



The Chatham Historical Journal

Volume 21, Number 1

Chatham County, North Carolina

December 2008

A Search for Hatch's Mill

by Jane Pyle*

Part I

This article is a report of information from public records about Hatch's mill, in operation on Roberson Creek from about 1850 through 1900. Also included is a partial Hatch genealogy, teased from censuses, deeds, estate records, and the Chatham County Historical Association's inventory of cemeteries and gravesites.

The Mill

Ramsey's 1870 map of Chatham County¹ shows Hatch's mill east of Pittsboro on Roberson Creek.² The homes of W. Hatch and R. Hatch are shown north of the creek on what was called the Raleigh Road, roughly the location of today's Hanks Chapel Road. Few people nowadays have any memory of the family or Hatch's mill,³ though the Hatch family was a large one and the mill apparently flourished for at least fifty years.

The 1880 U.S. Census of Agriculture collected detailed information about manufacturing, with a special schedule devoted to flour and grist mills.⁴ Four water-powered mills were listed in Center

Township, two of them with overshot wheels: Pendergrass's and Hatch's. Hatch's mill is reported to have an overshot wheel with a 15-foot fall. Four feet wide and making two revolutions per minute, the ten-horsepower wheel powers two runs of stones for an estimated maximum capacity of 40 bushels per day. The mill is in full-time operation nine months of the year and idle only one month. Capital invested, both real and personal, is \$1,500. Daily wages paid are \$1.30 for a skilled mechanic and fifty cents for an ordinary laborer, but only one male is employed on average and total wages paid during the year were \$100. Production between 1 June 1879 and 31 May 1880 totaled 500 barrels of wheat flour, 115,000 pounds of corn meal, and 86,000 pounds of feed, with a total value of \$7,048.

Compared with the other forty-two mills in Chatham County reported in the census,⁵ Hatch's mill was in the middle range of capacity and volume of production but much smaller than, for example, the McIver mill in Gulf on the Deep River, the Pace and Holt mills on the Haw River, and almost all of the mills on the Rocky River.

Earlier, the 1860 census also collected information on mills,⁶ but not in such detail as the 1880 census. In 1860, John W. Hatch reports both a milling business and a timber mill, each with a capital investment of \$1,000. The grist mill used 1,000 bushels of corn valued at \$1,000 to produce 1,100 bushels of meal valued at \$1,100 and 750 bushels of wheat valued at \$750 to produce 150 pounds of flour valued at \$900. The saw mill used one saw, powered by water, to produce 75,000 feet of lumber valued at



Detail, "Chatham County, 1870," by Capt. N. A. Ramsey

*Jane Pyle has been writing and editing articles for the Chatham Historical Journal since 1989.

\$750 from 500 “stocks” valued at \$250. The average monthly cost of labor for the grist mill was \$12 and for the saw mill, \$18. A faint note between the separate lines of information for the grist mill and the saw mill suggests that there was in fact only one mill; Hatch had finished making flour in March, which would have allowed him to saw lumber until fall, when the corn and wheat were harvested and ready for milling. This mill was the smallest reported for the “middle division” (undefined) in Chatham County in the 1860 census.

Location and Deeds

With the notation on Ramsey’s map and the listing of Hatch’s mill in the census, I began to search for relevant deeds to verify a location. I found a large number of deeds for various members of the Hatch family, both as grantees and grantors, and identified three deeds that contain clues to the mill’s location. The most descriptive deed (AO/356)⁷ uses the mill, mill dam, and flood gate as reference points; unfortunately, neither adjoining landowners nor distances are included in the metes-and-bounds description, and I cannot relate it to a modern map. The deed shows that the mill had three owners in 1868, for it conveys 1/3 interest in ten acres of land from John T. and Emeline R. Farrell to Robert J. Hatch, for \$500. (Emeline was Robert’s sister.) The next deed strongly suggests that the third owner was John Hatch, and the 1860 census report cited above documents this ownership.

