

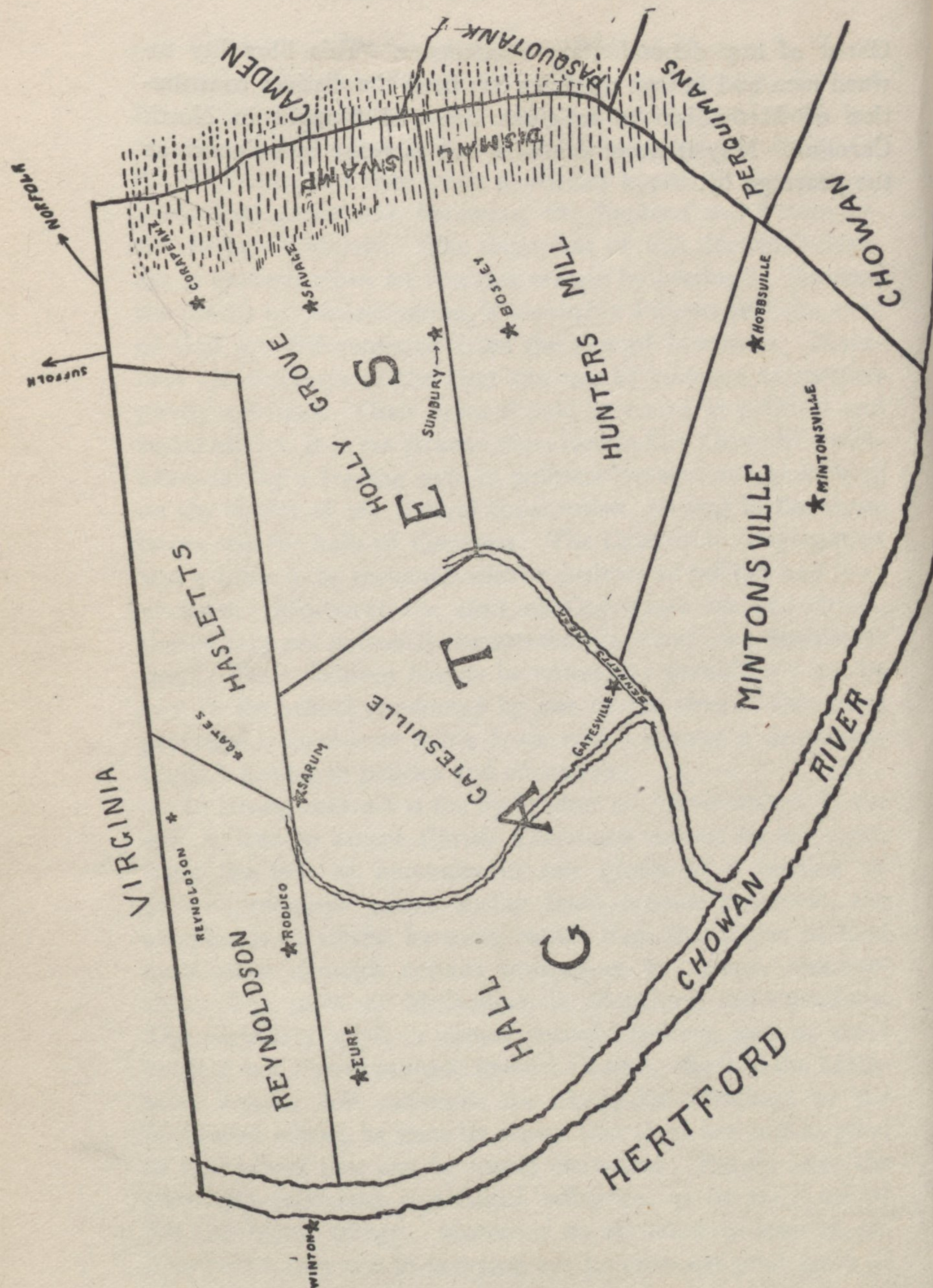
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GATES COUNTY TO 1860 *

By ISAAC S. HARRELL

INTRODUCTION

In the northeastern part of North Carolina, bordering Virginia and about thirty miles as the crows fly from Norfolk, is situated the county of Gates. On the west lies the county of Hertford and the boundary to the south is marked by the historic counties of Chowan and Perquimans. On the east the county is cut off from civilization by the dense Dismal Swamp, which is as rich in fine timbers and wild beasts as the old town of Edenton, in Chowan County, is in tradition and legend. The county thus situated has an area of 356 square miles and in 1910 the Federal Census reported a population of 10,455; with the exception of a few of the more thrifty and enterprising counties of the State, Gates is about the average in size and population and a little behind in industry.¹

The county is dotted over with small swamps and pocosons leading either into the great Dismal Swamp on the east or into Bennett's Creek and thence into the Chowan River to the south. Along these swamps, pocosons and creeks lie some of the rich farming lands characteristic of eastern Carolina; the people have no difficulty in producing a large crop if the season is suitable, but too much rain means disaster. Between the low, marshy lands scattered here and there over the county are sand ridges, and on these ridges it is extremely difficult to make a good crop; if there is too much rain the crop will drown, and a short drought will parch vegetation. The money crops of the county are cotton and peanuts; occasionally some thrifty farmer succeeds in marketing an early crop of Irish potatoes. Corn and other grains are raised for home consumption only. The low fertile lands bordering the swamps are covered with reeds that remain green throughout the year and apparently offer a good opportunity for stock raising; but in summer the flies and mosquitoes make grazing impracticable and in winter a large area of the land is flooded with water. However many of the farmers raise a few hogs for the nearby meat packers

* The following topics are discussed: Early Descriptions, The Negro, Churches, Education, Politics, Economic Conditions.

of Suffolk and Norfolk; but even these have to be kept in a pasture by the farmers who live near the great swamps, in order to protect them from beasts that frequently make raids from their homes in the swamp to nearby ranges.

There are no large landowners in the county; all belong to the small farmer class. The products of the county are not as great as they are in some of the other counties of similar area. In 1910 the farms with their live stock were valued at \$1,330,000 and the products not fed to live stock were valued at \$528,348. There are no manufacturing establishments and no cities. There is only one navigable stream in the county, Bennett's Creek, and this leads through a circuitous route to the Chowan River and the Albemarle Sound. Thus in industrial pursuits Gates falls into the class of the unimportant counties of the state.

The county of Gates was established by the General Assembly in 1788.² The name Gates was chosen in honor of General Gates, who had just triumphed in his famous campaign over General Burgoyne in New York. The law of incorporation reads in part: "Whereas by reason of the width of the Chowan River and the difficulty of passing over the same, especially in boisterous weather, it is extremely inconvenient for the inhabitants of the north-east end of the said river, to attend courts and other public business, as also for the convenience of the inhabitants of the north of Chowan and Perquimans Counties, it is necessary that the same be divided into a distinct and separate county."

After the county was created by the General Assembly, it was laid off into townships. That part which was formerly in Perquimans went to make up Mintonville Township. This township was in the eastern part of the county, and was bordered by the Dismal Swamp. In the northern part of the county, just above Mintonville and bordering the Virginia line, the township known in the early days as Folley and later as Holley Grove, was formed. West of the Folley Township and bordering the Virginia line was Hasletts. Adjoining this township and to the west was Reynoldson Township, or the Brick House as it is designated in the early returns because of the place where the elections were held. This township

was joined on the west by Hertford County. To the south of Reynoldson the township known as Hall was laid off. East of this township and south of Hasletts and Folley Townships was Gatesville. The townships of Gatesville, Reynoldson, Hall and Hasletts were formed from Hertford and Chowan counties and in politics always stood exactly opposed to the township of Mintonville, formed from that part of the county taken from Perquimans. Holley Grove or the Folley Township was formed from parts of Perquimans and part of Chowan and was about evenly divided in local political strife as will be explained later. In the earliest returns that can be obtained (those of 1842) there are returns from Hunter's Mill but in many of the returns that follow there is no mention of this township and whether it was united with other townships for several years and later re-established or whether the returns are lost, cannot be ascertained. This township is situated in the middle of the county between Gatesville and Mintonville and south of Folley Township. The situation of these townships and their political status were important influences in the development of the county.

The history of Gates County is not attractive because of any illustrious achievements within its border; there were no great leaders in state or national politics in the early days who hailed from Gates. It was an inert county from the very beginning; there were no agitations for reform; everyone was satisfied with things as they were.

Hence the value of Gates County history is that it illustrates life in North Carolina under average conditions uninfluenced by the stress of progress or extreme poverty.

EARLY DESCRIPTIONS

In order to understand clearly the social and economic conditions in Gates County, it will be necessary to trace briefly the development of the territory from which the county was formed. The best authority for conditions in the country prior to its formation is notes that are to be gathered from the records of travellers visiting the Albemarle section.

