

which to date has not been located.

What kind of building was erected for the "Poor House" can only be guessed at, for at the November 1831 sessions the court appointed a committee (Thomas Thompson, Edward Rives, and Isaac Clegg) to repair buildings and erect new ones so that all paupers could be accommodated.⁸ Not until the February 1833 sessions was this report of the committee filed, and although Burns was to have been paid half the sale price of \$400 in twelve months and the other half in eighteen months, not until November 1833 did the justices order that he be paid \$200 plus interest, presumably his final payment.

After 1833 little is found in the court minutes about the poor house other than the setting each year of the tax rate. The first mention of taxes earmarked for support of the poor is in the minutes of the Court of Pleas & Quarter Sessions for February 1833, when the sheriff is ordered to collect taxes for the county, county buildings, and the poor. In May 1834, general taxes for 1833 were set at twenty-five cents per poll and five cents per \$100 value of land; fifteen cents per poll and five cents per hundred dollars for a poor tax; and twenty cents per poll and five cents per hundred dollars of land for public buildings.⁹

Revisions Resulting from New Constitution

A new state constitution was adopted in 1868, fashioned largely on that of Pennsylvania.¹⁰ Both the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions and the Wardens of the Poor were eliminated. Poor relief involved the county poorhouse and cash payment for support of the needy.¹¹ Minutes of the newly-formed Board of Commissioners make many references to support for the poor. For example, in minutes for 1868 and 1869:

"The Board of Commissioners adjourned to meet at the County Poor House for the Purpose of examining the condition of the Paupers and county property. . .

"Ordered that the sheriff pay H. H. Burns Stewart [*sic*] of the County Poorhouse one Hundred and fifty Dollars to be used for the benefit of the Pauper Rations for one month, clothing, &c."

"Ordered by the Board of Commissioners that Headen & Bynum & Co. be allowed to pay said companys County taxes with an order for goods sold for Poor House."

"Ordered that the Sheriff receive corn in payment for Poll Taxes at 50 cents per bushel until further notice if Delivered at mill within 15 miles of the Poor House."

W. C. Thomas paid \$150 as agent of Poor House.

James H. Harman to receive \$11 for coffins and other work for Poor House.

R. B. Webster, Supt. at Poor House to be paid \$10, part of his salary at Poor House.

Dr. W. F. Berry paid \$1 for bleeding a pauper.

"Dr. H. Jackson was selected as physician at Poor House at \$1 per visit and report to the Board quarterly."

"B. Burns paid \$38.25 for medical attendance at Poor House up to October 1, 1869."

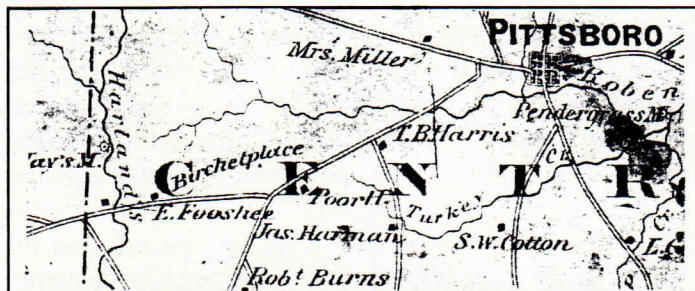
"Physician if called to professional service to Poor House on road day [is] to be exempt from road duty."

"Calvin Vestal paid \$8 for roll of sheeting, \$4 for coffin for a pauper, \$7 for conveying a pauper to Poor House."

