JOYNER LIBRARY-ECU

much benefit to the Country and an advantage to that section of Country in particular.—

The County of Stokes has a character & that is well known to be respectible. This County contains much property[13] & men of virtue.[14]

Iron ore is also found here, and might be managed to a greater profit.

The Dan River runs through this County and spreads wide low grounds of fertile lands. The Town fork Creek[15] is also productive of large bodies of low & high land of the best quality.

This County contains the Saura Town Mountains, so called from a nation or settlement of Indians who once inhabited them. These Mountains are about 600 feet high and about 60 miles from the Blue Ridge & entirely detached from them.

## WAYNE COUNTY.

By J. Slocumb[1]

Gentlemen

Through the Solicitations of Nicholson Washington[2] Esq$^{r}$. of Waynesborough and in pursuance of your request made through him under date of the 30$^{th}$ of March last, I have with great diffidence, and for the first time taken up my pen to ape the Historian, and give you a discriptive account of the County of *Wayne*,[3] Tho I am perfectly aware of my inability to give you an account sufficiently comprehensive to afford the satisfaction sought for, yet holding it to be my indispinsable duty to Contribute as much as in my power to the information and good of My Country. and to the gratification of my Fellow Citizens I proceed to give you such information as I am possessed of; in that plain way alone in which I am Capable. you can arrange it as best suits you; or otherwise dispose of it as you think proper

The County is about 36 miles long. and 28. miles wide and is generally verry level, The Soil on the River Neuse is fertile and inclined to be

[13] In 1815, the lands of Stokes were assessed at $899,669 and the slaves at $502,500; the lands of Surry at $841,226 and the slaves at $335,243. Beverly Daniels' report in 1811 of the manufactures in North Carolina valued those of Surry at $128,150, including 5 bloomeries producing iron articles annually worth $34,500; 1,530 tanned hides worth $2,200; 117 distilleries making 41,000 gallons valued at $20,000; 1 gunpowder mill producing 200 pounds at $150; 904 looms making 142,000 yards of cloth worth $71,000; and 8 cotton gins with 255 saws. The manufactures of Stokes were valued at $46,000, including 2,750 tanned hides at $7,000; 98 distilleries making 20,000 gallons worth $10,000; 1 paper mill at Salem; 600 looms producing 68,000 yards of cloth worth $28,000; and 2 cotton gins with 40 saws. *The Star*, February 21, 1811; *Murphey Papers*, II, 165-166.

[14] The resident attorneys in 1823 in Stokes were Augustine H. Shepherd, Emanuel Shober, and Archibald R. Ruffin; in Surry, Solomon Graves. Resident physicians in Stokes were Andrew Bowman, Frederick Shewman, Thomas Lacy, Robert W. Mosley, David Keel, George Folger, and Jeremy Parkhurst; in Surry, George Kimbrough, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Williams, and ——— Hamilton. *The North Carolina Register*, 1823, 48, 58.

[15] A southern tributary of the Dan.

[1] A trustee of Waynesborough Academy in 1810. *Laws of North Carolina*, 1810, ch. 68.

[2] This was perhaps the Nicholas Washington who was commissioner of the town of Waynesborough in 1811. *Laws of North Carolina*, 1811, ch. 73.

[3] Wayne County was formed from the western part of Dobbs in 1779 by a north and south line through the centre of the county. William Caswell, Charles Markland, William McKinnie, Sr., Ethelred Ruffin and Benjamin Cobb were appointed to run the dividing line. The first court of Wayne was to be held at the home of Josiah Sasser. Robert Sims, Thomas Gray, Andrew Bass, Ethelred Ruffin, and William Alford were directed to contract for the erection of a court house, prison and stocks, at such place as they should agree upon near or at the centre of the county. The county was named for General Anthony Wayne of the Revolution. *S. R.*, XXIV, 290-292; *North Carolina Manual*, 1913, 845.