The territory included in Gates County was first settled about 1660. Tradition has it that the first settlement was

made near Corapeake (then Oropeake, an Indian name) about two miles from the Virginia line and in what is now Holley Grove Township. The first record we have of a visit to this section, is that of George Fox, the great Quaker preacher, who visited the country about 1672. He came by way of Summerton, Virginia, and proceeded to what is now Gatesville, the county seat of Gates, and reports to have seen only one house during the trip of twelve miles. He describes the country as being very barren, especially on the sand ridges, and the many swamps and marshes made his travel slow. He reports only one house at Bonner's Creek (now Bennett's), the present site of Gatesville. Here he spent the night and made the best he could of the pioneer accommodations and on the next day proceeded down the creek to the Chowan River and thence to Edenton, then the most important place in the Province of Carolina. The tradition has it that the first settlement was at Corapeake, one mile from the Dismal Swamp, and Fox entered the colony ten miles to the west. Probably there were houses in the western part of what is now Gates that he did not see.³

It is evident that settlers came in rapidly after 1705, for in 1711 a visitor reports that a Mr. Mashburn was conducting a school at Sarum and that he had children under him who could read and write. From all indications this school was for the Indians and was supported by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, a society in England organized to establish churches in America. This same place is called Indian Town in 1719 when an Episcopal Chapel, the first in the region, was established there.⁴

When William Byrd surveyed the dividing line between North Carolina and Virginia in 1730, he was in territory that later became Gates County for more than a month, and from his reports one is led to believe that there were a good many inhabitants at that time; he writes that the priest accompanying the expedition married a few people and baptized many children. The impression one gets from reading Byrd's *History of the Dividing Line* is that these early people of the section were very primitive, and for the most part very idle. He records that they had adopted the Indians custom of letting the

women do all the work in the fields while the men sat around and smoked. The people lived in log huts and showed no signs of being discontented with their lot. Their only ambition was not to live in Virginia; to live in North Carolina meant less, and often, no tax.⁵

By 1758 the country was taking forward steps; in that year the first post route in North Carolina was established, running from Suffolk, Virginia, to Edenton, and on to Wilmington. This route passed through Gates and gave the people the opportunity to come in touch with the civilized world. In all probability this route went through Summerton, Sarum, and by Pipkin's Store.* It is true the route through Corpeake and Sunbury was nearer and there was a road running that way, as the accounts of travellers show, but Summerton was quite a trading place and there must have been several houses at Sarum. Also there was a stage coach some twenty years later from Suffolk to Wilmington by way of Sarum, and in all probability the coach line would follow the route of the mail line.⁶

No definite conclusions can be reached through a study of the notes made by those who travelled the country in these early days. Some describe it as barren and destitute, covered with sand hills and swamps; other reports are more favorable. J. F. D. Smythe makes the following entry: "We remained in Edenton only a few days and then persued our journey northward, through a country covered with sand and pines, a country dead flat, infested with swamps, and the land everywhere miserably poor and barren. On the second day after we left Edenton, in North Carolina, we came to a town called Suffolk, in Virginia, having travelled around on the edge of the Great Dismal Swamp the principal part of the journey." Smythe made his tour in 1783.⁷

Some travellers coming before Smythe when the country was in all probability not so well developed, give a different account. About 1760 the young George Washington, who was rising into prominence by virtue of his surveys for the great Fairfax estate, came to the country. His mission was to investigate the possibility of constructing internal waterways

* Until a few years ago there stood in Gates County, at Pipkin's, an old tavern called "Pipkin's Inn" and according to tradition this adds one more to those "infinitesimal" number of places where General Lafayette was entertained.⁸

as to open up the section. This was a business scheme and his observation can be reckoned as based on intense study. He has the following to say of the country that is now Gates County and its probability of betterment: "The Main Swamp of Oro-peake is about one-half onward from this, where stands the widow Norflets, Mi & Luke Sumner's Plantations. This swamp cannot be less than 200 yards across, but does not nevertheless discharge as much water as Cypress Swamp. At the mouth of this swamp is a very large meadow of 2 or 3000 acres, held by Sumner, Widow Norflet, Marmaduke Norflet, Powel and others, and valuable ground it is."⁸

In 1777 Ekannah Watson passed over the same road travelled by Smythe and Washington and he writes: "Proceeding: from Suffolk to Edenton, North Carolina, we passed over a spacious and level road through a pine forest, which, being in this district extended quite across in North Carolina. We travelled near the north border of the Great Dismal Swamp, which at this time was infested by concealed loyalist and runaway slaves, who could not be approached with safety. They often attack travellers and had recently killed a Mr. Williams. We entered North Carolina late in the day, availing ourselves of the hospitality so characteristic of southern manners, and threw ourselves upon the kindness of Mr. Granby,* a wealthy farmer and merchant."⁹

Five years later Watson again came to the same section and this time he found Gates County organized. He has the following to say, which throws a good deal of light on the existing conditions of the time in all of the mediocre communities of the State and of the South: "At Suffolk I had no alternative but to embark in a returning coal-cart, with one miserable horse and a black boy as driver. I embarked this mode of conveyance in order to reach the house of Mr. Granby, a wealthy planter of Gates County where I had been hospitably entertained in '77. I was compelled to travel two hours, in intense darkness, in this Tybun-like style, amid a storm of rain; and I

* This Mr. Granby was one of the most wealthy men in the county and lived about where Sunbury is now located. As was frequently the custom, the place was called after the leading man in the community and thus a place grew up called Granby and can be found on the map by that name. Later it came to be called Sunbury and then Sunbury. There is an old bridge near Sunbury that retains the name of Granby.¹⁰

arrived dripping wet and bespotted with mud." The writer goes on to say that Granby did not recognize him as his visitor of '77 and wished to turn him out in the rain, but almost by force the traveller went into the house where he found a dancing party. Once in the light Granby recognized the traveller as his visitor of five years back and made profuse apologies.¹¹

Thus from the records of these three men who visited the region that later became Gates county and who passed over the same route, we get an entirely different impression of conditions. It is very evident that the period that had elapsed since Byrd was in the community was one marked by progress. The country was opened, progress was on foot, things went forward by leaps and bounds; in fact all evidence leads to the belief that the period from 1740-1780 was the period in which the country that later became Gates County made great progress. By 1790 the people of the county compared favorably with those that lived in wealthy counties of the state. It was during this period that the log hut was abandoned and a more comfortable structure erected; slavery was introduced; lands were opened up; roads were laid out; churches established—in short it was during this period that the county took on all of those things that go to make up southern culture of the eighteenth century. There were a number of substantial people who were recognized throughout the section, men had begun to build up considerable fortunes, and from all evidence they were intensely interested in local and national issues.

The first Federal Census taken in 1790 shows that the county had a population at that time of 5,372. Of this number 73 were free negroes, 2,219 were slaves and 3,080 were free whites. There were listed 348 families in the county who had slaves and 282 who did not hold slaves. None of the slave-holders were exceedingly wealthy, most owned a few slaves, none a very large number. The outlook for progress was very bright; there was room for active competition, there was no apparent danger of a few men dominating the whole county. The distribution of slaves was as follows:

Families who owned from 1 to 5 slaves.....	205
Families who owned from 5 to 10 slaves.....	69
Families who owned from 10 to 20 slaves.....	53
Families who owned from 20 to 30 slaves.....	14
Families who owned from 30 to 40 slaves.....	7

Apparently there was no family in the county which held over 40 slaves and the seven owners who held over thirty slaves were:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Residence</i>	<i>Number of Slaves</i>
Miles Benton	Wiggins X Roads	40
John Baker	Lower Part of County	32
Josiah Granberry	Sunbury	30
Isaiah Pipkins	Near Reynoldson	34
Thomas Hunter	Near Sunbury	33
Cornud Orin (Orund?)	Near Drumhill	31
William Baker	Below Gatesville	35

From this background it is evident that Gates County came out of the Revolutionary War with as good prospects for development as could be desired. Proportionally she was about as rich as any of the counties except those with the larger towns, such as Chowan, Orange, and New Hanover. The section was having a wave of prosperity and development. In 1790 the Dismal Swamp Canal was chartered and work was soon begun on it; a little time and money would connect the county with this waterway and with Norfolk. However, in spite of these seeming advantages the development of the county from 1790-1860 does not compare favorably with that of other counties in the state. Gates seems to have made few steps forward. The population increased slowly; industries not at all. To account for this stagnation is difficult. It is due to some extent to the failure to build canals, which will be taken up later. Again there was a general depression throughout the extreme eastern counties when the lands to the west were being opened. Many left the county and went to join the rich land-owners and slave-holders in the far south. Those who were the thrifty and the most prosperous,—the Browns, Granberys, Orunds, Carrs, and Beamons—were all led to the south by the allurements of joining the large class of slave-holders. Again those who stayed at home did not conduct their plantations in such a way as to make them profitable.

In investigating the social conditions in the county prior to 1860 the first factor to be considered is the negro—first the free negro, then the slave.

THE NEGRO

In Gates County the negro was never a political problem; there is no evidence of the abolition sentiment being strong enough to feature in politics. The negro, both free and slave, was a problem of social rather than political importance.