The 1868 constitution provided for a Board of Public Charities to supervise charitable and penal institutions but allocated no funds to support it. Nevertheless, a committee was formed and the superintendent of the insane asylum accepted an appointment to survey existing conditions. A lengthy questionnaire was sent to each county, all but eighteen counties responded, and the findings were published in documents of the General Assembly.¹² Chatham County's poorhouse was reported to be located three miles from the county seat. (See detail of Capt. N. A. Ramsey's map of Chatham County, below.) The property contained five buildings of weatherboarded logs, with six rooms in the largest building and the smallest two with one room each. Water came from a spring and residents were allowed one-third pound of meat and one-and-a-half pounds of meal daily. The average weekly cost of the maintenance, exclusive of milk, butter and vegetables, which were produced on the grounds, was about \$1.10. About twenty-five of the three hundred acres were in cultivation or in meadows, with corn, wheat, oats, and potatoes planted for inmates and livestock, and cabbage, snaps, Irish potatoes, and turnips raised for summer and winter consumption. The overseer was R. B. Webster, who was paid \$240 per year, and the physician was Dr. H. C. Jackson, who charged one dollar a visit.

Miscellaneous Records

The North Carolina archives has a number of documents related to the poor house in addition to minutes of the Court of Pleas & Quarter Sessions and Board of Commissioners. "Accounts of Outside Poor and Lunatics," covering the years 1879 through 1898,



Detail, Capt. N.A. Ramsey's 1870 "Map of Chatham County, N.C."

show that many merchants in the county carried accounts for the indigent and presumably were reimbursed by the county. Among those listed with multiple accounts were W. L. London, O. S. Poe, J. M. McIver, John Barringer, S. M. Durham, J. J. Womble & Co., B. A. Phillips, and Yates & Thomas.

In a file of mostly undated records relating to the county commissioners between 1871 and 1930¹³ were found numerous petitions from neighbors requesting support for individuals; most of these were granted in the amount of one or two dollars a month. A note from H. T. Chapin, M.D., Superintendent of Health, verified that the Home for the Aged and Infirm, with 38 inmates, was in good condition and well cared for by Supt. Bridges. Similar reports were filed by Dr. L. A. Hanks, who recommended in one report that the houses be whitewashed, and L. E. Fothering, who in 1912 showed 23 male and 16 female inmates, who bathed once a week. An undated "List of Property at County Poor House belonging to the County" shows, among other items, 2 mules, one 20 years old and one 22 years old, 2 water buckets, 3 1/2 acres meadow lands, 10 acres of land in cultivation, and the contents of eight rooms, including their total of 21 people.

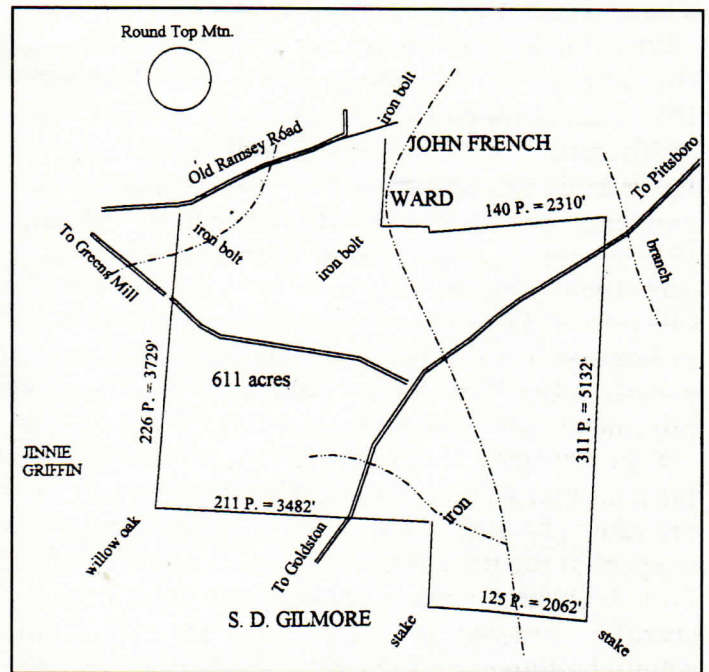
An inventory taken by Cary D. Moore, chairman of the Board of Commissioners, and J. E. Sturdivant at the end of 1912 names, among other items, "2 pitchforks. . .2 shovels. . .1 organ. . .3 broken stacks of straw. . .10 head of cattle. . .3 head of mules. . .14 white inmates. . .13 coloreds."

