

CHATHAM COUNTY'S INNER CIVIL WAR

by Jim Wiggins, November 2020*

In 2008, Georgia historian David Williams wrote

...historians have too often neglected—that during its brief existence, the Confederacy fought a two-front war. There is, of course, the war it waged with the North, the war so familiar to almost every schoolchild. But, though schoolchildren rarely hear of it, there was another war. Between 1861 and 1865, the South was torn apart by a violent inner civil war, a war no less significant to the Confederacy's fate than its more widely known struggle against the Yankees....From its very beginnings, the Confederacy suffered from a rising tide of internal hostility.

Williams' book, *Bitterly Divided*, chronicles this internal conflict.¹ In 2014, North Carolina historian William T. Auman discussed the significance of the internal conflicts that confronted the Quaker Belt in North Carolina while the war was raging to the north, focusing especially on Chatham's neighbor, Randolph County.² Building on these excellent sources, this paper will explore the possible sources of disunity within Chatham County leading up to and during the Civil War—what will be referred to here as 'Chatham's Inner Civil War.'³ The focus is a narrow one—evidence of disunity in Chatham County in the Civil War period. The paper will not evaluate the rights or wrongs of the County's inner civil war whether involving slavery, secession, or the war.

What was Chatham County like in 1860?

In the year before the beginning of the Civil War, Chatham County was predominately agricultural, though much of the land was of low production quality. The total population was 19,101 with households totaling only 2,521 (compared to over 28,000 households in 2018). Of these households, 33% included the county's 6,246 enslaved people. There were also 306 free Blacks and mulattoes.⁴ Half a dozen small communities existed, mainly in the southern half of the county (Pittsboro, Haywood, Gulf, Vernon Springs, Beaumont, and Lockville). A road from Pittsboro led to each of the adjacent counties plus one to Guilford County and another to the Gulf and Egypt coal fields as well as the steamboats recently operating on the Deep and Cape Fear Rivers. The roads were dirt except for a couple of toll plank roads built during the 1850s. There were fifty-nine churches, six private schools (academies), and several—the exact number cannot be determined—recently opened public schools (common schools) though there were no compulsory attendance laws on the books. Homes ranged in size from framed two-story, multi-room structures to the more common log houses with 1-2 rooms.⁵

The whites in Chatham composed four socio-economic classes, most involved in farming. Of the 1,740 farms there were a small number of farmers (plantation owners) who were both large landowners and slaveowners—about 2-3% of Chatham's population. Two owned over 1000 acres; 15 owned 500 to 1000 acres. Nine enslaved fifty or more people; two enslaved more than 70. These farmers produced a variety of crops (wheat, corn, tobacco, cotton) and raised a variety of livestock (sheep, swine, cattle).⁶

A second class was composed of farmers owning less land and fewer enslaved people than the plantation owners, as well as merchants and professional men, such as lawyers, most of whom owned little land and small numbers of slaves. Together these two classes, the plantation owners and slaveholding farmers/merchants and professionals, composed just one-third of the county's population but enslaved the majority of the county's enslaved people. Significantly, these classes also included most of the country's public officials as there were substantial property requirements to be a member of the General Assembly which appointed the County's justices of the peace who in turn appointed other county officials with the exception of the sheriff. So, I will refer to these two classes collectively as the 'political class.'

A third class (a majority of the white population) was composed of a few artisans (blacksmiths, wheelwrights, cabinet makers) and lots of small farmers (yeoman farmers) who owned their small farms (100 acres or less, not all of which was necessarily cleared) and, with their family members, performed the necessary labor rather than using enslaved labor. The yeoman farmers produced the same crops and raised some of the same kind of livestock as owners of larger farms, but these products were mostly for their own use. Many Quakers and Wesleyans were among the yeoman farmers forming the largest segment of the county's population. These small farmers were not part of the political class as they did not own enough land to qualify for some state offices such as state senator where the requirement was 300 acres of land. Nor did they have the time to travel to and participate in legislative meetings and occasional conventions, let alone go to war.

Most yeoman farmers did not enslave laborers to relieve them of farm work though some may have rented enslaved laborers to supplement the labor of family members. What these farmers did have was their vote—if they could meet the tax-paying qualification,⁷ though their only choice was between two parties (Whig or Democrat) both representing the interests of the political class rather than those of yeoman farmers. The politicians' primary interest was getting the farmers to the polls of the county's 15 voting districts where they would be provided with social interaction, food and drink, and incentives for a particular vote. Slavery was justified with arguments such as yeomen becoming "*equalized with an inferior race*" and having "*idle, vagabond free negroes turned loose on you with all the privileges of white men--voting with you; sitting on juries with you; going to school with your children; and intermarrying with the white race--and black men imposing themselves upon helpless females.*"⁸

The fourth class of Chatham's white residents was composed of poor farmers and laborers who did not own land. Their number is hard to estimate as census takers probably never identified many of them due to their isolation and mobility. Many were constantly driven to relocate in another county or even another state. Some (tenants and sharecroppers) worked for those who did own land and worked the farm in exchange for a place to live, usually a one-room log structure, and a small piece of land on which to grow subsistence food. Laborers moved frequently seeking work where they could find it. For example, Moses E. D. Pike, a Chatham County laborer, worked farms, cotton factories, a furnace, a flour mill, and a saw mill. His work week ran from one to six days.⁹ Those with families often sought employment for wives and children. Poor single women had similar problems— with or without children.

Landless white males could not hold public offices because of property-ownership requirements and could not vote because of failing to meet the tax-payer qualification to vote. The Free Suffrage Amendment passed in 1857 had eliminated the property-owning requirement to vote for state senators, but substituted a uniform tax-paying requirement. The primary slave-based economy kept salaries of poor whites low. Thus, the poor had little reason to support the interests of the political class were it not for the pleasures received at the polls or the pressures of their employers.

Although there were undoubtedly some physical altercations between landless whites and Blacks, there is evidence that landless whites interacted with Blacks, slave and free, in cooperative relationships. Elias Thomas, a slave on a plantation in Chatham County, recalled working with poor white men and women. "*We all worked together. We had a good time. We worked and sang together and everyone seemed happy.*"¹⁰ Landless whites and Blacks also interacted in social situations. Archibald Campbell of Chatham County received a jail sentence for playing cards with a Black man.¹¹

The Conflict Over Slavery

While most white Chatham citizens accepted or even participated in slavery, members of two religions formed the backbone of the abolition movement—Quakers and Wesleyan Methodists. Quakers have a long history in Chatham County—from the 1700s to the present day. They held very strong anti-slavery and pro-Union views which resulted in many leaving for free states during the first half of the 1800s. By 1860, there were only three Quaker meeting houses in Chatham County out of a total of fifty-nine churches.¹²

Like-minded Wesleyans arrived from the North in the late 1840s, espousing abolition, and were welcomed by the Quakers, joining them in settling in western Chatham. Many Wesleyans also left the county just before the war, especially their leaders, who were chased from the area with threats of imprisonment for violating laws against anti-slavery speech or possessing/distributing anti-slavery publications such as Hinton Rowen Helper's

The Impending Crisis. One of these was Chatham's principal Wesleyan leader, Alfred Vestal, who was a farmer in the northwest Chatham community of Mudlick. Vestal's son George lost his job as a local teacher. Chatham County 'vigilantes' were among those driving abolitionists from Chatham and adjacent counties. Though expelled, the Wesleyans were not eradicated.¹³ An early historian concluded that, along with John Brown's raid, "[Local] secessionists had now a forcible argument to prove the designs of the Northern people, and the secession movement may here be said to begin."¹⁴

The Conflict Over Secession

The Presidential election of 1860.

Lincoln and his 'Black Republican Party' were perceived by many southerners as a threat to their slave-labor system. Lincoln indicated that, though he was personally against slavery, he would not try to interfere with slavery where it existed in states. However, he said little about not interfering in territories not yet admitted to statehood, which was the biggest concern in the South because it threatened their control of Congress. But most of the northern Republican congressmen *did* want to interfere, either for moral or free-labor reasons.

Lincoln was not even on the ballot in North Carolina in 1860. The two primary candidates were John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, a Southern Democrat, and John Bell of Tennessee, Constitutional Union Party (former Whigs) candidate. Both were wealthy slave owners and supported slavery, but differed in their attitudes toward staying in the Union. Breckinridge supported state's rights and the right to own slaves which he said should not be sacrificed in order to save the Union. A meeting in support of Breckinridge at Gorrell's Store in Bear Creek was advertised by stating "*we trust that in this hour of trial they will vote as one man for Breckinridge.*" Those involved in that meeting included John A. Moore (45), Geo. W. Thompson (36), and Junius A. Alston (41).¹⁵ All were wealthy farmers, but only Thompson and Alston enslaved people (26 and 11, respectively), according to the 1860 census.