The free negroes held a position in Gates County similar to that held by the same class in the mediocre communities throughout the state. They were not sufficient in number to cause any apprehension until the insurrection in Southampton County, Virginia; after that uprising the people were diligent in their watch over both the free negro and the slave. The figures gathered from the census for 1790 to 1860 give the following facts concerning the number of free negroes and slaves¹³

	<i>Free Negroes</i>	<i>Slaves</i>
1790	72.....	2219
1800	82.....	2688
1810	111.....	2790
1820
1830	327.....	3648
1840	381.....	3647
1850	396.....	3876
1860	361.....	3901

Thus in the early days the number of free negroes in the county was not sufficient to cause any unrest on the part of the people. However as the years advanced the number increased more rapidly than the increase of either the slave or the white population. This increase was due to some extent to the prolific character of the negro race. However there were other factors at work. Many of the whites in the early days freed their slaves, for before the introduction of the cotton gin slavery was not a profitable institution. We find in the will of Joseph Riddick, one of the largest slave owners, provisions for freeing certain of his slaves.¹⁴ Again it is very probable that many of the free negroes came into the county from Virginia, where the free negroes were plentiful; for during that period

that the free negroes fall off there are indictments in the county courts against free negroes coming into the county from other states contrary to the state law. In 1844 fourteen free negroes were indicted by the grand jury of the county for coming in from Virginia without permission.¹⁵ What the court did with these negroes cannot be ascertained but it is reasonably certain that they did not leave the county. The names of those indicted, Collins, Boon, Brown and Copeland, are common to negroes in the county today who boast that they were of free ancestry. In the years from 1810-1830 the free negroes increased rapidly, as will be seen by the preceding table, but after 1840 the free negro population was practically stationary. Evidently the negroes immigrated to the county when the laws respecting free negroes were lax and often not enforced. When the state laws became more strict, especially when the trouble with the negroes in Southampton, Virginia, arose, there was pressure for local enforcement of the law. During the same period the tendency was stronger to free slaves than it was after the cotton gin gave the black an added value. After 1840 the free negroes do not increase; probably some went to the North where they could hold a more commanding position. From 1850 to 1860 there was a slight decrease in the free negro population, as the table shows. It was during the period from 1810-1830, before the people had been awakened to their danger by the insurrection in Virginia, that the free negroes thrived in the county.

Although there are no records of there being any schools for the free negroes in the county, the census of 1850 records over half of the male free negroes as being able to read and write. There are no records of them voting but every tax list carries a number of free black polls. It was the custom to make the negroes pay all the tax that could be extracted from them and even after the disfranchisement of the free negro in 1835 he was required to pay poll tax.¹⁶

The census records all the free negroes in the county as having white blood.¹⁷ Although conditions were not as bad as they were in Hertford, where a large number of negroes were the direct descendants of prominent white men, the relation between the negroes and the whites was by no means to

be commended. It is probable that some of these free negroes with white blood came from other counties and multiplied in Gates; however miscegenation existed to some extent in the county, for there was one prominent citizen, and in all probability more, who kept negro concubines. This man built at his own expense a church for the free negroes; this church was known as New Hope Baptist Church and part of the time had a free negro preacher. The church was built in 1859 and no slaves were admitted; even after the war it would not for a long time admit any negro who had been a slave, the line always being drawn between those "born free and those shot free." A negro by the name of William Reid preached at this church before the war and among its principal members were the Cuffs, Rooks, Boons, and Copelands, all names prominent among the negroes of the county today.¹⁸

It is evident from the foregoing that the policy of the people of the county towards the free negro was comparatively mild. In fact it was so mild in the early period that it was a desirable place for the free negro to live, as immigration to the county bears evidence. The free negroes were comparatively few in number, especially before 1810, and after 1830 they increased very little, and all of them were mulattoes; it is not strange that the policy towards them was lenient.

The people of Gates County were easy-going and never worried, for they did not believe in commercializing life. "Live and be happy" was their motto. The slaves of the county lived in this atmosphere and their treatment was consequently mild. The master was fond of his slave very much as a kind man is fond of a good horse. The environment of the slaves must have been good for the mortality statistics of slaves in 1850 are better than those of the whites.¹⁹ Of course there were some cruel slave-owners and there were some bad slaves; but, if the information of those, both white and black, who remember the ante-bellum days can be relied upon, the slave in Gates County had about as easy a time as a slave could expect. The strongest evidence that can be found to the contrary is the record of a case that reached the Supreme Court in 1843. A slave, Gilbert, was hired to one Parker by Copeland and the day before the slave was to be returned

Parker attempted to punish him. Gilbert ran from Parker, who shot the negro in the back when at a distance of only 10 feet. Only the smallness of the shot saved the negro. Cope-land brought suit against Parker for damage done his property, the negro. The Superior Court of Gates County decided that Parker had no right to shoot the slave unless the slave showed resistance and held that the owner should be compensated for any permanent damage done to the slave. Parker appealed to the Supreme Court of the State which affirmed the decision of the lower court. This case shows that the tendency of the county was to protect the slave from mistreatment.²⁰

As has already been stated the slaves were brought into this section between 1730 and 1760 in all probability, for it was during this period that the plantation system developed and the country prospered most. In the early days the number of slaves compared to the number of whites is very favorable, however after 1790 many of the counties in the state took on new life and slave and free negroes increased rapidly. No such conditions prevailed in Gates, as the following table will illustrate:²¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Slaves</i>	<i>Whites</i>
1790	2219.....	3080
1800	2688.....	3111
1810	2790.....	3062
1820
1830	3648.....	3891
1840	3647.....	4130
1850	3876.....	4159
1860	3901.....	4181

The statistics of 1790 compare well with those of other counties, but Gates was stationary from 1840-1860. In 1790 the slaves were well divided among the people as a preceding table has illustrated; this condition prevailed up to the Civil War. There is only one instance of one master owning as many as one hundred slaves and this was in 1860. His name was Mills Roberts and he lived in Mintonville Township. There were a score who held as many as fifty and half as many held seventy-five.²² On the whole the number of slaves and the number of whites were about equal. In the early period the tendency was for the slaves to increase faster than

the whites, as is shown in the period 1800-1810, when the slave population made a slight increase and the white population a decline; however after that date the white population began to quicken its pace and in 1830 the slave population became stationary.

Where the slave-owners held a great number of slaves, there was always a tendency to have severe laws; the slaves being massed together and there being more danger of discontent and rebellion, it was natural for the laws to be more severe. The farmers of Gates County did not fall into the class of large slave owners, as did the planters of some of the other counties, and this may account to some extent for the laxity of the enforcement of the somewhat lenient state laws. There were some bad slaves, to be sure, and these were dealt with in a high-handed manner when the crime was severe. As an example, a negro named Pete killed a white man in January, 1803. The crime was committed in the morning and before noon he was outlawed by the county government. He was caught about two o'clock of the same afternoon. Five magistrates of the county assembled at Gates Court House, the county seat, the same afternoon gave him a trial and he was sentenced and executed before night.²³ However the slaves were seldom in court and their offences were generally buying or selling some trifle; the laxity of the court indicates their good behavior. The usual punishment for a slave buying or selling except for his master was thirty-nine lashes but this punishment was seldom imposed in Gates, especially during the early days. There are several instances of masters being indicted for allowing slaves to assemble in their kitchens after night, contrary to state law, and these masters were fined. The poor whites were also indicted for selling trifles, usually liquor, to negro slaves and were fined, the slave generally escaping punishment.²⁴

There was only one time in the history of the county when the slaves threatened to cause trouble, after which we find the slave laws were enforced more rigidly and the free negroes were watched more closely. In August, 1831, the slaves led by a free negro preacher, Nat Turner, of Southampton County, Virginia, planned to have a great insurrection and kill off all

the whites. The day was fixed, and the slaves all through the eastern part of Carolina and Virginia were to rise. The leaders got drunk and began the work Sunday before the fixed time but their plan did not succeed. However they succeeded in killing some fifty white people and alarming the entire section of the country before they could be stopped. When the people in Gates heard of the uprising, they left their farms and came to Gatesville, the men to join the militia and the women to be protected. Southampton County was not far away and in Hertford, the adjoining county in North Carolina, an uprising was expected every hour. The people in their distress wrote to the governor for aid. John Pipkins, head of the Gates County militia, wrote as follows:

GATES CO., AUGS. 23, 1831.

His Excellency, Montford Stokes,

Dear Sir,

Our defenseless situation impells me at this important crisis, to call on you for some of the public arms to defend our families and our citizens. Not one-half the Regiment under my command is armed. We have just received news from our sister county (Hertford) the important intelligence of an insurrection in the county of South Hampton, Va., and the town of Mufreesboro is hourly expected to be the next scene of bloodshed—The citizens are all in army and all the arms we can raise is now resorted to.

About 200 armed negroes with musketts and bayonetts have made their first attack upon the citizens of South Hampton and have murdered 25 families and they are not as yet arrested in their bloody designs. About 100 stand of arms I think would be a great protection to us—and we need them immediately for our protection.

I am yours with respect,

(Signed) JOHN D. PIPKIN.

However the people were not willing to trust their fate to one letter for they realized the eminent danger and they took pains to bring all possible pressure to bear on the governor. The same day John B. Baker, a man of prominence living in Gatesville, wrote to the governor as follows:

GATES COURT HOUSE, 23rd Augt.

Sir

You, sir, no doubt have been informed that there is a serious insurrection of the negroes in a neighboring County of Va., and the militia are now collecting here—But we have no arms—I had no

notion of so few that can be serviceable being in the hands of our regiment; we have, as far as ascertained, not arms for one-third of the men. This is a wretched situation to be placed in, when all are alarmed, and I fear the most serious consequences if the danger should approach nearer to us.

I am induced to make this statement to you to aid the statement of our Col., with whom you are not acquainted. If sir, you can do so, send us arms as soon as possible. One-hundred stands would place us probably out of danger.

I do not send you the reports from Va. as no doubt you will have received them before this reaches you. They are more alarming than the report of any previous insurrection that I have any knowledge of.

Yours most obediently,

(Signed) JOHN B. BAKER.