The second deed (BO/212) is dated 1848 and records the sale of 193 acres on both sides of Roberson Creek from Stephen Petty to John W. Hatch and Robert Hatch. The deed was registered in 1885, perhaps in connection with the settlement of Robert Hatch’s estate. The deed grants permission to anchor the mill dam to Petty’s land. I found no record of when the mill was built, but from this deed I conclude that it was not built before 1848. The Petty family had extensive land holdings and one tract, containing the Petty family cemetery and identified on several deeds, was west of today’s Hanks Chapel Church.

The third deed verifies the location of the

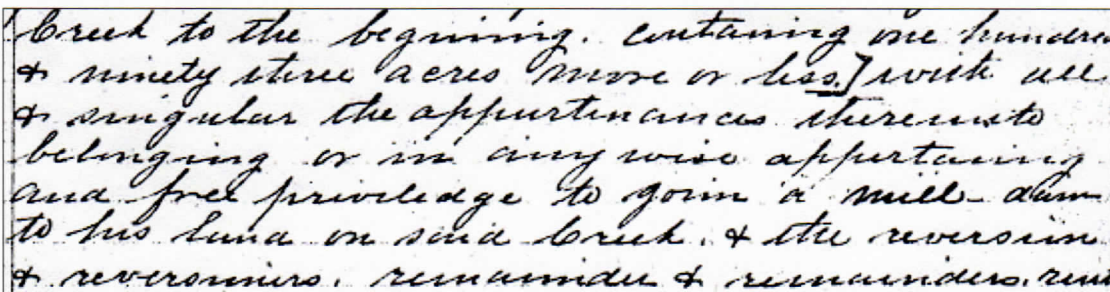


In spring of 2008 Catherine Deininger and Karen Hall conducted a riparian assessment of Roberson Creek southeast of Pittsboro. Their attention was drawn to stone masonry along what appeared to be a stream bed separated from the creek by a narrow ridge. Describing it to me some weeks later, Cathy thought it might be something to do with a mill. Her question piqued my curiosity – and thus began the road to retrieving this piece of local history.

(Photograph courtesy of Catherine Deininger)

mill, even though the transaction is unconnected with either the Petty or Hatch families. In other words, finding this deed was pure luck, and I am grateful to Bev Wiggins for pointing it out to me! This deed (379/403) was executed in 1973 and conveyed title to 23 acres of land from David M. Farrell to Hanks Chapel Church. The deed describes the southern and western boundaries of the tract as running up Roberson Creek [northwest] to the old ford at Hatcher’s⁸ old mill and then with the mill road leading out [north] to the old spring branch and on nearly north to the old public road. A brief reconnaissance on the property south of Hanks Chapel confirmed the location of the old ford, a boulder-strewn shallow section of the creek, and a road (perhaps two roads) continuing south. Traces of stonework along what could be the millrace extend west from this site. More careful study of the area by an archaeologist is needed to find remnants of the mill and to identify the exact location of Hatch’s mill and the ten acres of land on which it was built.

The final tidbits related to the mill were found in the estate papers of John W. Hatch, who died in 1902.⁹ Among many miscellaneous slips of paper kept by the estate administrator were receipts for wages paid to hands working on the dam, and a



Detail, book BO, page 213, Chatham County Register of Deeds

“Gorin” seems to be a copyist’s error for “groin,” as the mill dam would form such a structure.

small memorandum book dated 1901 records hours and amounts paid to several named individuals for work on the mill dam or on the mill.

The Hatch Family

The surname Hatch first appears in federal census records of Chatham County in the 1820 census, in which Henry H. Hatch is listed, a male over 25 years. Also in the household are a female over 25, a male under ten, and two slaves, both under 11. Occupations were not shown in this census. From later censuses, information from gravestones, and kinship ties shown in deeds,¹⁰ I could construct a reasonably accurate family chart, shown on the next page.