Candidate John Bell advocated remaining in the Union as the best chance of achieving slavery in the territories and the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. Chathamite John H. Haughton went to Baltimore to participate in Bell's nomination and upon return gave speeches in support of Bell and "*against the abominal [sic] heresy of secession.*"¹⁶ Haughton was a very wealthy lawyer, a businessman, a former General Assembly member, and as well a large land owner who enslaved 18 people. He was also a stockholder in the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company which gave him and other large farmers connections with the northern markets, particularly the cotton market. The Breckinridge-Bell debate was indicative of at least some conflict within the political class regarding secession.

Breckinridge won the 1860 Presidential race in North Carolina (50.4% to 46.7%), but anti-secession Bell won in Chatham County (54.9% to 34.5%).¹⁷ However, as we know, Lincoln won the nationwide election. So even though preserving the Union won the day in Chatham County, at least a third of the voters disagreed, instead favoring rights of slave states and secession to protect that right if need be. Lincoln's election caused some to urge immediate secession, but others preferred to await some overtly anti-southern action by the administration before making that fateful decision. Meetings were held across the state resolving that Lincoln's election was insufficient cause to leave the Union. While some meetings occurred as close as Randolph County, I have not found reports of any in Chatham.¹⁸

South Carolina secedes from the Union on December 20, 1860.

In response to South Carolina's secession in December of 1860, anti-secession meetings were held in Chatham County, with John H. Haughton being among the most active participants. On January 17, 1861, a meeting was held at the Baptist Church at Love's Creek (near what is now Siler City) where speakers stressed that the Union should be preserved. However, participants specified the conditions which would cause them to change their view and instead support secession. South Carolina's secession was not one of them. Participants recorded that "*we regret the hasty action of our sister state.*" Yet, they went on to say "*...we believe that the Federal Government has no constitutional power to use coercive measures to compel her to remain in the Union; and that any attempt to use such power would destroy the last hope to save the Union.*" Those at the meeting resolved to stay in the Union if "*slave property shall have the same protection from the General government as other property; and that the citizens hereafter shall be unmolested in the enjoyment of said property.*"¹⁹

Chatham County residents mentioned in support of the decisions at the Love's Creek meeting were John R. Marsh (47), E. H. Straughan (55), Daniel Hackney (56), Dr. Thomas J. Brooks (30), Rev. William Lineberry (54), Thomas B. Long (30), and Dr. William Lane (29).²⁰ Of the Chatham County residents about whom Census information could be obtained, most were wealthy farmers and slave owners. Though Brooks was an MD and did not enslave people himself, he lived with Hackney who did own 14 slaves. Lineberry was the minister of the Baptist Church and farmer with some wealth, but no indication it included slaves. Long was a wealthy farmer with 40 enslaved people. He was the only one to later serve (in the early part of the war as an officer). Thus, this group, though composed primarily of white males of the political class, did not support secession under the conditions existing at that time.

January 29, 1861: The General Assembly passed a bill calling for a public referendum to address the question of whether a state convention should be called to consider the issue

of secession (passed 86 to 24 in the House and 37 to 9 in the Senate). Chatham County's Senator W. G. Harris and Representative Turner Bynum supported the bill, while Representative Robert N. Green opposed it, and Representative William P. Taylor did not vote. All were wealthy farmers owning 13 to 36 slaves, and all were older than 45 and thus none would later serve in the military. The votes of Chatham's members are difficult to interpret. While Green's opposition may indicate his anti-secession view, Harris and Bynum's votes could reflect their support of secession or their willingness to let Chatham voters decide. These votes reflect at least some disagreement among these members of the political class.

February 10. A convention of delegates from the southern states of South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas met in Montgomery, Alabama and agreed to secede from the Union. Forty-nine of the fifty delegates were slave owners.

February 28: The North Carolina state referendum was held. On the question of whether to call a secession convention, among eligible state voters, a bare majority (50.5%) voted 'no.' Among Chatham County eligibles who voted (2,073 compared to a turnout of 2,500 in the previous governor's race), 86% voted 'no'; indicating that a strong majority were not affected by the recent secession of the six lower southern states. The 14% (283 votes) supporting the secession convention may have reflected some difference of views within the political class much like that of Chatham's representatives in the General assembly.

Being aware that they might lose the vote state-wide, Chatham voters elected three anti-secession delegates to the possible convention—Leonidus J. Merritt, Nathaniel Clegg, and William A. Rives. (We are presuming to have correctly identified these delegates, as the Fayetteville Observer article in which they are listed gives only initials.)²¹ Merritt was a less wealthy lawyer though he owned six slaves. Clegg and Rives were wealthy farmers owning 13 and 29 slaves respectively. Only Merritt would later serve in the war—as an officer from 15 April 1861 to 1 July 1862 (when he was killed near Richmond). Though all three were of the political class and owned slaves, the initial formation of the Confederacy was not enough for them to favor secession.

However, a few days later, Chatham's first military company was organized in Pittsboro indicating some citizens' support for secession and the willingness to fight for it. The 'Chatham Rifles' were led by Ross R. Ihrie and John W. Taylor. Ihrie (31) and Taylor (28) were both farmers with some wealth, owning 30 and 1 slaves respectively. Both served as military officers for one year from 15 April 1861 to 2 May 1862. Governor Ellis commissioned the Chatham Rifles in April, making it part of the 15th NC Regiment, later part of the 32nd Regiment. The unit remained in Pittsboro for six weeks "*drilling, parading and being lionized by the ladies, who made clothes and a handsome flag for the soldiers.*"²²

On April 13, South Carolina forces captured Fort Sumter. On the 15th, Lincoln's secretary of war notified Governor Ellis that North Carolina was being asked to provide two regiments for federal service for ninety days to put down the rebellion in the seceding states which, of course, did not yet include North Carolina.

The role of slavery and emancipation on the war was in dispute in the North. Lincoln, as well as some Union military officers and Republican congressmen, thought it better war strategy to deny emancipation in an effort to maintain Unionism in the non-seceding slave states. Others argued that freed slaves would provide important Union assistance in the war. Whatever his thinking, North Carolina's Governor Ellis spurned the call and instead ordered the seizure of Federal forts along North Carolina's coast and the Federal arsenal at Fayetteville. Ellis had initiated his own Fort Sumter, committing North Carolina to a fight with the Federal government. On the 17th, Virginia seceded leaving North Carolina surrounded by seceded states. Ellis promptly promised the Confederate secretary of war a regiment of volunteers for service in Virginia.

May 1: Two weeks later, the General Assembly passed a bill calling for the election of 120 delegates to a convention in order to again consider secession. However, this time the state's voters were not asked to address the issue of whether to hold a convention—only to elect delegates to the convention. The decision of the convention was to be final and unrestricted in powers. The bill was supported by all four of Chatham County's legislators. April's events had, apparently, consolidated their individual views. One early historian wrote "*The campaign for the convention was void of any particular interest—not a person in the state advocated anything but separation.*" This view of history was based exclusively on the speeches and letters of well-known politicians, however.²³

But why did the Assembly, including Chatham's political-class representatives, decide to not take the issue directly to the voters? Was northern aggression imminent because of Ellis's actions? Or did they believe that a significant number of the voters might still hold the views they expressed two months earlier when they rejected the first secession convention?

On May 8th, not waiting for the results of the convention to decide the issue of secession, the Assembly decided the issue of war. It passed The Militia Law of North Carolina, making all white males 18-49 liable for State military service in case of invasion, slave insurrection, or war with the United States. It was clear (at least in the eyes of the Assembly members) that secession would occur and that North Carolina would join the Confederate states. Chatham County was to organize two regiments as part of the 10,000 men who were to volunteer for the duration of the war, with the Governor authorized to increase the number. On the 10th, the Assembly passed a law authorizing the governor to accept volunteers. Those volunteering for the duration of the war were to receive a \$15 bounty, and those volunteering for twelve months a \$10 bounty. The enlisted men would elect their company officers who in turn would elect the field officers. The governor would

then organize the troops into larger units and appoint more general officers. Chatham's representatives supported the bills. Again, all were older than the eligibility ages, so this vote did not obligate them to serve.²⁴

A day later, the General Assembly, knowing there would be some resistance to the Militia Law, passed a treason law proscribing death for (1) anyone "*levying war against the state, or adhering to its enemies, giving them aid and comfort...if proved by the testimony of two witnesses to the overt act, or by confession in open court*" or (2) "*any free person advise or conspire with a slave to rebel or to make insurrection in this State...That if any free person, knowing of any such treason shall not, as soon as may be, give information thereof to the Governor of the State or to some conservator of the peace, such person shall be punished by fine or imprisonment at the discretion of the court*". All Chatham County representatives voted 'yea.'²⁵ The effect of this treason law, though the specifics cannot be known, must have discouraged anti-secession activities.