These two letters show something of the distress caused in the county by the insurrection in Southampton. There are no reports of any trouble with the negroes in the county trying to rebel. The troops rapidly assembled and in a few days the matter was over. But the people never forgot the uprising; it made a lasting impression upon them of the constant danger of the negro. Perhaps this has much to do with the more stringent enforcement of the slave laws of the state. Although there were no ordinances on slavery passed by the county court after the insurrection, there was certainly a more rigid enforcement of the laws passed by the state. Gates County raised troops to send to help out the inhabitants of Southampton and the legislature passed an act allowing the county and also Hertford to levy a tax to pay the expenses of mobilization of troops. The state also passed an act in 1833 providing for the more stringent enforcement of the patrol laws in Gates County.²⁶ This law provided that the patrolmen should be paid, and provided for a tax to be levied on black polls to raise the necessary amount. No man could serve as a patrolman, except in case of an uprising, who did not own slaves. These measures were characteristic of the time and denote a feeling of unrest among the people over the negro question.

Prior to these measures there is only one law to be found relating to the negro in the county. This was passed by the county court in 1808. At the February term of the Court of Pleas and Quarterly Sessions an ordinance was adopted providing for patrolmen to keep the property around the Court

House free from persons of color. This rule was made to keep away the free negroes who made it a practice to hang around while the court was in session. The ordinance also declared that any person who found such a negro between Bennett's Creek and David Southall's and brought him before the Court would be given a reward. This ordinance was undoubtedly directed against the free negro, but it tends to illustrate the attitude of the county toward the negro; if the negro would keep out of the way the white man did not molest him.⁹³

These measures in the county were necessary to preserve slavery as an institution and were not unjustly severe. In the later days of slavery, slaves were tried in the same courts that white people were tried in. The attitude towards the negro was as lenient as could be expected.

EDUCATION

There is little material dealing with the schools in Gates, and from the sources that are available it seems evident that education played an insignificant part in the early days. As has already been intimated, a traveller reports a school at Sarum about 1710, but this school was supported by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and was for the Indians.²⁷ It is very probable that the people in Gates who gave their sons and daughters an education patronized schools out of the county. There was a good academy at Edenton, and very likely many attended schools in Virginia.

The first mention of a public school in Gates County is a provision in the will of Miles Benton. This will was filed in the court house in Gatesville November 3, 1805. It reads in part as follows: "It is my will and desire that my land and plantation I purchased of Luke Sumner be sold by my executors on a credit of twelve months and the money arising therefrom to be let at interest and the interest arising from the principal to be applied to the building of a schoolhouse and hiring a teacher for the purpose of a free school and that schoolhouse be built within two miles of the places where I now reside and all the children within four miles of my place of residence be permitted to be taught in said school. It is my desire that the court appoint commissioners to superintend said free school

from year to year during time."²⁸ The brother of Miles Benton, John T. Benton, brought suit and the lands set aside by Miles Benton were lost by litigation and the school was never established. Although no evidence can be found to directly substantiate the fact, it is very probable that there were schools of some kind in the county before Benton provided for this public school; for when Francis Asbury came to the county, he once remarks that Mrs. Bakers' son, Marmaduke, was "to have gone this day to finish his education at Princeton."²⁹

In 1820 the first academy in the county was chartered. It was known as the Spring Hill Academy, located at Sarum, now Buckland. This was the place at which Mr. Mashburn ran his Indian School in colonial days. The progress of this school, its course of study and teachers, are unknown. All that can be gathered is from the statute of incorporation and from the recollections of some former students. The charter of 1820 was made to Willis Cowper, Richard B. Gregory, Henry Pugh, and John B. Baker. They were made a body corporate who could sue and be sued, hold and dispose of property, and make such rules and fill such vacancies as they deemed to the best interest of the school.³⁰ Some elderly people say they attended this school just before the civil war and that a "goodly number" of people in the county sent their children to it.³¹

The next academy to be chartered was the one at Sunbury. In 1832 the Legislature passed an act "To incorporate the Sunbury Academy in the County of Gates." This charter was made to John C. Gorden, Joseph Gorden, Richard H. Parker, Henry Costin, Willis Riddick, Wells Cowper, Isaac R. Hunter, Edward K. Hunter, John Gatling, James Costin, Thomas Twim, Noah Harrell, Tillery W. Carr, and George Costin. This body was given the same powers that were given the incorporators of Spring Hill Academy. The academy was located at Sunbury and was at first opened to both boys and girls. This plan did not work very well and in about seven years the academy was closed and a separate school was opened under private control. This institution had a select boarding school located in the yard of the George Costen place, Sunbury, open only to girls. There were three teachers and a

music teacher. Two pianos were used in the music department; a course was given in French and other subjects characteristic of the select boarding schools were taught. Girls came to this school from adjoining counties and at one time the boarding pupils were nearly a score in number. In connection with this school for girls and under practically the same management, was a school for boys at the home of Mr. Gorden, about a mile and a half away. No girls were allowed to attend this school. The school at Gorden's was placed under the care of Mr. Kellogg, a graduate of Yale, and the select boarding school for girls was under the care of a lady from New England. Both of these schools were controlled by practically the same body of men that chartered the Academy.³²

The same year the Sunbury Academy was incorporated, an academy was chartered at Gatesville. The charter was made to Thomas Saunders, Henry Gilliam, William G. Daugherty, Jephtha Fowlker and William E. Pugh. This charter embodied the same powers that the previous charters granted in the county embodied. The academy was located at Gatesville and was known as the Gatesville Academy.³³

These academies no doubt served well the needs of the more wealthy citizens of the county. There are many old people in the county who can point out the places where these academies stood and name a number of the teachers. All of these schools were private and tuition was charged those attending. However there are no records of there being any free or common schools until the proceeds of the Literary Fund were distributed among the counties for the purpose of education in 1840. The census of 1840 records that there were at that time five common schools in the county. These five common schools were attended by one hundred and twenty-five pupils. For the same year only one academy is listed and this had forty-eight pupils.³⁴ It is impossible to tell whether the other academies had surrendered to the common schools or whether for some reason or other they failed to be listed.

Under the system established by the Literary Fund, a county received from the state two dollars for every dollar that was raised for education in the county. Education took on life and the best schools the county had until Charles B.

Aycock awoke the state to its great need, were maintained from 1840-1860. The census reports that in 1850 there were twelve common schools and twelve teachers and these schools had an enrollment of 520 pupils. Over \$1,000 was spent in the county for education during the year. The same census reports that there were ten academies with a total enrollment of 210 pupils. These academies had an income from students of \$3,052 and were not endowed.³⁵ In 1859 the Board of Education in the county, through its chairman, S. W. Worrell, reported that there were twelve schools in the county and twelve teachers; only two teachers were women. There were 308 boys out of a possible 835 attending school and 258 girls out of a possible 744. The length of the school term for the year was seven months, the highest in the state with the exception of Halifax County, which also had seven months. During the year there was \$2,679.85 in the hands of the chairman.³⁶ The records of the Literary Fund show that from 1841 to 1860 the annual appropriation for education in the county ranged from \$556.00 to \$1,790.00 contributed by the state, and one-half as much contributed by the county.³⁷

The next and the last educational move in the county before the war was the establishment of the Reynoldson Academy. The charter for this academy was granted in 1850 to the Baptist churches of the Chowan Association. This association had established a school for girls at Murfreesboro in 1848; many men from Gates had been instrumental in aiding the school for girls and now demanded that the school for boys be located in Gates. The object of the proposed academy was to prepare the boys of the community for entrance to Wake Forest College. In 1853 John W. Willey, Dr. W. H. Lee, J. D. Goodman, Edward Howell, R. L. Land, and E. B. D. Howell were appointed to select a suitable place and supervise the construction of the academy. The summit of the rising ground in front of Piney Grove Baptist Church, Reynoldson or Brick House Township, Gates County, was selected. The name Reynoldson was given the school to express the love and esteem held for a Baptist minister whose work in the Association had been praiseworthy.

"Soon a large, commodious and handsome building was

erected, nicely finished, and furnished with more than the usual academic outfit. A small, but choice selection of chemical and philosophical apparatus was secured at a cost of \$600. A large, convenient and comfortable hotel was built and furnished for the accommodation of the teachers and pupils. It was not long before a store was opened and a post office." Reynoldson was one of the best schools in the entire section and its boarding attendance was encouraging. Some of the students came from Virginia, many from adjoining counties. The place selected had many good qualities; it was quiet, not half dozen houses within a mile, "a cool spring of water and a Baptist church within sight of the location."