The U.S. census of 1900 lists Jasper Foushee as "county poorhouse keeper" and 27 "paupers."

Other documents related to the county home are filed with the Chatham County Register of Deeds. In 1910 the county commissioners deeded to the board of education two acres of land near the county home, at the edge of the Round Top Road near the schoolhouse.¹⁴ In 1912 the commissioners deeded another acre of land at the corner of what is today St. Matthews A.M.E. Zion Church, on the south side of the road leading from the county home to Green's mill, today's Bear Creek Road, NC 902.¹⁵

Replacement of Poor House

In 1920 the Chatham County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution declaring that "whereas the County Home is antiquated and out of keeping with the progress and spirit of the times [and] no longer meets with the demands for which it was established," the home should be abolished and replaced with a modern and properly equipped hospital for the use of all citizens, not just for indigent patients.¹⁶ In the following year the county purchased 32.25 acres in Center Township east of Pittsboro¹⁷, and in 1922 the commissioners resolved to raise \$50,000 for the new hospital and home¹⁸.



County Trustee to Davis & Hudson, Deeds GW-452, May 1930

The commissioners minutes show that the old county home property was sold in 1923 for \$4,907,¹⁹ however, deeds show that although the Old County Home Tract of 611 acres was sold for \$3,990 in 1924, it reverted to the county after default of payment.²⁰ The property was again advertised and sold in 1930 for \$2,400.²¹

By December 1922 the new county home was completed and sixteen inmates, six of them African-American, were moved to the new location.²² The supervisor, a Mr. Thomas, recorded names, ages, and relatives of residents in a register begun for the new home and noted date of death and place of burial. Entries show that the county home was used as a correctional facility, with some inmates "sent from Court to Home" for short periods of time.

In April 1947 the county home property was surveyed and 46 parcels were laid out, including a central tract of 7.6 acres on which the home and seven outbuildings were located.²³ Soon after the survey, ten lots were sold and in 1948 the county home and lot were sold.²⁴

The County Home Cemetery

St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church records show baptisms, confirmations, and burials at the "county poor house."²⁵ Other churches undoubtedly also participated in services and burials both at the old county home or poorhouse and at the "colored cemetery" near Pittsboro, west of today's county fairgrounds. No cemetery has been found to date on the old county home property.

In 1925 the same people who purchased the old county home property purchased Piney Grove cemetery, and in 1926 the county purchased ten of the

platted lots, each fifteen feet by twenty-five feet, and perhaps acquired all 30 lots.²⁶ A 1989 plat for adjacent property refers to "approximately 47 gravesites counted in area from woods line to property line near fence".²⁷ In 1995 the senior author surveyed the area and found one gravestone marker with legible inscriptions, one marker with illegible markings, numerous field stones, and about 35 sunken gravesites. The legible marker is inscribed for Robert Alston, 1849-1929, "He worked for County Home for 30 years."

The register for the new county home records eight burials in the county home cemetery between 1929 and 1938. They are, in addition to Robert Alston, Hagar and Heck Barns, 1937; Lee Dark, 1937; Basel Green, 1936; Minnie Judd, 1937; George Murchison, 1934; B. A. Peoples, 1938; and Calvin Range, 1934.

NOTES

1. Wade H. Hadley, Doris G. Horton, and Nell C. Strowd, ed., *Chatham County, 1771-1971* (Durham: Moore Publishing Co., 1976), p. 7, 37, 66. After the Revolution and the separation of church from state, the Church of England parishes continued, primarily to minister to the poor, according to *The Episcopal Church in North Carolina, 1701-1959* (edited by Lawrence Foushee London and Sarah McCulloh Lemmon, Raleigh: Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, 1987). The parish structure was abolished in 1778, but in Chatham County Wardens of the Poor continued to administer taxes collected for the poor until 1868. See also note 7 below.