May 13: Chatham County voters elected three delegates to the convention—all lawyers. Leonidus J. Merritt was previously mentioned. Manning (30) was wealthy and, like Merritt, owned six slaves, while Headen (38) lived on his father's farm where there were four slaves. Manning served as a military officer for 19 months (15 April 1861 to 7 October 1862).

When the convention met on the 20th, the members (including Chatham's delegates) unanimously agreed to support the Ordinance of Secession of North Carolina. It is unclear why the convention did not raise more questions regarding secession. The state could have followed the decisions of other border states who remained in the Union but were war-neutral by not providing military support to fight the seceding states. But Ellis's precipitous military actions and being surrounded by seceding states would have made this choice an impossible one.

Having decided to secede, then the issue was whether the state should join the new Confederacy. There had been some public discussion of the State's joining other like-minded border states in a 'Central Confederacy' which would be neutral in the war — a proposal that had been made earlier by Congressman Zebulon Vance.²⁶ But convention members voted unanimously to go with the Southern Confederacy. A proposal that this decision be submitted for ratification to legal voters was voted down—34 to 72—with all three of Chatham's representatives voting in the minority. This effort could not have been much more than a symbolic vote as the General Assembly had said that the conference's decision would be final. [Still, it shows some degree of disagreement even among the political class.]

Thus, it appears that most of the political class of Chatham helped lead North Carolina out of the United States, being one of the last states to take this action. All of the county's representatives and convention delegates but one were slave owners. But only 33% of the

county's households were slave owners. Did Chatham's representatives reflect the views of Chatham's eligible voters at that time? Without a public referendum on whether to hold a second secession convention, we cannot know how much unity existed at that point among Chatham voters. Can we get a clue when we look at who volunteered to fight the war?

Conflict Over the War and Who Will Fight It

May 28: A week after the convention vote to leave the Union and join the Southern Confederacy, a second military group of 80 volunteers (the 'Chatham Guards'), was organized in Bear Creek and Matthews Townships. This unit offered its services to Governor Ellis, forming part of the 26th NC Regiment.²⁷ Volunteers were told to continue drilling and equipping themselves. William Spearman Webster was a 48-year-old farmer living in a household of farmers. According to the census, he owned neither land nor slaves. He was the captain of the Guards for one year (28 May 1861 till 21 April 1862) when he was replaced by Stephen W. Brewer (24) a merchant whose military dates cannot be located. Brewer owned land, but apparently no slaves, in 1860.²⁸ After the war, Brewer would become county sheriff.²⁹

In June, the 'Chatham Boys' were organized in Albright and Matthews Townships, of volunteers residing in Chatham County, soon to total 95. This unit drilled on the front lawn of Capt. Bill [Billy] Mathews until going to Camp Caroline in Wake County, and was assigned to the 26th Regiment as Company G. It was led by William S. McLean (34) an MD who soon became a surgeon in the Confederate Army and was replaced by John Randolph Lane (25) a farmer who served from 10 June 1861 until he left the military after Lee's surrender (9 April 1865).³⁰ Both McLean and Lane owned land and slaves and thus were part of the political class.

In the same month, militant elements of pro-Union supporters in Randolph County armed and organized themselves into anti-Confederate paramilitary units. Similar events followed in adjacent counties but no evidence can be found that this included Chatham County. However, Chatham citizen Martine Wilson was sent to jail for "*treasonable and incendiary language and for fear of private injury done to his neighbors.*"³¹ He was 39 and a farm laborer with no financial assets, according to the 1860 census.

On July 7, Governor Ellis died and was succeeded by Henry T. Clark, the Speaker of the Senate, who was a wealthy land and slave owner.

On July 21, the Confederate Army scored a convincing victory in the first major battle of the war at Manassas. On August 29, federal troops captured the Union's first North Carolina territory—Fort Hatteras on the Outer Banks.

September 20: The 'Haw River Boys' were organized at Hanks Chapel—composed of men from nearby Bynum and south along the Haw River to the juncture with the Deep River. When incorporated into the state troops, they would help form Company D, of the 35th NC Regiment. The unit's first captain was Hardy James Lasater (23) who was a farmer. Little else can be found about Lasater except that in 1850 he lived with his father who owned 13 slaves. He served from 20 September until he was killed on 1 July 1862 along with seven other men. He was replaced by Robert E. Petty (25) who had been a clerk living with his widowed mother on her farm, along with older siblings who worked the farm. Neither Petty nor his mother owned slaves according to census slave schedules. Petty served from 20 September 1861 until Lee's surrender. George W. Avent (21) served alongside Petty for the length of the war. Before the war he lived on the farm of his parents who owned 32 slaves.

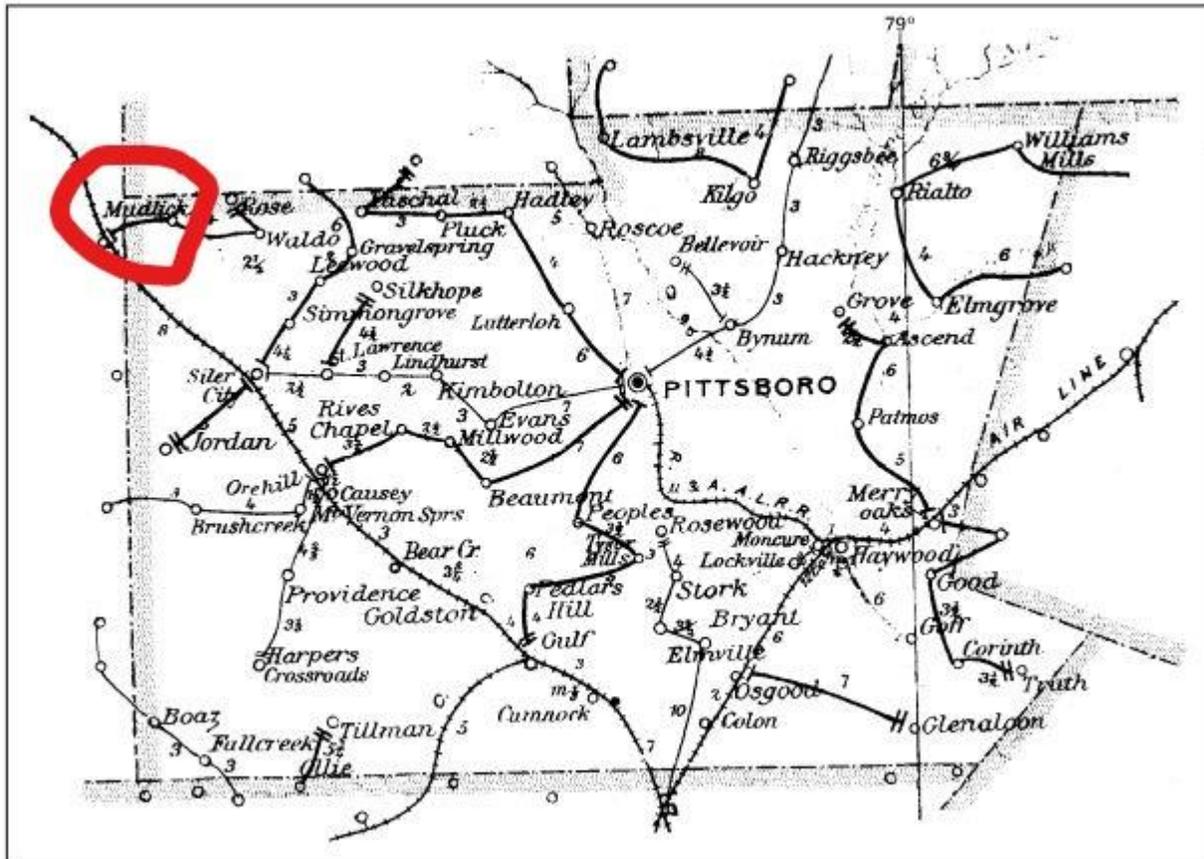
The formation of these military units suggests that most of those favoring secession assumed that this meant that the county and the state were going to war. At this same time there were almost certainly Chatham citizens who, while pro-slavery, believed that the consequences of war would be so terrible that 'wait and see' should be the preferred strategy. This was the view of U.S. House member Zebulon Vance, who was a slave-owner, but who, in December 1860, had colorfully argued that "*the leaders in the disunion movement were—'precipitating' the people into a revolution without giving them time to think.... But the people must think, and when they do begin to think and hear the matter properly discussed they will consider long and soberly before they tear down this noble fabric and invite anarchy and confusion, carnage, civil war, and financial ruin with the breathless hurry of men flying from the pestilence.*"³² However, once Lincoln called for troops and North Carolina seceded, Vance served as a military officer; and later, as governor, he strongly supported secession.

