brought growth to Charlotte along with some unsavory characters that annoyed peaceable citizens. Mrs. Blackwelder believes that the mines brought the railroad, which helped Charlotte develop into a major city. By the 1840s much of the gold had been mined, leaving ore that was more difficult to extract, so with the California gold many foreigners departed.

Banks grew here because of gold, helping to make Charlotte the banking center of today. With the railroad, the area became a textile center after the Civil War, thus continuing to produce wealth.

Death Notice

OMGS Life Member John Copeland passed away on Monday, July 3. He authored a genealogy book, "Dunlaps of Moore County, NC," tracing the Scottish Presbyterian Dunlaps from Ayrshire, Scotland, to Virginia and the Carolinas. Our condolences go out to his wife, Ann, and his family.

New from the Carolina Room

by Jane Johnson

5/22/2006 to 6/21/2006

To view the Public Library's catalog for a complete list of holdings, go to <http://www.plcmc.lib.nc.us/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.

Afro-American Death Notices From Eastern North Carolina Newspapers 1859-1935

Albemarle

Anson

Asheville

Charles E. Daniel, His Philosophy and Legacy

Citizens of Craven County North Carolina and Vicinity, Vol. 1, 1809-1813

Citizens of Edgecombe County North Carolina and Vicinity 1826-1830

Citizens of Halifax County North Carolina and Vicinity

Citizens of Orange County North Carolina and Vicinity, Vol. 1 & 2

Cleveland County in World War II

East and West Southern Pines

Edgecombe County: Along The Tar River
Garner

Gates County Marriage Record Books 1851-1882

Georgia Frontier: Colonial Families to the Revolutionary War Period, Vol. 1

Georgia Frontier: Revolutionary War Families to the Mid-1800's, Vol. II

Georgia Frontier: Descendants of Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, Vol. III

Historic Wilson: In Vintage Postcards

Lincoln County Revisited

Lincolnton: Photographs From The Clyde R. Cornwell Collection

List of Emigrant Ministers to America 1690-1811

The New Bern Obituaries from the Elizabeth City Independent

Elizabeth City

Pasquotank County North Carolina, Vols. 1 & 2

Reconstructed Passenger Lists from 1850: Hamburg to

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, and The US

Richmond County and the Seaboard Air Line Railway

Rutherford County In World War II

Sedalia and the Palmer Memorial Institute

War Governor of the South: North Carolina's Zeb

Vance in the Confederacy

Winston-Salem's Historic West End

Church History Project

North Carolina State University has a grant from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission to conduct a North Carolina Church Records in History Local Project.

As part of the university's public history program, the project will provide assistance to North Carolina churches that want to preserve their historic records. The university will provide organization and conservation of noncurrent records, production of finding aids, regional workshops on church records and their roles in local history, and on-going

consultation. Churches must agree to permit access to the results.

Churches interested in this project must contact the project coordinator by 31 July 2006. Write Craig T. Friend, Department of History, Campus Box 8108, N.C. State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8108, call 919-513-2227, or e-mail ctfriend@social.class.ncsu.edu. (Please put church project in subject line.)

Upcoming Events

July 6-9, the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, MacRae Meadows, Grandfather Mountain, Linville, NC. For more information visit their website at www.gmhg.org.

July 29, Genealogy workshop in Winston-Salem, NC. For more information, visit their website at www.ncgenealogy.org, and then click on Calendar & Events, then on Western Regional Summer Workshop.

August 17-20, Greensboro Highland Games, Greensboro, NC. For more information visit their website at www.triadhIGHLANDgames.org.

October 21-22, Stone Mountain Highland Games; Stone Mountain, GA. For more information visit their website at www.smhg.org.

October 28, Waxhaw Highland Games, Waxhaw, NC. For more information visit their website at 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

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 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 & 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 & 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 & 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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