Black, as is also the land on little river[4] a Branch of Neuse, There is some Excelent Swamp & Creek Land; That on Buck Swamp and Fallin Creek[5] is I believe the best Corn land in the County. The growth on the river and Creek land is generally, Red and White Oak, Black & White Hickory. Water Oak, Poplar, Ashe, Sweet Gum, Maple and Elm, interspersed with short leaved pine, The Swamps and low Grounds abounds with Black Gum & Cypress, The Black Gum is a large tall tree; But like the fir tree of New England is neither fit for Timber or fewel. The large natural growth of the plaines is almost universally pitch pine

Indian Corn, wheat, Rye, Oats, Peas, Sweet petatoes, Cotton & flax all grow well in this County, Indian Corn, peas & Sweet petatoes particularly are raised in abundance

The river Land is worth from 6. to 10 Dollars p. Acre the Creek & Swamp Land from 4 to 6. The value of the common or poor Land depends on its & Conveniences the price varies from 25 Cents to 3 Dollars[6]—There is perhaps no County in the State Better watered or that affords more valuable Mills & Mill Seats

The first settlements made here by white people was in the year 1738. It is obvious that their object was to improve the land The settlements progressed slowly until about the year 1745 to 50. they then began to increase rapidly, there is now about 1100. Voters in the County, & perhaps 6000 Souls[7]

Neuse and little Rivers runs through this County; There is no Lakes, Bays, Harbours, Canals, Mountains, Cataracts, Islands Mines or Curiosities

There is a Mineral Spring at the Seat of the late Co$^{l}$. Joseph Green[8] the water is strongly impregnated with Coperas, The dirt taken from the Banks is a tollerable substitute for that article in dyeing

There is some large Swamps or Marshes which affords excelent range for Cattle

There is a Convenient number of Roads which requires but little Labour to Keep in good order tho they are verry much neglected

There are three Bridges across little River, Sassers, Crawfords & Raifords, Sassers Bridge is on the main road leading from New Bern to Raleigh

Pork is the Staple Commodity raised in abundance and carried to the New-bern Market, Down Neuse in Boats & Scows from 4 to 12 Tons Burthen, There is however a verry Considerable quantity of Cotton, Flour, Lumber & Naval Stores raised here and Carried to the same Market

[4] A northern tributary of the Neuse.

[5] A northern tributary of the Neuse near Kinston.

[6] In 1815 the Wayne County land was assessed for the federal direct tax at an average of $3.52 per acre; and for the state tax of the same year, $3.10. *Murphey Papers*, II, 165-167.

[7] The total population of Wayne County in 1810 was 8,687, of which number 5,820 were whites. *Ninth Census*, I, 52-54.

[8] Joseph Green was a director of the town of Waynesborough in 1787. In 1790, he was the largest slaveowner in the county. He owned 70 slaves. *S. R.*, XXIV, 875-876, XXVI, 1219.

There is perhaps But few Counties in the State more Wealthy in proportion to the number of Inhabitants[9]

Waynesborough[10] a small Town on the north Bank of neuse oposite West Point, Established by Act of Assembly in the year 1786 on the lands of Doctor Andrew Bass, it has improved slowly there is not at this day more than 5 or 6 dwelling Houses a Court House and Gaol, all of wood & Single Story except the Court the House, The Houses generally throughout the County is of wood & Single Story There are However some Handsome two Story Houses and the taste for Building seems to improve

Agriculture has arrive to a tollerable degree of perfection and is still progressing

The useful domestic animals are Horses, Mules, Horned Cattle Sheep (of the common breed) and Hogs.

There is verry little game to be found here, a few of the common or red deer, some foxes, & Wild Turkeys, and Ducks of several Kinds to be found in the rivers and Creeks during the Winter

There are 4 or 5 Whiskey Distileries, some of which promise to be profitable to the owners and a great number of Brandy distileries There is a number of Cotton Gins with from 20 to 40 Saws which will Clean from 500 to 1000 W$^{t}$. of seed Cotton in the day Some of them worked with Horses others with Water[11]

There is two or three Spining Machines with 30 or 40 Spindles each but from the difficulty of abandoning old & Established habits they are not verry much used

There is a great number of Shad Fisheries on little river & neuse at which white shad & some Rocks are caught

The State of Society is in many respects really deplorable owing to the predominiance of that Bane of all Cocities party Spirit Perhaps to Justify this position it may not be improper to mention a circumstance which is inevitably one among the many Melancholy effects of partyism. In November 1807, the Clerks office of the County Court became vacant by the death of the then Clerk, The Gen$^{rl}$ Assembly was then in Session, The representatives from this County were informed of the death of the Clerk,

[9] In 1815 the total slave and land property in Wayne was assessed for the federal direct tax at $1,746,851. The white per capita wealth in land and slaves in Wayne was somewhat above the average for the State, though less than half that of Halifax County. In 1810, there were 2,756 slaves in a total population of 8,687. With the growth of cotton culture the slaves increased to 5,451 in a total population of 14,905 in 1860. In 1790, the total slave population was only 1,557 in a total of 6,133, and but 255 of the 805 heads of families owned slaves. Of these, 148 owned less than 5; 55, from 5 to 10; 37, from 10 to 20; and 15, 20 or more. *Ninth Census*, I, 52-54; *S. R.*, XXVI, 1204-1221; *Murphey Papers*, II, 165-167.