We know that four Chatham military companies were preparing for military service and that a total of 518 eligibles did volunteer by the end of the first year of the war.³³ But this represented only 20-25% of Chatham's white males meeting the age requirement (18-45) set by the General Assembly.³⁴ As well, while close to 90% of the volunteers were under the age of 30, that still represents only about one in three of the county's white males under 30 who did volunteer. Apparently, there was far from universal support among the eligibles for personally fighting the war.

Most of the officers in Chatham's four companies were of the political class. However, three of the nine officers of the four companies were neither wealthy nor slave owners nor living in a household of family from the political class. This suggests there was some initial support for the war outside the political class.

But, apart from the officers, who were the initial volunteers? Let's try to get some answers to this question by looking more closely at the Chatham Boys who volunteered in the first year of the war and would form Company G's 26th Regiment. In order to examine the

backgrounds of the Chatham Boys volunteers, a systematic sample was selected.³⁵ Of the 22 in the sample, 17 could be identified as residing in Chatham County in 1860. The background information here pertains to these Chatham Boys as acquired from the 1860 US Census. Of course, identifying individuals in the census is not failproof, and I apologize in advance for any errors. Corrections are welcomed.



Most of the Chatham Boys were from the northwestern part of the county, many from the Mudlick community. All but one were under the age of thirty. The exception was 45 years old and more will be said about him shortly. Most were single and worked on family farms. A small number were teachers or craftsmen (wheelwright or blacksmith). The blacksmith was married with no children. A small number of the volunteers were married farmers with young children. But the 45-year-old was a day laborer with a wife (neither of whom could read) and six children!!

Only the volunteers who lived on their own farms had any personal wealth though the amounts were modest. Those volunteers with no personal wealth nevertheless lived on family farms whose owners did have some wealth. None of the volunteers were slave owners and only three lived on family farms with slaves.

Trying to determine the motives of young men's decisions to volunteer or not is uncertain business. The political class had a motive—maintaining slavery—and it was they who typically organized military units. But if G Company is representative, the young members

of the political class did not volunteer in great numbers in the first year of the war. Few yeoman farmers without slaves could afford to volunteer for the army because they were needed to maintain their farms. But this might apply most to the owners of the farms and not to the young men living with them. These young men could choose between working hard on the farm they didn't own or joining friends in a military unit that offered adventure and social status. Poor whites, at least those constantly seeking employment, could have decided that military life did offer some security—such as a \$10 bounty for enlisting in the NC State Troops and/or \$11 a month pay serving as a private in the Confederate army. Was this reason enough for our day laborer with a wife and six children to volunteer?

What all of these young Chatham County men could not know was what their individual experiences in the war would be. Many volunteered thinking that they would serve only twelve months. That illusion would be dispelled quickly. Let's look at the war experiences of the 95 Chatham Boys from Chatham County who volunteered in the first year of the war.³⁶ (Information regarding the experiences of all Chatham Boys during the war comes from Walter Clark's *Histories of the Several Regiments from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-1865*.)

Some of these Chatham volunteers fought for the Confederacy until unable to fight. Twenty-eight died of disease or wounds (most of the latter at Gettysburg in 1863); while seven retired from service due to the same causes. Another seven were wounded but returned to fight for the Confederacy and fourteen fought till the end of the war. Five were captured and not exchanged till the end of the war.

On the other hand, twenty-six chose to not fight for the Confederacy at some point during the war. Three hired substitutes in 1862. Fifteen deserted, most after 1862. (Four either returned or were arrested and returned, with one deserting a second time.) Another eight were captured and, as a condition of release (most near the war's end), either gave their oath of allegiance to the Union or joined the Union Army. Thus, the volunteers' actions during the war reflected quite different commitments to the war.³⁷

1962: The Second Year of the War

By February, 1862, Union troops on North Carolina's eastern coast had captured Roanoke Island and were threatening New Bern. To repel the attack, in March, Governor Clark ordered one-third of the state militia organized into state regiments. This constituted a state draft or conscription order. On the 6th, twenty-seven new Chatham residents were added to Company G to help in the defense. But the effort failed as New Bern fell on the 14th.

In April, one month after the state began drafting citizens, the Confederate Congress passed its first Conscription Act, making all white men between the ages of 18 and 35

subject to military service for a three-year period. This included those who had initially volunteered for only twelve months! As an inducement to enlist before the draft went into effect, the government offered a cash bonus to those who volunteered and allowed them to serve with units of their choice. A substitution clause in the Act allowed those liable for service to either pay a fee to the government or to hire a substitute (someone not liable for service) in their place. Exemption clauses gave exemptions to a host of others, including militia officers, teachers, ministers, local government officials such as justices of the peace and sheriffs, mail carriers, ferrymen, railroad employees, telegraph operators, manufacturers, industrialists, and skilled artisans needed for the war effort. Note the absence of one particular occupation--farmers (owners and laborers). Thus, non-slave-owning yeoman farmers were most susceptible to the Act along with poor tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and day laborers.

In October, the liability age was increased to 45, while exemptions were extended to owners of twenty slaves or more. The State passed a law that allowed pacifist Quakers to pay a \$500 fee for an exemption; although it allowed those who could not afford the fines the opportunity to perform public service in the state salt works near Wilmington.³⁸

A total of 934 Chatham white males were enlisted in the military in 1862—which was roughly 40% of the eligibles in the county.³⁹ Who were the 46 members of the second cohort of Chatham residents to enlist in Company G during the entire second year of the war? Like the first cohort, many were from the Mudlick community area. In other ways they were somewhat different from the first volunteers. Of the 46 white males, 27 volunteered on March 6 before the draft went into effect. Five were thirty years of age or older, while nine were hired as substitutes. Most were without wealth or slaves and lived on farms owned by family members who were also neither wealthy nor slave-owners. Again, yeoman farmers provided the bulk of the service members.

What were the experiences of the second cohort of Chatham residents in Company G? They were similar to the first cohort. Eighteen died due to disease or wounds, while two retired from military action due to the same causes. Eleven were in service at the end of the war. But eleven deserted, seven of whom were returned or arrested and returned, one of whom deserted for a second time. Three took the Oath of Allegiance to the Union as a condition of release from captivity at the end of the war.

With the war in full force and men fighting and dying, the Confederacy now faced internal conflicts on several fronts--draft dodgers, deserters, Unionists, and their supporters on the one hand and state militia on the other.⁴⁰ Recently elected Governor Zebulon Vance promised to unflinchingly prosecute desertion, draft-dodging, and disloyalty in the State. What was happening in Chatham County?

On September 11, the Confederate Conscript Bureau in North Carolina asked the governor for permission to use the state's militia officers and those they commanded to enroll conscripts. Vance agreed to the request. The duty of these units was to arrest draft-dodgers and deserters and transport them to Camp Holmes in Raleigh for processing. On September 22, Colonel J. F. Revis, commander of the Fifteenth Regiment North Carolina at Pittsboro, ordered his entire command to handle the problem of draft-dodgers and deserters. He had twenty-five pounds of powder and one hundred pounds of buckshot at his disposal. When Revis had little success, Vance ordered two companies of the Raleigh Guards into Chatham to give assistance. But to complicate things, some local militia officers refused to aid the outsiders in the capture of deserters and draft-dodgers. Those officers were arrested and sent to Camp Holmes. Anyone interfering with these arrests would be seriously punished. This precipitated a new problem. Now, not only were local militia members required to arrest men who might be their neighbors, but also to arrest anyone who came to the assistance of their arrested officers. Those who complied might face consequences from local citizens who opposed those efforts. Five barns in Chatham and Randolph counties owned by those making arrests were burned.⁴¹

On September 22nd, Lincoln pledged to issue his Emancipation Proclamation on New Year's Day proclaiming that if--and this was a very big if--the Confederate states did not cease their conflict and rejoin the Union by the first day of 1863, he would declare their slaves free. The purpose of the Proclamation was to increase the chances of winning the

The war experiences of William H. Terry & John Vinson

Terry, William H., private. Enlisted in Petersburg, Virginia [a Confederate conscript who had a farm, a wife and six children], at age 32, on August 12, 1862, for the war. Present and accounted for until wounded in the left leg and captured at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 1-4, 1863. Left leg amputated. Hospitalized at Gettysburg until transferred to Baltimore, Maryland, October 12, 1863, and transferred to City Point, Virginia, where he was received on or about November 16, 1863, for exchange. Reported absent wounded until June 29, 1864, when he was retired to the Invalid Corps. Buried in the Terry family cemetery.