The school was opened in 1855 under the auspices of James K. Delke, a graduate of the University of North Carolina. Charles Rawls, of Nansemond County, Virginia, was assistant. The next year George Morgan of Gates County, was added to the force of teachers. The school was a success and many wanted to turn it into a college. A committee was appointed to investigate the matter but it advised against such action. From the wording of their report there must have been considerable feeling over the matter throughout the Association. In 1857 the Principal had trouble with the boarding department. Investigation was made of the condition of the school and a debt of \$2,500 was reported. As a remedy the board decided to change the teaching force and Boushall, of Camden County, and Ellis, of Wilmington, N. C., were elected joint principals. Together they ran the school successfully until 1861 when Ellis left and James Taylor, of Gates County, a graduate of Wake Forest, became associated with Boushall. Soon it was closed for both teachers and pupils were called to take their places at the front. The record of the school was good, the situation was desirable. In 1856 the legislature passed an act forbidding liquor being sold within two miles of the school grounds;³⁸ the attendance was large and there are many men in the county today who received their education at the Reynoldson Military Institute.³⁹

From the study of available sources the conclusion must necessarily be drawn that in the early days of the county the people contributed little time and less money to the education

of their children. If the child received a fair education before 1820, he must leave the county; and if he was educated in one of the academies established during the period that followed, he must pay tuition. Some of the children attended schools out of the county, such as the son of Widow Baker, already referred to, but the great majority before 1820, from all evidence, never had the advantage of even a common school education. The period of the academies, 1820-1840, did not better the condition very much, for most of the teachers were brought from other states and the tuition had to be made so high to pay them that only the children of the more wealthy could afford to attend. However with the establishment of schools by the Literary Fund the county took a new interest in education. Free schools were established throughout the county and all who wished to could attend a seven months school without paying any tuition. Then there were the academies that the children of the more wealthy could attend. This system of education was brought to an end by the Civil War; for several decades the people grew up in ignorance partly because they were lazy and partly because they could do no better. It took Aycock to re-awaken the people to their duty to child and state.

THE CHURCHES

During the colonial period the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was interested in establishing churches in America. This society was active in the Albemarle section and with the aid of the vestry in Edenton it succeeded in establishing churches in several of the eastern counties. The first of these churches to be established in Gates County was at Indian Town (Sarum) which was directed, in 1719, to be built at a cost not to exceed \$150.⁴⁰ This church was active, as were the other chapels of the Church of England, until about fifteen years before the Revolutionary War. In 1720 Mr. Paul Phillips was lay reader at the chapel; in 1723 Rev. Thomas Newman was paid for holding twenty services a year. In 1724 Mr. Thomas Rountree was reader at the place near Mr. Abraham Hill's, the location of which is not known. In 1732 Mr. John Chanpion was paid £15 for shingling the chapel near Indian

Town and in 1738 he repaired the church again and the vestry met there.⁴¹

The next year it was ordered by the vestry that two chapels be built, each thirty-five feet long, twenty-two and one-half feet wide and a pitch of eleven feet; one was to be erected at James Costen's (near Sunbury), and one at James Bradley's (location unknown). The one ordered to be built at Sunbury was erected, and the people used it under the auspices of the established church until a few years before the Revolution. The Hunters, Costens, and Gordons, were the leading families in this church. The other chapel that was ordered to be built was probably never constructed, for no trace of a chapel near James Bradley's can be found. However this chapel may have been the one erected the next year by a man named Parker and known as the Knotty Pine Chapel. This chapel was erected at a cost of forty-two pounds and ten shillings and was located six miles from Gatesville. On the contrary we find that in 1744 Mr. Henry Baker gave one acre of land and the timber to build a chapel on the Knotty Pine Swamp and he was given the privilege to build a pew in any part of the church he pleased.⁴² These churches may have been the same, or perhaps there were two chapels near Gatesville.

Besides these records we find that there were several other chapels in the county before the Revolutionary War. In 1744 it was ordered that the old chapel near Sandy Pine* be sold and a new one built at Tottering Bridge and that Thomas Hunter and Richard Bond attend to the matter. The old chapel was sold for \$95. Again there was a chapel in the county known as Farlee's Chapel; this chapel was doubtless somewhere near Sunbury (possibly at the Folley) for we find that Mr. Abraham Norfleet, who lived at Sunbury, was lay reader at the chapel in 1754.⁴³

These churches no doubt were well supported by the people as is shown by the rapid increase in number and by the constant repairing and enlargement. In 1757 Mr. Elisha Hunter was appointed to repair and tar the three chapels, Constance's (at Sunbury), Farlee's and Knotty Pine, and cause glass win-

* This was probably Sandy Cross for we find that there was a chapel here and Joseph Reddick was one of the leaders.

dows and sashes to be fixed in each. The church wardens were ordered to provide for the three chapels three quart-tankards, three pewter pint cups or cans, three table cloths and three napkins. Thus it is certain that these churches had good attention and the men who served them were of a high type. Mr. Gordon, who came over from England as a missionary, was especially commended for his clean life. The same rector that served the people in Edenton generally preached at Farlee's, Constance's and Knotty Pine. "In 1747 Rev. Clement Hall was ordered to preach at Constance's Chapel from Lady Day to Michaelmas and on ye Saturday at ye house of Mr. James Farlee."⁴⁴ Again in 1754 Rev. Mr. Hall, the first man in North Carolina to write a book, officiated twenty-one Sundays at Farlee's, Sarum (Indian Town), and Constance's, and the remainder of the time at Edenton. These records all go to show that the religious condition of the country where Gates County is now situated was good before the Revolution. The church wardens that had charge of the church were not only officers of the church but they were primarily civil officers. These churches were attended by the most wealthy men in the section. Josiah Granberry, Timothy Walton, Richard Bond, Jethro Benton, Luke Sumner, and Elisha Hunter were all leaders in the church at Sunbury.⁴⁴ It is certain that some of the men named above were most active in the movement for independence. The Sumner named above was of the same family as General Jethro Sumner, the Revolutionary hero; and Luke Sumner was himself a member of the Committee of Safety of the Edenton district.

For over thirty years after 1775 there is no record of a church in the proper sense existing in the county. There were societies, it is true, and there were some few persons who met for religious purposes but there was no church with a building and a preacher until the establishment of the Middle Swamp Baptist Church in 1806. The absence of churches immediately after the Revolutionary War does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in spiritual things. It is true that religious enthusiasm did not run as high during this period as it did for several years after the great revivals that took place from 1800 to 1830; however there was some interest as is shown by

the continual visits of such men as Asbury and Burkett. The aid that the English societies had given to the Established Church was withdrawn and it threw the religious steering gear out of place. The people were at a loss as to how to proceed; the entire church policy had always been shaped by the royal government. Doubtless the people accepted religion more as a social policy than as a means to salvation. However people were not enough interested in religious questions to erect churches and ask for ministers. Those who attended services at all went to the churches on the border of the Virginia-Carolina line. There was a church at Summerton, a church at Cypress, and probably other churches for those who were disposed to attend. No doubt these churches along the line hindered religious progress in the county. Those who were wealthy and able to erect churches went to these border churches and were somewhat slow in aiding churches in their immediate vicinity.

When churches were finally established in the county, it is a notable fact that they were almost invariably erected where the old established churches of the pre-Revolutionary period had stood, and in several instances the old buildings were used.

THE BAPTISTS

The first church to be established in the county after the Revolution was the Middle Swamp Baptist Church. This church was one of the eighteen churches that went to make up the Chowan Association which was formed in 1806. Most of the churches that constituted the new association had been members of the Kehukee Association. These churches withdrew from the old association when the general division of the Baptist Church over the question of paid clergy and education came up. There is no record of Middle Swamp ever being a member of the Kehukee Association and in all probability it was formed about the same time these other churches withdrew and formed the Chowan Association. This first church cast its lot as favoring education by the church and in favor of paying its clergy. The other churches of the county that were organized at later dates were influenced by this church and they, too, went with the Missionary Baptists.⁴⁵

In 1776 the Western Branch Baptist Church was constituted in Nansemond County, Virginia, and five years later the Ballard Bridge Church in Chowan County, North Carolina, was organized. These two churches were close together for churches in those days and they were often served by the same minister. In going from one of the churches to the other the road lay through Gates County and by the place where the present Middle Swamp Baptist Church stands. The ministers in going from one church to another, especially Lemuel Burkett, often spent the night and held prayer-meetings in the neighborhood of the present church. These prayer-meetings were held in the homes of James Pruden, Micajah Riddick, Mrs. Granberry, Lewis Walters, and Abram Morgan, and it was out of these little meetings that the first Baptist Church in the county sprang.⁴⁶

The first building was a log house built across the road from the present church. It was from all descriptions an unimposing structure with mud between the logs to keep the wind away. Soon this became inadequate to accommodate the growing congregation and a frame building was erected on the same side of the road on which the present building stands. Later this was torn away and another larger and more imposing building was erected, mainly through the activity of Mr. Willie Riddick. In 1874 a fourth structure, and a few years ago the present and fifth building, were erected. Such has been the growth of this church founded by those old preachers of another century. It is said that one of the new churches was to have a stove, something novel, as the old custom had been to have no fire in the church. Many of the old people objected to this worldly feature. They did not think a church was the proper place for a stove and for a time it brought on a feeling that threatened to destroy the brotherly sentiment in the church. It was only by wise leadership and cautious movements that the congregation was kept together.⁴⁷

All of these early churches had negro as well as white members. After the Civil War the Middle Swamp Colored Baptist Church was organized and the colored members went to that church.