2. Marilyn P. Laird and Vivian P. Jackson, comp., *Chatham County Court Minutes*, 3 vol. (Cape Girardeau, MO: Poe Publishers, nd). Vol. 1 covers the years 1774-1779.

3. *Public Laws of North Carolina, 1831*, chapter 17, sections 1, 2.

4. Minutes of the Chatham County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, May 1831, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

5. Minutes of the Chatham County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, August 1831, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

6. John Burns to Wardens of the Poor, August 1832, Chatham County Deeds, Book AC, p. 271.

7. Wardens of the Poor apparently were substantial leaders of the community, as their names demonstrate. A volume of court minutes in the state archives mentions that the wardens of the poor elected in 1852 were W. Hanks, William Marks, Richard Webster, A. G. Headen, M. Q. Waddell, Turner Bynum, and W. M. Burgess[?].

8. Minutes of the Chatham County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, November 1831, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

9. Minutes of the Chatham County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, February 1833, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. Additional taxes were added for the state in 1839 and another category was added in 1841 to support common schools.

10. Hadley *et al*, *Chatham County, 1771-1971*, p. 47.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

12. "First Annual Report of the Board of Public Charities," Executive Document 26, General Assembly Session of 1869-1870. State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

13. "Records Related to County Commissioners, undated, 1871-1930." State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. One interesting set of papers describes a lengthy suit brought by Lee County in 1914, in which the county claimed that it had supported two paupers from 1909, when the county was formed, but that these were Chatham County residents. Lee set the value of this support at the rate of \$16 a month or \$456, plus \$896 for other expenses. In 1918 depositions were taken from neighbors to determine on which side of the Deep River the two had resided, and Superior Court eventually ruled in favor of Lee County.

14. Chatham County Deed Book EX, p. 98, 3 February 1910.

15. Deed Book FB, p. 1, 12 May 1912.

16. Minutes, Board of County Commissioners, Book 5, p. 255.

17. Deed Book FY, p. 16, 5 July 1921.

18. Minutes, Board of County Commissioners, Book 5, p. 334, 394, 397.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 442.

20. Deed Book GH, p. 502, 3 November 1924. Evidently additional land was acquired adjacent to the original acreage; however, we found no documentation for this additional land.

21. Deed Book GW, p. 451, 17 April 1930, and Book GW, p. 451-452, 5 May 1930.

22. Chatham County Home Register, handwritten ledger in the Chatham Historical Museum, Pittsboro. The last entry on the first page reads, "Martha Stone refused to come and died out there the next year, having stayed on with Mr. and Mrs. Clark." Different scripts indicate a succession of superintendents, but none of these are named. In 1939 G. C. Yates assumed the duties of superintendent and continued until the home closed. The latest date included in the register is 1940.

23. Plat Book 2, p. 38, 1 April 1947.

24. Deed Book JS, p. 374, 29 April 1947; Deed Book JZ, p. 509, 5 August 1948. In 1952 the property was sold to Pittsboro Christian Village for a rest home (Deed Book KY, p. 563).

25. Register, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, Pittsboro Memorial Library. Dates cluster in the mid-1880s, although one burial is recorded in 1861.

26. Plat Book 1, p. 6, October 1925; Deed Book GK, p. 281, 22 July 1925; Deed Book GO, p. 369, 13 April 1926.

27. Plat Book 90, p. 17, 22 December 1989.

The **Chatham Historical Journal** is an occasional publication of the Chatham County Historical Association. Its purpose is to disseminate items of historical interest about Chatham County. To be considered for publication, articles or photographs should be previously unpublished, of reasonable length, and include detailed sources of information.

Implied copyright of published articles is reserved for the author.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary, CCHA, Box 913, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312.