Vinson, John, private. Enlisted in Chatham County at age 26, March 6, 1862, as a substitute. Present or accounted for until wounded at Malvern Hill, Virginia, July 1, 1862. Returned to duty on September-December, 1862. Present and accounted for until he deserted on March 29, 1863. Court-martialed and sentence to be shot. Sentence revoked on an unspecified date. Returned to duty prior to July 1, 1863, when he was wounded at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, while carrying the colors of the regiment. Returned to duty on September 1, 1863. Present and accounted for until wounded in the right leg and captured at Wilderness, Virginia on or about May 5, 1864. Right leg was amputated. Died in hospital at Lynchburg, Virginia, on or about August 5, 1864, of wounds.

Source: *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865*.

war and reuniting the country which had always been Lincoln's primary goal. Declaring slaves free would decrease their use as laborers in the Confederate war effort, thus increasing the Union's chances. The Proclamation did not apply to the four slave states not in the Confederacy nor to the areas inside the Confederacy states under the control of the Union army, e.g., North Carolina's northeast coast. (The application of 'universal' emancipation would have to wait until Reconstruction and the passage of the thirteenth amendment.) Of course, the Confederacy did not cease their conflict and on January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued his executive order. The order also included an additional provision officially authorizing the recruitment of Blacks into the Union's armed forces which Lincoln felt would help achieve the massive manpower needed to fight the war. He was aware that this provision was not without its risks, as it would not be supported by all Unionists and might increase the resistance of the Confederacy.

1863: "Cracks in The Wall"

1863 was dominated by four kinds of events: continued war in the North, continued searches for draft-dodgers and deserters, the struggles of soldiers' wives, and 'peace meetings' in several counties, including Chatham.

In January, 1863, the Fifty-sixth Regiment North Carolina Troops, supported by several companies from the Raleigh Guards, again ranged through the Quaker Belt from Wilkes to Chatham hunting draft-dodgers and deserters in the fourth sweep by Confederate forces in the area during the war. On the 26th, Vance issued a proclamation warning all deserters or those absent without leave to return to their regiments by February 10 and, if they returned by this date, they would not be punished except for loss of pay for time absent. Those not returning by that date would be tried upon capture, and upon conviction, sentenced to death. Vance argued that deserting to care for family was not an excuse because draft dodgers would bring shame on wives and children by hiding in the woods by day and plundering their neighbors at night. But by then, some families left at home were struggling to make ends meet without the labor of the soldiers. Desertions continued to grow into the summer.

Later in the month, Vance received reports about the plundering and stealing by organized gangs of deserters and disloyalists in the border area of four counties of Chatham, Randolph, Moore, and Montgomery. Local authorities found it impossible to deal with, for as soon as officials in one county sought to make an arrest, the culprits took refuge in another. The militia forces of the four counties were ordered to coordinate their arrests of all deserters, conscripts, and absentees in the area. But by March 18, when the order was given to call off the hunt and disband the troops, reports had surfaced regarding the misconduct ('illegal strongarm tactics')⁴² of the commanders in dealing with those sought after or captured. A few weeks later, a militia unit operating in southwestern Chatham County shot into a group of deserters, killing one "boy."⁴³

The Gettysburg, Pennsylvania battle of July 1-3 is widely viewed as the turning point of the war. Lee's Northern Virginia army had been very successful until that point. But on day three of the battle, Lee's charge of the Union lines failed, and on the 4th, he was forced to lead his troops south, away from the battle. Not only was it a lost battle, but it cost the lives of thousands of his troops. A great number were from North Carolina—including Chatham County and G Company.

In the same month, the NC State Assembly passed a law creating a state military force called the Guard for Home Defense whose dual role was to arrest deserters as well as protect loyal citizens. The law inducted all able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and fifty exempted from Confederate service into the Home Guards. A companion law made it illegal to assist deserters—punishable by \$500 and imprisonment up to four months.

At home, some wives of soldiers were carrying on their own battles with their government to keep their farms afloat and their children fed. One Chatham wife wrote the editor of *The Weekly Standard* in Raleigh asking for help. *"We have to pay the highest prices for all we consume. My wheat and oats crops were entirely destroyed by hogs: and my little son was trying to raise some corn, when suddenly our horse died. Our farm, for the want of my husband's care, is fast going to ruin. I reluctantly applied to the man who deals out provisions to the poor soldiers wives, and he gave me such a snappish answer that it chilled my blood...I told him I must starve unless I get help, and that I would write to the Governor for relief. He said the Governor had nothing to do with it."*⁴⁴

Two months later, Henry London, Chairman of Chatham's Relief Committee received a letter from the Governor Vance regarding the matter. London responded by stating *"It gives me pleasure (not in the way of boasting) to answer it so as to inform you how nobly the County has acted and continues to act, and as far as I can learn far exceeds any county in the state providing for the Soldiers Families...I am daily in receipt of such letters as ***⁴⁵ and upon investigation find that there is no truth in them and that they complain without any cause and I think that when I see the Committee in Haywood District, I will learn that *** is not to be believed or that the Committee are satisfied she is not in want."*⁴⁶

During the same period, some Chatham residents began holding meetings criticizing the Confederate government's handling of the war and encouraging a negotiated settlement to the war. But there was no agreement as to the terms of the negotiations. Some were willing to give concessions, others said the settlement should not *"enslave us"* or be *"degrading,"* while one demanded *"independence."* Some of these words may represent an indirect way of saying that preserving slavery was a necessary condition, but nothing was said explicitly, contrary to the case in some other counties. Most supported sending the terms to a state convention or a referendum of all voters.⁴⁷ The officers of these meetings were too old to be drafted, but otherwise they were a diverse group in terms of occupation and wealth. They included farmers (large and small), lawyers, physicians,

ministers, and at least one blacksmith. Some had modest wealth and no slaves, while others were very wealthy and enslaved dozens of people.

On September 7, Vance responded (using his usual colorful language) by discouraging peace meetings that might divide and turn North Carolinians against one another. “*Let not the enemy be rejoiced to behold our strong arms and stronger devotion which have often made him tremble, turned against ourselves. Let us rather show that the God of Liberty is in His Holy Temple—the hearts of freemen—and bid the petty bickerings of earth keep silence before him.*”⁴⁸

1863 found northwest Chatham and the Mudlick community nearly depleted of draft eligibles as only eight men, none in their twenties, enlisted in G Company. Three were teenagers living in parental households whose head was either a farmer or artisan with modest income and no slaves. All but one of the remaining five were independent farmers with low to modest wealth and no slaves. The exception was farming with his father, and neither man had more than modest wealth, but the father owned two slaves. During the war, four of these eight died of disease and two were wounded. One was captured and held till near the end of the war when he was released, having taken an Oath of Allegiance to the Union. Only one made it till the end of the war unscathed.

1864: “We Are Fighting Each Other Harder than We Ever Fought the Enemy.”

On February 17, 1864, *The Weekly Standard* (Raleigh) printed the proceedings of a public meeting in Chatham County held at Hezekiah Henderson’s store on February 4. John H. Haughton, mentioned earlier, was among those who spoke, again indicating that the political class was well represented. Resolutions passed included:⁴⁹

- *That it is perfectly clear to the minds of all sensible people that this war can never be settled by the sword.*
- *That we are in favor of a convention to be held in the city of Raleigh, and we desire to hear of one being held in all of the Southern States, that we may meet in general Convention to propose terms to the United States that this war be settled.*
- *That it is the least of our intention to give aid and comfort to the enemy; and we urge upon our soldiers the duty they have sworn to perform; Stand by your colors, while your friends at home tender the olive branch of peace.*

Nothing was said specifically about the terms of a settlement regarding the continuation of independence or slavery. Perhaps these participants were beginning to believe that it would be much more difficult to reach any kind of settlement on those issues, particularly slavery, if the Confederacy lost the war.