In a brief search for earlier family history, I did not discover a place of origin. Henry was apparently a man of some means when he moved to Chatham County about 1820 and took up land near Pittsboro, for there are a number of deeds in his name, both as grantor and as grantee. The first deed recorded for Henry Hatch (AA/76, recorded in 1826) documents his purchase of the Seven Island mill tract on Haw River.¹¹ This tract of 202 acres seems unlikely to have had a working mill because the purchase price for it and an adjoining 85-acre tract was only \$588. However, he may have purchased only a part interest, as recorded in other deeds. In 1829 he purchased an undivided fifth share of a tract (AB/141) on waters of Roberson Creek for \$250, a more likely mill property, though no mill is mentioned. Three 1835 deeds record his purchase of 1/7 share described variously as the mill tract formerly property of Mrs. Mary Lucas or a 1/7 share in 300 acres known as the Lucas mill tract. This mill was on the Haw River near the mouth of Roberson Creek, later known as Moore's Mill. Hatch seems to have been a sharp businessman, for he purchased (AC/175) about 1,360 acres of land on both sides of Roberson Creek for \$600 in January 1832, and in April 1835 sold (AC/248) 1,130 acres with an almost identical description for \$1,000.

In Part II of this article, in the next issue of the *Chatham Historical Journal*, I will flesh out the listing of Henry Hatch's children and describe production on their farms, as reported in censuses of agriculture.

NOTES

1. Capt. N. A. Ramsey, "Chatham County, 1870," (New York: Snyder, Black & Sturn), reprinted by Chatham County Historical Association, Inc., 2007. Comparisons with modern maps is tempting, often frustrating, and usually misleading, as the location and names of roads changed and map scale blurred details. Many old

roads are still visible on the ground, and a mapping of these could be a boon to local research.

2. Robinson, Robenson, Robeson, Roberson, and Robertson are common variant spellings for this creek in deeds or maps. Of the many spellings of the name, I have selected Roberson and used it consistently.
3. A Hatch family descendant now living in Raleigh recalls a large, busy mill serving the area into the 1920s. I think he may be thinking of Moore's Mill on the Haw River near the mouth of Roberson Creek.
4. "Flour and Grist Mills," Special Schedule of Manufactures No. 7 for Center Township of Chatham County, 1880 U.S. Census of Agriculture. This table gives statistics for four mills in Center Township, two on Roberson Creek and the other two on Rocky River.
5. Wade Hadley, "Water-powered Grist Mills in Chatham County, North Carolina as of 1880," (*Chatham Historical Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1, January 1991). Hadley draws his information from the tables cited in footnote 4, summarizing the information except for name, capital invested, and value of products, which he shows for each mill.
6. "Products of Industry" for Chatham County, N.C., 1860 Census of Agriculture, Schedule 5.
7. Chatham County Register of Deeds, Pittsboro. Deed books may be either lettered or numbered and are here cited parenthetically with book and page number, e.g., Book A-O, page 356, is cited AO/356.
8. Herbert Poole, in "Bygone Mills on the Haw River in Chatham County," (*Chatham Historical Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1995) says, "Locals during my childhood confused Moore's mill with Hatch's mill, which was located on Robeson Creek, a tributary of the Haw. The cause for the confusion may have been that a Robert Hatcher was for many years the operator of Moore's mill." Robert Hatcher was the miller at Ramsey's Mill on the Deep River before 1913, when it was washed away.
9. Loose estate papers, N.C. Archives, Raleigh.
10. Census data are widely available. For 1800-1850 I used facsimile reprints by John R. Schunk, ed., (Wichita KS: S-K Publications, n.d.) and for later dates, www.heritagequestonline.com. Other dates are from *Gravesites of Chatham County, North Carolina*, by Will and Audrey Heiser, (Pittsboro: CCHA, 2002).
11. This site is included in G. F. Swain, J. A. Holmes, and E. W. Myers, *Papers on the Waterpower in North Caro-*

The *Chatham Historical Journal* is an occasional publication of the Chatham County Historical Association, Inc. Its purpose is to disseminate items of historical interest about Chatham County. Original articles submitted for consideration should be of reasonable length and fully documented. Implied copyright is reserved for the author.