[10] On January 6, 1787, the General Assembly directed William McKinnie, Sr., Burwell Moring, William Whitfield, Joseph Green, William Whitfield, Jr., David Jernegan, Jr., Richard Bass, William McKinnie, Jr., and William Fellows to lay off, erect, and govern the town of Waynesborough on 75 acres of land belonging to Andrew Bass, where the court house was located. When sixty or more half-acre lots had been laid off and numbered, they were to be drawn by the subscribers by lot at £3-5s each, £3 of which was to be paid to Bass. *S. R.*, XXIV, 875-876. In 1811, Cullen Blackman, Isaac Handby, John Davis, Joseph Edwards, Nicholas Washington, and Henry Brownrigg were appointed as commissioners to govern the town. *Laws of North Carolina*, 1811, ch. 73. The town of Waynesborough disappeared many years ago. Goldsboro is now the county seat of Wayne.

[11] In 1811, the value of Wayne manufactures was reported at $42,800, including 4,500 tanned hides at $2,000; 135 distilleries making 30,400 gallons worth $12,100; and 855 looms producing 134,000 yards of cloth valued at $18,700. *The Star*, February 21, 1811.



nine new Justices were then appointed for the County (Tho there was then I believe 35) who were expected to vote in the ensuing Election for Clerk and who it was well understood would all vote in the same Gang (for it need not be told that we are divided into two Gangs) sometime previous to the siting of the Court a Question arose among the people particularly among the Justices what Business should be done first when the Court met, Those who had then the ascendency in Court insisted that it was indispensably necessary to proceed in the first place to the appointment of a Clerk, The Gang to whom this Host of new Justices were attached urged their right of being first qualified to the end that they might vote in the Election, They being of a pacific disposition and being apprenhensive that some disorder and Confusion might take place between the parties (which ought not to Creep into a Court of Justice) unless timely precaution was used, They therefore assembled in solemn silence at the Court House about 15 minutes after midnight precedeing the siting of the Court for the purpose of qualifying the new Justices, when one of the then acting Justices began to administer the oath required by Law. The Gang in oposition suspicting some illicit design was on the Watch; they immediately Collected in the Court House, The parties then together might easily have been mistaken for a Mob, The lights were soon extinguished, and some other Business done not strikeingly Charactiristic of a Court of Judicature. They However soon dispersed without effecting the object for which they assembled; at the usual hour of the day Court was opened in the ordinary way and a Clerk appointed without opposition, Court was then adjourned until 10 oClock the next day, it seemed however there was two Courts & they must have two Clerks, accordingly a party of Justices went into the Court House had Court again Called qualified the new Justices and appointed another Clerk, a Suit is now pending Between the two Clerks for the appointment—Perhaps it may be thought improper when speaking of the State of Society to take into view any thing of a publick nature, nor would I do so but I perceive the same Spirit prevails in a greater or lesser degree in private as well as publick affairs; Creates lasting and deep rooted animosities and tends very much to sour Society

There is a number of common English Schools to which almost every person occasionally send their Children, we have no Academies[12] or publick Libraries, we have no Societies for intelectual improvement for encouraging the arts & agriculture or for purposes of Humanity which may be verry fairly attributed to the great discord that prevails amongst the people

There is Six Quaker meeting Houses and between 7. & 8. Hundred

[12] In 1794, Wayne Academy was in operation on the north side of Neuse River, 3 miles below Joseph Green's. Subjects taught were Latin, Greek, geography, moral and natural philosophy, logic, and rhetoric. Tuition was $14 annually and board $30. C. L. Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies*, 1790-1840. *A Documentary History*, 634.

In 1810, Waynesborough Academy was incorporated with John Davis, Joseph Edwards, Isaac Handley, Uriah Bass, Jesse Slocumb, Robert Collier, Joseph Everitt, John McKinney, Asa Jernigan, Sampson Lane, Joseph Copender, Ephraim Daniel, James Bradberry, William Exum, and John Hooks as trustees. *Laws of North Carolina*, 1810, ch. 68.