Governor Vance, prosecutor of the war, and William Holden, editor of *The Weekly Standard* (Raleigh) and leader of the Peace Movement, were to face off in the gubernatorial election on August 4. On July 2, *The Weekly Conservative* (Raleigh), a newspaper supporting Vance, published an expose of the Heroes of America and the accusation that Holden was a member and leader. The Heroes of America was an underground organization of militant Unionists who fought Confederates and their supporters by robberies, arson, and shootings. The Reverend Orrin Churchill of Chatham County had reported on the Heroes' activities in the county. "*Its objects, or main objects, are protection from the enemy. It has one of the hardest oaths to it, that has ever been invented, so as to prevent its subjects from telling the secrets...I, a poor deluded soul, went into this unholy thing and for a short time thought it was all right, and during that time, was the cause of some four or five others becoming deluded with myself. But thank God, my eyes were open to see what I had done for myself and others. I at once declared non fellowship with the concern, and prayed to God to forgive me for doing so vile a thing...It was said too that those who belonged to this concern were expected to vote for Mr. Holden.*"⁵⁰

On July 20, the *Daily Conservative* reported that guns were stolen from the households of Captain T.J. Goldston, J.J. Goldston, Sr., and B.N. Watson, all of whom lived in the Gulf community.⁵¹ One day before the election, *The Weekly Conservative* claimed that deserters had recently banded together and begun stealing guns from loyal citizens in order "*to get to the polls armed on the day of the election, as they have been advised by their leader W.W. Holden...It is very much feared in Chatham that they will overawe the people and take possession of the polls, unless prompt measures are taken to prevent it.*"⁵²

On August 4, Vance won the election by a landslide state-wide 57,873 to 14,432, and in Chatham County 1,202 to 640.⁵³ Holden's credential of 'leader of the Peace Movement' did not carry the day in the county, though he fared better in Chatham than he did state-wide.

On August 9, Chathamite Haughton writes to Vance from Pittsboro that there were 800 to 1,000 'Holdenite' deserters in the four counties of Chatham, Randolph, Moore, and Montgomery. "*Deserters who have been stealing guns in the lower part of this county intend arming the slaves & that this was confessed by slaves of a highly respectable man...The feeling of all our best & most prudent citizens so far as I have heard...is that a war of extermination be waged on deserters, that it is time to cease making captives—that the plan adopted in Alabama—is the only one that will prevail, that is to hang them up pine tree[s] & let them hang.*"⁵⁴ Four days later, eleven battalions of the Home Guards were sent into the four counties to capture and destroy deserters and militant Unionists who were "*committing murders, robberies and other depredations upon the peaceful citizens.*" Of these battalions, two were sent into Chatham. A rumor in the county stated that deserters threatened to burn Pittsboro as soon as the Home Guard units left the county.⁵⁵

On September 3, Sherman's troops marched into Atlanta contributing significantly to Lincoln's re-election in November.

On October 4, Judge Thomas Settle sent a letter to Vance regarding the mistreatment of wives of deserters by military officers sent to capture their husbands. *"Allow me Governor in this connection to call to your attention a matter in which you certainly must be misunderstood although your orders on the face bear the interpretation which the officers gave to them. I have found in Chatham, Randolph, and Davidson that some fifty women in each county & some of them in delicate health and five advanced in pregnancy were rudely (in some instances) dragged from their homes & put under close guard & there left for some weeks. The consequences in some instances have been shocking. Women have been frightened into abortions almost under the eyes of their terrifiers."*⁵⁶

Settle described the first-hand account of the torture of the wife of Bill Owens who was a leader of the Heroes of America, captured at his hideout in south-eastern Randolph County in April.⁵⁷ On April 5 of the following year, *The Weekly Conservative* (Raleigh) reported *"Bill Owens, the notorious deserter, house burner, murderer, &c, who some time since moved his trial to Chatham Superior Court, was taken from the jail of that county on Wednesday night the 22d instant, by a party of persons unknown to the jailor,...demanding the keys of the jail, threatening his life in case of refusal...took out Owens, carried him some half mile from town and shot him [dead]---four balls penetrating his body."*⁵⁸

1864 would end with G Company having been joined by a dozen Chatham draftees, seven from the Mudlick community. Their ages ranged from 18 to 42. The younger ones lived with farm-owning relatives whose wealth ranged from low to modest. The wealthier owned 1 or 2 slaves.⁵⁹ The older draftees were either farm-owners with little wealth or farm laborers with no wealth. During the war, four died and four deserted, while three were paroled at the war's conclusion. (The fate of one cannot be determined.) For the entire Chatham County, the last two years of the war would find about another 10% of the eligible males drawn into the military. For the entire war, over two-thirds of the eligibles in the county would serve.⁶⁰ Of those, almost one-fifth died.⁶¹

1865 "All Hell Breaks Loose"

Events occurred in rapid succession in the last four months of the war.

- On January 15, Fort Fisher, on the coast, was captured by the Federals.
- On February 15, *The Weekly Conservative* (Raleigh) reported an incident in the Chatham neighborhood of Cane Creek. *"A band of robbers, seven or eight in number, entered the house of Thos. C. Dixon, who is in the service, last night...carried off a large quantity of bed clothing, leather, jewelry, and other*

valuables. They were supposed to be deserters, as they had army guns, canteens, &c."

- On February 25, A dispatch from General Lee depicted the situation facing the Army of Northern Virginia. *"Hundreds of men are deserting nightly and I cannot keep the army together unless examples are made of such cases."*⁶²
- On February 27, about six hundred troops marched into Chatham, Randolph, and Moore counties because *"it is believed organized bands of deserters are collected in those counties to a greater extent than any other portion of the state."*⁶³
- On March 3, reports came from Chatham County regarding the perils facing its loyal citizens. One wrote the Governor that deserters had been robbing in places *"too numerous to mention...100% of them met at Nat Newlines the other day and elected a Yankee prisoner who ran away from Salisbury [prison] Captain. They are 50 to 75 in number in squads."*⁶⁴
- On March 9, *The Semi-Weekly Observer* (Fayetteville) reported that near Chatham's Mount Vernon Springs *"a party of gentlemen, determined to put a stop to the outrages which have been perpetrated by deserters in this section of Chatham, started in search of them. In the course of the night they came upon a party of five, who had just robbed the house of Mrs. Dark, whose husband is in the service and who had no man at her house to protect her. The five were found sitting before a fire dividing up their plunder. They were fired upon and two...were mortally wounded; the other three were captured without resistance, and carried to the Pittsboro jail."*
- On March 13, the Confederate Congress authorized the recruitment of up to three hundred thousand slaves *given* the consent of both slave-owner and slave. But only a small number were ever enlisted, as the war was over only a month later.
- On March 11, Sherman's army occupied Fayetteville. On the 15th, part of his army, led by Maj. General John A. Logan, was camped on the east side of Cape Fear River just southeast of the Chatham County line. In what may be the only contact with Union soldiers in Chatham County during the war, slaves on plantations in that area of the county remembered Union soldiers taking rations and farm animals.⁶⁵
- On March 27, Lee sent another dispatch. *"The number of desertions from the 9th to the 18th... 1,061...I do not know what can be done to stop it."*⁶⁶
- On April 26, the external Civil War ended in North Carolina when Confederate General Johnston surrendered his army to Sherman at Durham's Station. The Chatham Record, in 1915, gave an account of the consequences of this surrender for Chatham County. See the box below.⁶⁷

It was most fortunate for North Carolina, especially that part west of Raleigh, that Johnston's army surrendered when he did, for in a few days more Sherman's army would have marched through this section and devastation would have ensued. Sherman had already out-

lined his march and had issued orders for the cavalry, under Kilpatrick, to keep up a show of pursuit of Johnston's army towards Burlington (then known as Company Shops); Gen. Howard to turn to left by Hackney's X Roads, Pittsboro, St. Lawrence and Asheboro; Gen. Slocum to cross the Cape Fear river at Avent's ferry and move rapidly by Carthage, Caledonia and Cox's Mill; and Gen. Schofield was to remain at Raleigh with part of his force and with the remainder follow an intermediate route. In this way Sherman intended to head off Johnston's army by taking a shorter route to Salisbury.

In pursuance of this plan Kilpatrick's cavalry had reached Chapel Hill, and the infantry had reached Holly Springs, Cary and Morrisville, when Johnston and Sherman agreed on the armistice and there they halted. Another day's march would have brought Gen. Howard's forces into this county (Chatham) and our countymen would have then fully realized all the horrors of war. As it was, a few bummers strayed into this county and did some pillaging. The present generation cannot imagine the terror of our people during the month of April, 1865, when they were daily expecting the "Yankees" and everything was being hid!

Hackney's X Roads, Pittsboro, and St. Lawrence are all in Chatham County.