Information about publications and membership may be found at www.chathamhistory.org or by writing P. O. Box 93, Pittsboro, NC 27312.

CCHA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.
© 2008, Chatham County Historical Association, Inc.

***Henry H. Hatch, 1796 - 1867**
***Martha Ward, 1791 - 1874**

***John W.**
 1819-1902
***Elizabeth H.**
 1820-1893

***Theophilus**
 1841-1862
 ^Euphemia,
 1847-1910
 Omay, 1849-
 Laomi 1850-
 *Artemus
 1852-1913
 Nutana 1857-
 *Nancy E.
 1858-1926

***Robert J.**
 1826-1884
***Celia**
 1827-1889

Sylvanus
 1845-
 *Leonidas Utley
 1847-1893
 Henry 1849-
 *William B.
 1858-1898
 John R., 1863-
 Laura, 1866-
 Joseph, 1850-

***Elizabeth**
 1825-1877
***John Bland**
 1815-1891

Luvenia, 1846-
 *Thomas J.
 1849-1926
 *Martha
 1852-1868

***Frances**
 1826-1896
***Wm. Bland**
 Jr.
 1823-1895

Mary M. 1845-
 Robert M.
 1848-1906
 Elizabeth,
 1851-

***Emeline**
 1828-1871
***John T. Ferrell**
 1823-1883

John, 1847-
 Atlas, 1848-
 Allie, 1848-
 Juna, 1855-
 William, 1856-

Mary Ann
 1831-
Thomas Lilly
 1834-

Martha, 1859-
 *Theophilus,
 1862-1920
 Viola, 1866-
 Frederic, 1868-
 Emaline, 1871-
 Francis, 1875-

***William H.**
 1834-1899
***Ann E.**
 1834-

Charles, 1858-
 Fanny, 1859-
 Addie, 1862-
 *Clarence G.
 1863-1876
 Peter, 1864-1921
 Caddy, 1865-
 Samuel, 1866-
 Annie, 1867-
 Nathaniel, 1870-
 John, 1872-
 Daniel, 1874-
 Allie, 1876-

Indiana
 1850-
Britton Utley
 1842-

***Theophilus m.**
 Martha A. 1844-
 Josie, *73-

***Artemus m.**
 *Sarah Brown,
 1856-1898
 ^Edwin B.
 1876-1955
 Omeia, 1879-
 Roberta, 1879-
 Florence, 1884
 Annie M., 1885-

***Nancy E. m.**
 *Daniel Farrell,
 1859-1897
 4 children

^Euphemia m.
 ^John Griffin
 1847-1905
 4 children

Sylvanus m.
 Eliza, 1846-
 Ida 1867-
 Hugh, 1869-

Leonidus m.
 *Martha Brown
 1849-1923
 Josephine, 1872-
 Dewitt, 1873-
 Eva, 1878-
 John, 1879-

***William B. m.**
 *Nancy Hearne
 1860-1927
 Nina B., 1891-
 Eva J., 1994
 Henry E., 1997

The Henry H. Hatch Family of Chatham County, North Carolina

- Notes:
- Inclusive dates (e.g. 1796-1867) are those reported in *Gravesties of Chatham County, North Carolina*. Single birth-years (e.g. 1876-) and names of children are taken from censuses of 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1900, with year of birth calculated from age listed; thus all single birth-years should be considered approximations.
 - * denotes burial in Hanks Chapel churchyard
 ^ denotes burial in Pitsboro Baptist cemetery
 ** denotes burial in Haywood cemetery

***Theophilus m.**
 *Maggie A.
 1858-1923
 Annie, 1895-96

Charles C. m.
 Cora, 1867-
 2 children
 **Peter R., m.
 Rowena Parham