Quakers including Children Brought up in that line, there is two Methodist meeting Houses besides several private Houses at which they hold meetings

There is Six Baptist meeting Houses

In August 1795. great damage was done by a Storm of Wind and rain the Crops of Corn, fences, Mills & Bridges was verry much injured in Consequence of which Corn sold the next Summer from 100 to 125. Cents P. Bushel every other Kind of grain proportionably high

The most Common amusements is Horse raceing. Dancing and Card playing

Nothing verry remarkable occured during the revolution the British under the command of Cornwallis marched through the County and with the aid of the Tories (of which this County afforded no inconsiderable share)[13] done some mischief by plundering. and destroying Stock, I must however do the County the Justice and myself the pleasure to say that it afforded some Brave and worthy Patriots and at a time too when the word Patriotism only meant love of Country not of party

A circumstance happened in the summer of 1805 which may not be uninteresting to some. A respectable Gentleman of the name of Jernegan died, one of his negroes was suspected of having poisoned him, she was apprehended and confined, a Special Court was convened, she was tried, found Guilty and Executed, In the Course of her trial a number of others was implicated, all of whom were arrested and tried the Court Continued to sit for 15. days the people became alarmed to find so many implicated and to find that so many attempts had been made to take the lives of the inocent by poison, some were of opinion that a Combination was formed by the negroes to destroy the whole of the white people Begining with the most Conspicuous Characters first; In the course of the trials and examinations a number of Snake & Scorpion heads was found in possession of negroes and great quantity of Roots which done great violence to the immagenation of the Credulous, and afflicted them with immaginary pains.—The result was that Four of the negroes were Executed several Banished and a great number severely punished[14]

[13] *S. R.*, XXII, 568-569.

[14] A Waynesborough correspondent of the *Raleigh Register* wrote two letters dated July 15 and July 30, describing this exciting incident.

"I take the liberty, from a sense of the danger which the white people of this State are in, to communicate to you one of the most shocking plots by the Blacks imaginable. . . .

"We have been engaged in this county in the trying of Negroes for poisoning the Whites, ever since Monday last. One suffered death at the stake (was *burnt alive*) on Saturday last, for poisoning her master, mistress, and two others; two more are under sentence of death, and are to be hanged on Wednesday next. Thirteen are imprisoned under guard, a part of whom, from the evidence, I expect will suffer death, and we are daily making new discoveries. Some have been brought from Sampson, others from Johnston, so that the plot appears to have been a general one. It is said by some of the prisoners, that the head men are to be poisoned first, and the rest are to be subdued; and after detaining a sufficient number in slavery, the balance, if refractory, are to be put to death.

"We proceed this morning with the trials, and God only knows what the event will be. Six or eight Light Horsemen are continually on duty to bring up charged negroes, besides a strong guard of Infantry about the prisoners. What raised the first suspicion in this business, was the death of one or two of our responsible men." *Raleigh Register*, July 22, 1805.

The second letter was as follows: "I sit down to give you an account of the negro business from the date of my last.

"One other negro was found guilty and hanged, with the two I wrote you were to be hung the Wednesday following the date of my last. One other found guilty, was pilloried, whipped, nailed, and his ears cut off, on the same day. Some others, who were guilty in a less degree, were whipped



The prevailing diseases is Bilous—In the Cure Evacuants is verry generally used. The ague & fever is verry prevalent on the rivers in the latter part of the summer & faul

I immagine three fifths of the Male Inhabitants above 12 years old can both read and write a much larger proportion can read only, Female Education is verry much neglected I am not of opinion that more than one half can either read or Write, a much less proportion can do both

There does not appear to be a verry great difference in this time and 25. years ago

J. Slocumb

10th June 1810

[*Concluded*]

and discharged; others were acquitted for the want of sufficient evidence to convict them. The court then adjourned until after the superior court at Newbern, owing to the business of some of the parties concerned in that court. This court met again on Thursday last, tried and acquitted one for the want of witnesses being brought up. Nothing more was done until yesterday, when the court tried another, who is sentenced to transportation, agreeably to act of Assembly. Our election commencing tomorrow, the court adjourned until next day when it is expected the other four will be tried, and one more, if taken; if not, he will be outlawed." *Raleigh Register*, August 12, 1805.

The General Assembly of 1807 passed an act requiring that slaves charged with capital offences be tried at the regular terms of the county courts, and that special courts for the trial of such cases be discontinued. *Laws of North Carolina*, 1807, ch. 10. It is not known whether this act was passed to forestall grave injustices which might arise from speedy trials in highly excited communities or for some other reason.

It appears that slaves were not infrequently accused of poisoning or attempting to poison whites. There are records of several such trials in Johnston County Records, Special Courts for Trial of Negroes, 1764-1780, in posesssion of the North Carolina Historical Commission.

Cf. R. H. Taylor, "Slave Conspiracies in North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, V, 20-34.