On June 22, some Chatham County citizens met at the Fair Mount Foundry in Snow Camp. Benjamin Way was appointed President and Thomas C. Dixon was designated to report resolutions drafted by a committee. Both were farmers from the Mudlick community with moderate wealth, but neither owned slaves in 1860. The resolutions adopted by the citizens included (1) regretting secession and ardently desiring reunion pledging unfeigned allegiance to the U. S. government, (2) mourning the death of President Lincoln, and (3) not supporting any man for office who voluntarily aided the late rebellion.⁶⁸

July 6, 1868. North Carolina's secession is terminated when Congress rejoins it to the Union.

Between the end of the Civil War and North Carolina's readmission to the Union lay three years of continuing conflict in the context of Reconstruction. The U.S. Congress would set the conditions for readmissions, particularly the acceptance of three Constitutional amendments prohibiting slavery, giving Blacks born in the U.S. citizenship, and extending voting rights to Blacks. It would accomplish this through giving the Union military controls over how Constitutional conventions were held, while denying Confederate public officials and military officers the right to hold public offices or to vote in certain elections but giving Black males voting rights. All of these efforts met with mixed opposition/support in Chatham County.⁶⁹

In Conclusion

'Unity' was not an accurate description of events in Chatham County before, during, or after the Civil War. Granted, like in most wars, the governing elite pressed for unity among the citizens, and when that failed, they passed laws to force cooperation and punish those who 'were disloyal.' When that failed, they sent in the troops. This was true in North Carolina and Chatham County. Even Governor Vance, while himself strongly advocating the war until the very end, offered a pretty accurate depiction of the war. "*It was a revolution of the politicians not the people; was fought at first by the natural enthusiasm of our young men; and has been kept going by state and sectional pride assisted by that bitterness of feeling produced by the cruelties & brutalities of the enemy.*"⁷⁰

But identifying the source(s) of the disunity is more complicated. Some recent historians have concluded that it was a result of class conflict.⁷¹ The conflict was between those identified in this paper as the political class (plantation owners, wealthy farmers, merchants, and political officials) who made the decisions regarding secession and the war and the smaller farm owners and laborers who left their families to fight the war—an idea captured in the saying 'Rich man's war; poor man's fight.' But this is an over-simplification. *Within* the political class, there were conflicts regarding if and when to secede, and later, if and when to negotiate a settlement and its conditions. There were disputes over the best way to preserve slavery—continue the war or negotiate a return to the Union. Among the farm owners and laborers, there were conflicts regarding whether to do their duty to their comrades (in the case of G Company—brothers, cousins, friends, and neighbors) and continue to fight under terrible conditions or to desert in order to fend for their families at home.⁷² On the homefront, there were conflicts between militia, home guard, and their pro-Confederate supporters and the draft-dodgers, deserters, militant Unionists, and their supporters. This was certainly true in Chatham County. And even after the war, the internal war within Chatham County continued into Reconstruction in the fight between 'scalawags' (native white Republicans) and 'redeemers' (local Democrats/Conservatives). But that is another story.

There are still many unknowns. One very important one is how Chatham voters would have split their votes over the issue of secession if the General Assembly had called for a referendum on the second secession convention. Did Holden's two-to-one loss in Chatham in the 1864 Gubernatorial election reflect a lack of support for anti-war views among Chatham citizens? What were the views of women, who could not vote?

Another conspicuous unknown is the activities and attitudes of 6,177 enslaved people and 220 free Blacks in Chatham County during the events described here. One historian has addressed the various North Carolina laws passed during this period which restricted the movement of enslaved people as well as the freedoms of free Blacks.⁷³ Another discussed the activities of enslaved people throughout the Confederacy such as resisting the authority of their owners, abandoning their owners for the protection of federally controlled territory, supporting the Federal Army as soldiers or workers, supporting individual Federal soldiers escaping from Confederate prisons, and hiding deserters.⁷⁴ (By the end of the war approximately 179,000 Blacks, the large majority from Confederate states, served in the Union's land and naval forces—5,000 from North Carolina.) But few records can be found that offer any evidence as to whether or not the enslaved people in Chatham conformed to these observations during Chatham County's internal civil war.

The Past is Never Dead or Even Truly Past: Remembering the War Between the States

Following the war, attention was paid to honoring the Confederate soldiers, particularly by the United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. *The Chatham Record* covered many events. Here's just a sample:

1895. During the year the *Record* published veterans' reminiscences of their experiences during the Civil War.

5 May 1909. A Confederate soldier statue had been placed in front of the Chatham County Courthouse in 1907. "Next Monday being Confederate Memorial Day and a legal holiday in this State the Daughters of the Confederacy will decorate the graves of all Confederate soldiers buried at this place. They will meet at the Confederate monument at 5 o'clock and they request all persons, old and young, who revere the memory of our Confederate heroes, to meet with them and join in the decoration of the graves. All who have any flowers are requested to bring them."⁷⁵

30 Aug 1911. "Of all the many pleasant Confederate reunions held in this county not one was ever more successful or more enjoyed than was the one held here on last Thursday....The veterans turned out in large numbers, about 150 being present, and hundreds of other persons, men, women, and children were in attendance....The Confederate drum corps from Raleigh...enlivened our old town with their martial music and old war-time tunes....A recess was then taken for dinner, which was spread on long tables in the corridors of the court-house....The annual election of the officers of Leonidas J. Merritt Camp of United Confederate Veterans resulted in the unanimous (reelection of the old officers as follows: Thomas Y. Mims, commander; A. J. Lane, first lieutenant commander; J. J. Hackney, second lieutenant commander; H. A. London, adjutant; A. H. Perry, chaplain; P. D. Laster; surgeon; Ambrose Eubanks, Quartermaster; and O. M. Dorsett, commissary.---The song by the choir that seemed to give more pleasure was the one entitled 'We Are Old Time Confederates.'⁷⁶ (See box at right.)

'We're old time Confederates' says a lot about the identities of many 1911 white Chathamites. During the war and immediately after the war, many southern civilians blamed the defeat on the Confederacy's political leaders. But the words of the song suggest that if animosity toward the leaders existed during the war, it had diminished in Chatham County by the turn of the century. Special effort was given to celebrating the many Confederate general Chieftains. The song also singled out Southern women for their loyalty during the war.

At the same time, white supremacy was establishing itself, this time in the forms of Black disenfranchisement and racial segregation.⁷⁷ These developments may have made it easier to sing the final phrase of the song "Now our Country is United---It's good enough for me." There undoubtedly were Chatham citizens who did not participate in celebrating the Confederacy, but no information has been found to indicate the continuation

the tune of "Old Time Religion" and was so much enjoyed by the veterans that it was repeated. At the request of many we here-with publish it:

We are a band of brothers,
We are a band of brothers,
A band of Southern Brothers,
Who fought for Liberty.

CHORUS.

We're old time Confederates,
We're old time Confederates,
We're old time Confederates--
They're good enough for me.

Jeff Davis was our Leader,
Our only chosen Leader,
Our True and Faithful Leader--
He was good enough for me.

Lee and Johnston our Chieftains;
Bragg, Beauregard and Johnston,
These were glorious Chieftains
They were good enough for me.

We followed Stonewall Jackson,
The Christian Soldier Jackson,
The Terror striking Jackson--
He was grand enough for me.

We fought with Hood and Gordon,
With Longstreet, Polk and Cle-
burne,
With Ewell, Hill and Hardee--
They were good enough for me.

We rode with Stuart, Hampton,
With Fitz Lee, Duke and Morgan,
With Forest and Joe Wheeler--
They were good enough for me.

We honor our Southern Women,
Our true and Loyal Women,
Our very glorious Women--
They are noble pure and fair.

Now our Country is United,
Now our Country is United,
Now our Country is United--
It's good enough for me.

We must all meet in Heaven,
We must all meet in Heaven,
We must all meet in Heaven,
To rejoice eternally.

of openly anti-Confederacy actions among white Chatham residents during this period of Chatham County's history.

My point here is not to point a finger at commemoration/celebrations of the Confederacy in Chatham County. Instead, it is to point out that support for and celebration of the Confederacy is not the complete story. Whether you label it "Chatham County's inner civil war," or not, there was much conflict in Chatham County during the time that the county was part of the Confederacy and fighting a war with the Union. Our description of Chatham's Civil War history should not ignore this conflict.

In a sense, the County's inner civil war has reappeared in 2020 over the questions of whether the monument to Confederate soldiers in front of the Chatham County courthouse should have remained there or been removed to another location, and where the Confederate battle flag should be displayed. Opposing forces have faced off across the streets surrounding the courthouse.