There were no more Baptist churches in the county until

the organization of Piney Grove Church at Reynoldson in 1827. Why a church was located at this place, it is hard to determine. There is no record of any Baptist families being especially active in this locality and it does not offer a very imposing place for a church. However the church seemed to thrive and was always in good standing. This church was founded by John Harrell, an elder in the Middle Swamp Church, with the assistance of Elders Delke, Daniels, and Rice. Then there was Cool Springs (below Gatesville) and Sandy Cross churches organized in 1828. The church at Sandy Cross was strong in its membership in the early days. It was located in the midst of a Democratic stronghold and Joseph Riddick and Whit Stallings were both members of the church. The services were first conducted in the old Episcopal chapel located in the community and later a new church was erected. Elder Q. H. Trotman, a native of Perquimans County and a member of the board of trustees of Wake Forest College, was the most influential man in the church for many years. He was very popular and it is told that the section offered to give him strong support if he would run for Congress, but he declined on account of his ministerial duties. He was pastor of this church for twenty-eight years.⁴⁸

What Nathaniel Pruden was to Middle Swamp and John Harrell to Piney Grove, Shadrach W. Worrell was to the Gatesville Church. He moved to Gatesville about 1837 and was chiefly instrumental in organizing a Baptist Church and building a house of worship in that place. The church was constituted in 1854 and admitted into the Chowan Association in 1855. While in Gatesville, Worrell also served as pastor of Cool Springs and Middle Swamp churches. After the war he went to Baltimore where he was unsuccessful as a commission merchant, editor and broker. The last days of his life were spent in poverty.⁴⁹

In addition to these five churches there was a congregation at Watery Swamp, admitted into the Chowan Baptist Association in 1851. This church, from all evidences did not prosper, for we find that it made no report to the Association after 1857 and was consequently dropped.

These Baptist churches have been instruments for good

in the county. Always aggressive, they have contributed much to the Baptist Association. They have sent out fully fifteen ministers and many of the members have been patrons of Wake Forest College. Through their efforts at Reynoldson they gave the people the best school in the county and made it possible for many of the present citizens to secure an education.

THE METHODISTS

The first record of a Methodist sermon being preached in Gates County is recorded in Asbury's Journal, Saturday, December 17, 1785. Asbury records that he preached at Brother Reddick's in Gates County, North Carolina. Evidently Asbury had been in the county before, for he speaks familiarly of the people. He also records having preached at Cypress Chapel several times before this record of his preaching at "Brother Reddick's." It was at Cypress Chapel that he met for the first time James O'Kelly who later withdrew from the Methodist and formed the Christian Church.

Asbury was in the county again in 1787 and preached at Knotty Pine, an old Episcopal chapel built near Sarum during the colonial period. He preached here Sunday, February 11, 1787, and reports that he had a large congregation and an "open time." Although this is the first account in the journal of his being at Knotty Pine it is probable that he had been there before, for he speaks of there being "quite a little revival."⁵⁰

It will be needless to give an account of all the visits of Asbury to the county. His first visit was in 1785 and the last one is recorded in 1810. During this time he came to the county no less than thirteen times to preach. Doubtless he made other visits that are not recorded in his journal, which became rather sparing in the later years of his ministerial work. The preaching was done in the old Episcopal chapels or in the house of some friend. He visited the home of one Mr. Baker, who lived below Gatesville, on nearly all of his trips. This Mr. Baker was probably the son of Lawrence Baker, a wealthy citizen of the colonial period. Asbury indicates that the Baker's were people of some means, for he once notes that they had just built a new house and again he arrived just as their son, Marmaduke, who was to have "gone this day to

finish his education at Princeton," died. This man is also referred to once as Colonel Baker.

During the first visits Asbury made it a point to preach at Knotty Pine but after 1801 he preached at Gates Court House instead. Baker lived near Kotty Pine but even after Asbury stopped his ministry there he never failed to visit the Bakers on his trips through the county. When he went to Gatesville (or Gates Court House as it was then called), he often stopped at Daniel Southall's and sometimes preached at his house; sometimes he preached at the Court House that stood on the lot in front of the present court house. On Thursday, March 10, 1803, he ordained B. Harrall to the deacon's office. "He is a man of good repute, without slaves."

Asbury visited Sunbury at least twice and preached in Constance's Chapel or the house of Isaac Hunter, his journal does not make it definite which. Monday, March 11, 1799, he says: "We rode to Constant's chapel, on one of the branches of Bennett's Creek. . . . I was made very comfortable in in soul and body at Isaac Hunter's; and had a happy meeting with the poor Africans at night." Asbury's efforts must not have been of much avail at Sunbury for two years later he says: "We went forward to Isaac Hunter's, twelve miles. Alas for this place! Five souls of the white—some poor Africans are seeking the Lord."

Asbury was the man who planted Methodism in Gates County. He came and labored among the people; he was in the county at least thirteen times and probably more, during his labors. The conditions were not always encouraging to him; sometimes he says the people are wicked and would not listen to him and declares he will never come to them again. At other times he finds that they give him a warm welcome and come out in great numbers to hear him preach. The first Methodist Church in the county was erected in 1812 and we have no record of Asbury being in the county after 1810. However he may have preached in this church for he was certainly in Norfolk and Suffolk several times after 1812.*

* Asbury's Journals contain the following references to being in the county:
Jan. 1, 1783, (Vol. I, p. 455);
Saturday, December 17, 1785, preached at "Brother Riddick's" (Vol. I, p. 503);

During these visits of Asbury no churches were built and no regular organization was perfected. However Methodism was being established. At the various places where the Bishop preached societies were organized and services were held. There is no specific reference to any of these organizations in Asbury's Journal, but reliable tradition says that as early as 1800 there was a society in the neighborhood of what is now Parker's Church, and that the society met at the home of Thomas Parker. Tradition also has it that Asbury preached at this home. Again we find that Mrs. Baker, who lived near Knotty Pine and of whom Asbury spoke so often during his visits to the county, wrote to Asbury concerning the condition of the Society in her neighborhood. It is from such societies as these that Methodist churches in Gates County sprang. In all of the early records of the churches we find that the first members were listed as becoming Methodist long before the churches were established in the community. On the roll of Kittrell's Church, Milly Williams's name heads the list and the year 1781 is given as the time when she became a Methodist, and the church was not organized until 1827. Sarah Harrell's name heads the list at Gatesville and the date of her becoming a Methodist is stated as 1801. These people no doubt were received into the societies organized by Asbury; when these societies became sufficiently strong, churches were built and a definite organization was made.⁵¹

The first Methodist church in the county was Savage's. This church dates back to 1811. The deed for the church property is dated November 21, 1812, and is made by John

Sunday, February 11, 1787, preached at Knotty Pine (Vol. II, p. 6);
Monday, February 28, 1788, preached at Knotty Pine (Vol. II, p. 25);
Tuesday, January 11, 1791, "Brother Baker's" (Vol. II, p. 105);
Friday, January 27, 1792, records being in Gates County (Vol. II, p. 14);
Friday and Saturday, December 2 and 3, records being in Gates and at the house of Colonel Baker (Vol. II, p. 323);
Friday to Monday, March 8-11, in Gates and at Knotty Pine, Gates Court-house and Constant's Chapel (Vol. II, p. 407);
Wednesday, March 18, 1801, at Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 15);
Friday, March 20, 1801, at Isaac Hunter's (Vol. III, p. 15);
Thursday, April 2, 1801, Knotty Pine (Vol. III, p. 18);
Thursday, March 10, 1803, Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 106);
Friday, March 9, 1804, at Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 148);
Tuesday, February 4, 1806, Knotty Pine (Vol. III, p. 215);
Thursday, February 6, 1806, Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 215);
Friday, January 19, 1810, Knotty Pine and Gates Court-house (Vol. III, p. 329);
Monday, January 22, 1810, records being in Gates County (Vol. III, p. 329).

Savage to Jonathan Williams, Jessie Savage, and John Oden, trustees.⁵² The old church stood about where the present structure is and the old building was repaired several times before the erection of the modern one in 1907. The society that built the first church supposedly grew out of a society organized and frequently visited by Asbury at one Deacon Hasletts, near Summerton.

The next church to be organized in the county was Parker's. This church grew out of a society that tradition says was organized and visited by Asbury (there is no record of it in his journals) at Wiggins X Roads. Later the society met at the home of Thomas Parker about one mile from the location of the present Parker's Church. Nothing definite is known of this society but it is evident that it was organized as early as 1800. In 1813 this same Thomas Parker gave the land on which the church was built. This church has had four buildings.*

The church at Sunbury (Philadelphia) and the one at Gatesville grew out of the old chapels that had been erected in the colonial days, just as the Baptist church at Sandy Cross grew out of an old chapel. When Asbury visited the county, he preached at these chapels. It was natural for the people to come to the same place to worship that they had come to as little children forty years back. We find that Isaac Hunter's name heads the list of Philadelphia. It is also noteworthy that one Isaac Hunter was very prominent in the old Constant's Chapel under the colonial rule. When at Constant's, in 1801, Asbury preached to the negroes and from the remarks in his journal he had more hope for these black souls than he did for the white people of the community.⁵³ During his visit in Gatesville in 1803, Asbury ordained one R. Harrell as a deacon and doubtless this man played a prominent part in the development of Methodism in that section of the county. The first church at Sunbury was erected sometime after 1815; the date of the appointment of trustees is thus dated but no record of a building or a deed can be obtained. The Gatesville church was built about 1828. Jesse Brown, Reuben Harrell and

* This is secured from local tradition and cannot be relied upon altogether. However with the aid of the church records beginning some years later and an occasional deed the facts are to be relied upon as stated fairly accurately.

Thomas Wright Hayes were its founders. Of these churches, as of the others, little is known.