Obviously, there are multiple interpretations—histories—of the Civil War and its contemporary symbols. Any interpretation, even if revised to include Chatham County's inner civil war, would still be just a White-based revision. An effort to broaden discussion of the County's participation in the Civil War is limited by the absence of information regarding the thoughts and actions of local Blacks during the Civil War—at least that I am aware of. A future challenge will be to determine how we might construct a history of the Civil War in Chatham that includes all Chatham citizens, all viewpoints, motives, and allegiances.

**Jim Wiggins is a CCHA volunteer who moved to Chatham County in 1978. His interest in Chatham history is wide-ranging.*

¹ Williams, David, *Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner Civil War*, The New Press, 2008, p. 1

² Auman, William T., *Civil War in the North Carolina Quaker Belt*, McFarland & Co., 2014. It is Auman's book that brought the existence of the internal struggle, or disunity, over the various aspects of the Civil War to my attention and inspired me to apply his analysis to Chatham County.

³ Chatham's external war has been treated elsewhere. Seagroves, Jessie Ruth, "The War Between the States," in Hadley et. al., *Chatham County, North Carolina 1771-1971*, Edwards Bros., 1997.

⁴ <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-27.pdf> and <http://chatham1860.blogspot.com/p/v-behaviorurldefaultvmlo.html>, both accessed 31Aug2020.

⁵ Osborn, Rachel, and Ruth Selden-Sturgill, *The Architectural Heritage of Chatham Country, North Carolina*, The Chatham County Historical Association, 1991, chapter 5.

⁶ Alston-DeGraffenried Plantation Boundary Increase/Amendment, Chatham County, NC, National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet, Section 7/8, pp. 8, 12; Osborn, p. 22.

⁷ To vote for members of the state senate, one had to own at least fifty acres; to vote for the house of commons, one had to be a taxpayer.

⁸ Levine, Bruce, *The Fall of the House of Dixie*, Random House, 2013, p. 56.

⁹ Bolton, Charles C., *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, Duke University Press, 1994, p. 33.

¹⁰ Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938 North Carolina Narratives, Volume XI, Part 2, Elias Thomas, page 345 of 436. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=112/mesn112.db&recNum=348&itemLink=D?mesnbib:47:/temp/~ammem_gJzN:: Accessed 31Aug20.

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- ¹¹ Bolton, Charles, pp.45-7.
- ¹² Statistics of the Churches in the State of North Carolina by Counties, in Statistics of the United States, 1860, pp. 435-437. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/statistics/1860d-16.pdf> Accessed 31Aug20.
- ¹³ Huddle, Mark Andrew, "Incendiaries in Our Midst: Wesleyan Methodist Abolitionists in North Carolina, 1847-1860." Master's Thesis, Western Carolina University, 1995.
- ¹⁴ Hamilton, J.G. de Roulhac, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, Columbia University Press, 1914, p. 10.
- ¹⁵ *The Weekly Standard*, 10 October 1860.
- ¹⁶ Sitterson, Joseph Caryle, *The Secession Movement in North Carolina*, University of North Carolina Press, 1939, p. 171.
- ¹⁷ *The Weekly Standard* (Raleigh), 14 Nov 1860, p. 3. Accessed online via Newspapers.com. 31Aug20.
- ¹⁸ Auman, p, 28.
- ¹⁹ *The Fayetteville Observer*, 17 Jan 1861.
- ²⁰ *The Fayetteville Observer*, 17 Jan 1861.
- ²¹ *Fayetteville Observer*, March 4, 1861, p. 3.
- ²² Seagroves, p. 122.
- ²³ Hamilton, pp. 26-7.
- ²⁴ The Militia Law of North Carolina at the Second Extra Session of the General Assembly 1861. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=dul1.ark:/113960/t44q8px0s&view=1up&seq=5> Accessed 31Aug20.
- ²⁵ . *Fayetteville Semi-Weekly Observer* 16 May 1861; *Journal of the Senate of the General Assembly of North Carolina*, 1860-61.
- ²⁶ Sitterson, p. 199.
- ²⁷ For a history of the 26th NC Regiment, see www.26NC.org.
- ²⁸ Wealth and slave ownership determined by 1860 census records.
- ²⁹ Seagroves, p. 123.
- ³⁰ Seagroves, p. 124
- ³¹ Auman, p. 35-36.
- ³² Years, W. Buck, and John G. Barrett, eds., *North Carolina Civil War Documentary*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980, p. 14.
- ³³ Goff, Jerry C., "The Geographic Origins of North Carolina Enlistments in the War Between the States." Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1987, p. 70.
- ³⁴ Using the 1860 Census statistics, this figure was arrived at taking 40% of 15-19-year-olds to estimate the number of those 18 to 19 and 60% of 40-49-year-olds to estimate the number of men 40 to 45.
- ³⁵ Researching the backgrounds of all of the Chatham Boys listed in Walter Clark's *Histories of the Several Regiments from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-1865* was beyond the scope of this paper. So, I chose every fourth name on the list for Company G, and attempted to find information about them in the 1860 Census for Chatham County. As noted, that resulted in 22 names and I found information for 17 of those. The remaining five were either not found listed in the census or were residing in another county in 1860.
- ³⁶ Clark, Walter, ed. *Histories of the Several Regiments from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-1865*, 5 vols. Goldsboro, N.C., Nash Bros., 1901, pp. 548-561.
- ³⁷ Records are not complete enough to account for others.
- ³⁸ Auman, pp. 43-46.
- ³⁹ Goff, p. 70.
- ⁴⁰ No records can be found regarding the total number in Chatham County.
- ⁴¹ Auman, pp. 38-57.
- ⁴² Examples were taking the families' horses and holding them for ransom until the delinquents surrendered; rape and murder.
- ⁴³ Auman, pp. 60-64
- ⁴⁴ *Weekly Standard* (Raleigh), 19 Aug. 1863.
- ⁴⁵ Name removed to protect privacy.
- ⁴⁶ *North Carolina Civil War Documentary*, W. Buck Years and John G. Barrett, eds., Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980, p. 261)
- ⁴⁷ *SemiWeekly Standard* (Raleigh), Aug. 11, 25, 28, Sept. 2, 4, Oct. 13.
- ⁴⁸ Mobley, Joe A., "War Governor of the South" *North Carolina's Zeb Vance in the Confederacy*, Univ. of Florida Press, 2005, pp. 107-8.
- ⁴⁹ *The Weekly Standard* (Raleigh), 17 Feb 1864.
- ⁵⁰ Years, p. 114.
- ⁵¹ *Daily Conservative*, 20 July, 1864, p. 2.

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- ⁵² Weekly Conservative, 3 August, 1864, p. 1.
- ⁵³ Weekly Standard August 10, '64, p.5.
- ⁵⁴ Auman, pp. 162-163.
- ⁵⁵ Auman, p. 164.
- ⁵⁶ Yearns, p. 104.
- ⁵⁷ Yearns, p. 104.
- ⁵⁸ *The Weekly Conservative* (Raleigh), 5 Apr 1865.
- ⁵⁹ Interestingly, in one instance the two slaves were both very young children.
- ⁶⁰ Goff, p. 71.
- ⁶¹ Seagroves, p. 122.
- ⁶² Williams, p. 240.
- ⁶³ Auman, p. 191.
- ⁶⁴ Auman, p. 187.
- ⁶⁵ *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 11, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>. See narratives for Charley Crump, Dorcas Griffeth, Sarah Ann Smith, Sara Anne Green, Emma Stone, and Elias Thomas. <https://chathamhistory.org/pdfs/ChathamCountySlaveNarratives.pdf>
- ⁶⁶ Williams, p. 240.
- ⁶⁷ *The Chatham Record*, 28 Apr 1915, p. 2.
- ⁶⁸ *The Daily Standard* (Raleigh), 3 July 1865
- ⁶⁹ <https://chathamhistory.org/pdfs/ReconstructionandBlackRights.pdf>
- ⁷⁰ Mobley, Joe A., "War Governor of the South" *North Carolina's Zeb Vance in the Confederacy*, Univ. of Florida Press, 2005, p. 216
- ⁷¹ Williams; Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, Harper Collins, 2003.
- ⁷² For discussion of the many motives of deserters, see Bardolph, Richard, "Confederate Dilemma: North Carolina Troops and the Desertion Problem." *North Carolina Historical Review*, Part I and Part II, January 1989, 61-86, and April 1989, 178-210.
- ⁷³ Trotter, William R., *Silk Flags and Cold Steel*, John F. Blair Publisher, 1988, chap. 5.
- ⁷⁴ Williams, chaps. 3-4.
- ⁷⁵ *The Chatham Record*, 5 May 1909.
- ⁷⁶ *The Chatham Record*, 30 Aug 1911.
- ⁷⁷ <https://chathamhistory.org/pdfs/ReconstructionandBlackRights.pdf>