Of the remaining four Methodist churches organized before 1860, still less is known. Kittrells was organized in 1827 through the efforts of George Kittrell, a local preacher. There was a quarrel in Savage Church and the dissenting element withdrew and formed Kittrells, two miles away. It was at this church that Henry Willey, the most prominent Whig of the county, held his membership. Allied with him were the Crosses, Williams, Parkers, and Kittrells.⁵⁴ It is evident from the names on the roll of those who went to make up this membership that the church was strong, not so much in number as in personnel. The people in this community were building a new church when the war came on and it was decided best to put off construction until after the cessation of hostilities. Then there is Zion's church which was built in 1820. The church grew out of protracted services that were held under an arbor not far from the location of the present church. The deed for the church property was made October 6, 1819, by Samuel Brown and his wife, Sarah Brown, to Timothy Walton, Jonathan Lassiter, Samuel Brown, John B. Walton, John Walton, Richard Bond and John Davis, trustees.⁵⁵

Fletcher's Chapel and Harrell's church were both organized before 1860. The date of Fletcher's is 1849 and the man most instrumental in its construction was Asa Hofter; nothing more is known of its early history.⁵⁶ As to Harrell's nothing is known. It is probable one of the oldest churches in the county, for Asbury was in close touch with the people in this section during his visits in the county.

Gates was first reported in the conference minutes in 1821. By this time the churches in the county were certainly as many as four and perhaps five. They were considered worthy of recognition and were placed on a charge with Edenton. The next year the circuit was reported with Edenton again and so on until 1825 when it was placed with Murfreesboro. In 1826 Gates became a separate circuit. The reports at this time show that there were 484 white members and 74 black. During these early days the county was in the Norfolk District and

Gates was given a preacher every year except 1830-1, when the county is united with Bertie. In 1828 there were 661 white members and 88 colored. In 1832 there were 703 whites and 200 colored but the next year the colored members fell off to 90. In 1835 there were 790 whites and 100 colored members; in 1839, 758 whites and 95 colored. During these early days Isaac Soule, James Morrison, Irvin Atkinson, Vernon Eskridge, T. Jones, George W. Nolley, A. Norman, James P. Oliver and Isaac M. Arnold all served the people as preachers. However, much of the preaching before the 'forties was done by the local preachers and often the conference makes mention of these local ministers. In fact there are several instances where the conference appointments make special mention of local preachers who are to assist the regular preachers in the work in Gates.⁵⁷

As has already been said these early churches, like the Baptist churches of the same period, had negro as well as white members. There was a gallery built in the rear of the church where the negroes were placed. They would come up and commune after the white people had partaken. The presence of the negro in the churches in the county may be traced to Asbury with a reasonable degree of certainty; while in the county, he preached to them and seemed to delight in having them progress in the faith.* When the white people had their great camp meetings that lasted for two or three weeks, and there were at least two camp grounds in the county, one near Gatesville and one near Sunbury, the negroes would come, too, and have their meetings. An old negro preacher and slave, Jerry Harrell, was often a leader of the negroes of the Methodist faith when they came to the camp ground meeting.⁵⁸ In 1841 Philadelphia Church, Sunbury, had forty-one members of the negro race on its roll. After the war many of these negroes left the white churches and formed a negro church, but some of them stayed with their white friends even to their death.⁵⁹ Joe Hunter, an old colored preacher, did not leave the church at Sunbury after the war but continued to attend and hold his place in the gallery. Every time the whites would

* See account at Constant's Chapel in Vol. III, page 15, of Asbury's Journals.

commune, he would be there and wait until they all were through and then come down to be served.

Another thing that is very noticeable in going through the old church records is the frequency with which members were dismissed for misconduct. Every time a page is turned you will see some name scratched through and the word "dismissed" written beside it.

If we may be guided by the custom in vogue after the war, each of the eight Methodist churches in the county had preaching once each month. This meant that the preacher had to preach twice every Sunday. Sometimes services would be held on a week day, for there were more than eight churches in the Gates Circuit. It must be remembered that Gates was in the Virginia Conference and the church at Summerton and probably other churches in Virginia were connected with the Gates Circuit.⁶⁰

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

One would expect to find the Christian Church strong in the county, for it was in this section that James O'Kelly began his work. O'Kelly was presiding elder of the district in which Gates County is located when he made his break with Methodism. At Cypress Chapel, Virginia, not far from the Gates boundary line, the Christian church had its beginning.⁶¹ However, there was only one Christian church in the county prior to the Civil War. This church was the one at Sunbury. The date of its organization is not known but it was sometime about 1830. The story is told that the church was an offspring of Philadelphia, the Methodist church in the community. The separation was due not so much to a matter of doctrine as to a spirit of personal revenge. It is said that two men, brothers, had a dispute over a ladder. They were both members of the Philadelphia church and the little quarrel found its way into church affairs. The result was the organization of a new church, Damascus. Several families in the community divided, some going to the new and some staying with the old church. Nothing can be learned of the early history of this church. George Costen was the man of the early days who really contributed most to its growth.⁶²

From this survey of the churches we find that there were thirteen churches in the county before 1860. There were four Baptist churches with a total seating capacity of eighteen hundred, and property valued at \$2,200. There were eight Methodist churches with a seating capacity of thirty-three hundred and fifty, and property valued at \$4,100. There was one Christian Church with accommodation for four hundred and property valued at \$400. All of the old chapels of the Established Church of the colonial period had sunk into oblivion.⁶³

POLITICS

The geographical conditions in Gates County did much towards shaping political issues. The county was isolated and interest in state and national politics never ran as high as it did in some of the neighboring counties. When issues did arise, they were dominated mostly by exotic influences.

As a whole the county was about evenly divided in local issues. The people in the eastern part of the county, especially in the southeast, had more difficulty in marketing their products than those in the western part. The eastern section, especially in Mintonville Township, was more isolated than the other sections. Markets were far away and the roads were across sand ridges and swamps. Here a more democratic spirit developed. Mintonville was always the stronghold of the Democrats; in every election for state and national officers from 1840 to 1860 Mintonville polled a strong, and in several instances, an unanimous vote for the Democratic ticket. In the other townships conditions were somewhat different. They seem to be about evenly divided and this tendency is noticed more and more as the crisis of 1860 approaches.⁶⁴ If the vote was a one-sided one, it was sure to be against the man who was being supported in Mintonville. A few election returns taken at random from the scanty files that have been preserved at the county court house at Gatesville illustrate this well. The first returns from all the townships that can be obtained are those for governor in 1842. John M. Morehead was the candidate on the Whig ticket, and Lewis D. Henry on the Democratic. The returns by townships are as follows:⁶⁵

	<i>Morehead</i>	<i>Henry</i>
Gatesville	112	103
Hall	27	88
Haslett's	50	25
Brick House	14	32
Folley	63	53
Hunter's Mill	22	8
Mintonville	25	114
Total.....	313	423

Again the election returns for governor in 1850 are suggestive; Reid ran on the Democratic ticket and Manly was the Whig candidate.⁶⁶

	<i>Reid</i>	<i>Manly</i>
Gatesville	82	112
Hall	55	69
Brick House	31	37
Haslett's	21	55
Folley	63	95
Hunter's Mill	No returns	No returns
Mintonville	111	33
Total.....	363	401

The peculiar vote of Mintonville holds out not only for governor but likewise for the election of state senator. In 1850, Mr. Henry Willey, a man prominent in the politics of the county, was the candidate on the Whig ticket, and Whitmel Stallings, also a man of importance in the county, was the Democratic nominee. Stallings was from Mintonville Township in the eastern part of the county and served in the state senate and the assembly for fifteen years. Willey was from Willeyton, in Haslett's Township, in the western section of the county. The returns were as follows:⁶⁷

	<i>Willey*</i>	<i>Stallings</i>
Gatesville	49	32
Haslett's	35	14
Hall	30	24

* This was Mr. Henry Willey. His brother, John Willey, was a member of the lower house in 1830, 1832, 1833, 1834, 1842. John Willey and Whitmel Stallings were opposing candidates for the lower house for several years. Stallings finally won consistently over Willey. In 1842 when Stallings gets in the Senate, Mr. Willey is again elected to the House. John Willey and Stallings were both Democrats.

Brick House	15	16
Folley	48	25
Mintonville	17	56
Total.....	194	167

Both of the foregoing candidates were from Gates County, but in the election for State Senator in 1856 neither of the candidates was from Gates. Dillard, the Democratic candidate, was from Chowan. Savage, the unsuccessful Whig candidate, was also from Chowan.⁶⁸ However, the same discord is disclosed in the county returns.⁶⁹

	<i>Savage</i>	<i>Dillard</i>
Gatesville	29	58
Hall	21	25
Haslett's	32	14
Brick House	12	24
Folley	28	58
Mintonville	77	16
Total.....	199	195

The election for the member of the House of Commons was held at the same time that election to the Senate was held and the returns correspond very closely. In 1850 Gatling was the Democratic candidate for the Lower House. Gatling was from Haslett's Township and a member of the Gatling family that has been prominent in county politics from the beginning of the county to the present day. Eure, the Whig candidate, was from Hall Township and one of the most wealthy men in the county. The returns were as follows:⁷⁰

	<i>Gatling</i>	<i>Eure</i>
Gatesville	70	130
Hall	22	105
Haslett's	25	49
Brick House	30	36
Folley	70	104
Mintonville	111	37
Total.....	328	461

The contest for the lower house in 1856 is very close to that of 1850, except in one instance: Gatesville Township was becoming more Democratic and this time cast most of its votes

for the Democratic candidate, Parker. Bond led the Whig ranks. The returns:⁷¹

	<i>Parker</i>	<i>Bond</i>
Gatesville	128	76
Hall	60	65
Haslett's	19	56
Brick House	56	25
Folley	70	104
Mintonville	142	24
Total.....	475	350

The change in the returns from Gatesville Township only denotes the general tendency of the county. The Whig Party had begun its decline.

Not only do the election returns for state officers show that one part of the county was lined up against the other part, but the returns for local officers also bear out this fact. Take for example the returns of the election for sheriff in 1856. Hill ran on the Democratic ticket and Lee was the Whig nominee.⁷²

	<i>Hill</i>	<i>Lee</i>
Gatesville	142	42
Hall	55	55
Haslett's	22	52
Brick House	33	48
Folley	80	93
Mintonville	147	16
Total.....	479	306

Again take a look at the returns in the Congressional elections. In 1847 Biggs of Martin County was the Democratic candidate for Congress in the district, and his Whig opponent was Outlaw of Bertie. These returns bear out the fact of Whig supremacy during the forties.

	<i>Biggs</i>	<i>Outlaw</i>
Gatesville	84	74
Hall	10	40
Brick House	24	20
Haslett's	10	40
Folley	76	85
Mintonville	17	62
Total.....	221	321

By 1851 the situation shows little change so far as national issues were concerned. The same men were again candidates and the returns from the townships in Gates showed little change. By the time the next congressional election came off there was a change. The Whigs began to lose out. The downfall came suddenly in 1855, when they failed to put out a ticket. With the overthrow of the Whigs the Americans, an independent party of the district, put out a candidate, R. T. Paine, of Chowan. Although Paine won the election, he was unable to carry Gates. Many of the old Whigs, rather than join the Americans, went with the Democrats.⁷³

	<i>Paine</i>	<i>Shaw</i>
Gatesville	93	118
Hall	40	52
Brick House	27	36
Haslett's	49	0
Folley	89	77
Mintonville	33	133
Total.....	331	416

It is evident from these returns that the Whigs and the Democrats were about evenly divided in the county until 1855, when the Whig party failed. After this time most of the voters went with the Democrats. In pointing out the close fight between Mintonville Township, which was the stronghold of the Democrats, and the other townships that were a little inclined to Whiggery, it will be well to mention how close the fight was in the early days. To carry the election, either side had to work hard. Each party would hold a convention, generally on the 4th of July, and the principal pastime was to abuse the other party.⁷⁴ The people did not stop their fight merely with the election for state and local officers, but carried it into the race for the president of the United States. In 1840 Harrison (Whig), received a majority of fifty votes over Van Buren (Democrat). In 1844 Clay (Whig) received a majority of twenty-seven over Polk (Democrat). In 1848 the Whig candidate, Taylor, received 379 votes, and Cass, Democrat, received 289. Scott (Whig) and Pierce (Democrat) tied for the county in 1852. Election returns for the

other years show that the race was always a warm one. The returns for the election of governor are very similar.⁷⁵

To sum up, these election returns indicate that politics in Gates was an uncertain thing. Nearly always a Whig went to the State Senate, but this is explained by the fact that Gates elected her senator with Chowan, Currituck, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Camden, and Hertford counties. All of these counties were inclined to Whiggery, and they outvoted the people of Gates even when Gates wanted a Democratic senator. In the House of Commons the county had first a Whig, then a Democrat. In the National elections most of the results favored the Democratic candidate, but it was not a landslide by any means; the same is true of the Congressional elections. As the Whig party declined, the tendency was for the two parties to unite, rather than for the Whigs to join in with the new American party. As 1860 approached there was greater unity on political questions. In 1856 the two townships that had the heaviest vote, and townships that always voted against each other, cast their lot together; in national and local elections both went Democratic. However the county was not to remain solid, for in the election of 1860 we find again a trace of the old sectionalism. By a vote of 161 to 131 the county voted for a Whig governor. And in this election, as in the former elections, Gatesville and Mintonville Townships voted against each other; Gatesville cast 87 votes for Ellis and 126 for Pool; Mintonville cast 132 votes for Ellis and 39 for Pool. The presidential vote was 353 for Bell, the Whig candidate, and 338 for Breckinridge, the Democrat.⁷⁶ This division was not due to any immediate national issue, but to a revival of old party lines, for the division is equally noticeable in the local elections. In Mintonville Township Ballard, Democrat, received 81 votes, while Eure received 127. In the election for sheriff Hunter received 61 votes in Mintonville, and Parker, 148. The reverse is true in Gatesville, where Hunter had 138, and Parker, 63. It is evident that this dissension in the county was deep-rooted. No doubt the fight in local, state, and national politics was carried on with much feeling. However, after the war, the county became united and it has been practically Democratic down to the present

day. Look how one-sided the vote for governor was in 1866! Worth received 96 votes and Dockery 4 (these 4 came from Mintonville). H. Willey had only 4 votes cast against him for the state senate, and Lee went to the lower house with the same record.⁷⁷

Although no returns can be obtained further back than 1842, the county was in all probability anti-Federalist in the early days, for Joseph Riddick, who was in the assembly for 35 years, voted with the anti-Federalists.* He never wanted to spend any money. The county was opposed to internal improvements and to the Literary Fund.^{78a}

Before attempting to pass any judgment as to the cause of political dissension in the county, it is well to show how these two sections stood on the matter of free suffrage. In August, 1857, the question of free suffrage in senatorial elections was submitted to the people, and the results in Gates fail to show an antagonism as strong as it was in the election of officers. Every township voted for the measure except Haslett's. There is no doubt that this result in Hasletts was brought about largely by the activity of Mr. Henry Willey, the Whig leader in the county, who lived in this section. Gatesville and Mintonville stand together for the free suffrage. Notice the difference in the vote from the townships on these questions and the vote when it is for the election of officers. The vote follows:^{78b}

	<i>Free Suffrage</i>	<i>Against</i>
Gatesville	123	20
Hall	49	29
Brick House	20	18
Haslett's	5	54
Folley	73	51
Mintionsville	108	6
Total.....	378	178

* Joseph Riddick was the leading man in the county from the close of the Revolutionary War to his death in 1839 or 1840. He was in the Assembly from 1781 to 1811 and again in 1815 and 1817. For nine years he was the speaker of the House, was a member of the convention at Hillsboro that debated the Constitution of the United States. During its sessions he made himself distinguished on account of his common sense. He bitterly opposed the ratification by the state of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions and their defeat is largely due to him. He was also a member of the convention of 1835 for a new constitution for the state. In 1798 Governor Johnston wrote to James Iredell, "There are some men of very good understanding in both houses. Riddick, from Gates, has more influence in the Senate; he seems generally disposed to do what is right, but will go about it in his own way."⁸² He made his trips to Raleigh in a stick-gig and never missed a session. At his old home is a grape-vine that he brought from Raleigh when he was a member of the Assembly.⁸³

It is seen that the county as a whole was strongly in favor of free suffrage; the democratic spirit prevailed. This vote on suffrage can no doubt be accounted for by the general conditions in the county. There were few schools and these were inadequate; the people were not large property-holders, yet all wanted to vote for the man who was to represent the county in the state Senate. There was no party change, however, in the next senatorial election; the Democrats were in power before the suffrage clause was voted upon. Mr. Willey was the man in the county to lead the movement against suffrage. He came from the community where there were the best schools. As will be noticed, the old Democratic stronghold, Mintonville, was strong for free suffrage.

In February, 1861, the question of calling a convention to consider secession was submitted to the people. The county was strong for the convention (vote: 377 to 141.⁷⁹) Only two townships voted against it, Hunter's Mill and Holly Grove.* In this vote on the convention we find Mintonville strong for the movement. The vote was 79 to 9.⁸¹

It is hard to give any definite reason for this division in the county on political issues. However, there are three explanations that are fairly plausible: first, when Gates County was created, that part taken from Perquimans went to make up Mintonville Township. That taken from Hertford and Chowan went to make up Gatesville Township. Later Chowan and Hertford were Whig counties, while in Perquimans the tendency was more towards the Democrats. The townships in the north were made up partly of one county and partly of another. Gatesville, made up from counties that became Whig, was Whig; Mintonville, made up from a county that became Democratic, was Democratic; and the other townships that had a mingling of each were never very solid. In colonial days there was rivalry between Perquimans and Chowan counties.

A more plausible reason, however, for this sectionalism in the county is to attribute it to the race of a few of the leading

* It is certain that the leading Whig in the county, Mr. Willey, was opposed to secession. Mr. Willey's opposition to the war cost him his seat in the State Senate for the next six years.⁸⁰ After the war he went with the Democrats and was sent to the Constitutional Conventions of 1865 and 1868, and to the State Senate several times.

men for office. We always find that the Whig leaders came from points surrounding Gatesville, while the Democratic leaders came from Mintonville Township. In the early days of the county the feeling was probably not as strong as it was after the development of parties in 1836. Joseph Riddick, from Mintonville Township, an anti-Federalist, represented the county in the House and Senate for 32 years. If the spirit had been as strong along party lines as it was in 1850, it is not probable that one man would have held office for this length of time. Other men held office, not for one or two years, but for a number of years. However, after 1840 no such conditions prevailed, there was a constant change in the personnel and in the party principles of the men elected to the various offices. John Willey, and later, his brother, Henry, came from Haslett's Township and made politics interesting. On the other hand, Whitmel Stallings, of Mintonville Township, was always ready to put up a good fight. Stallings was a Democrat and the leading man in his section of the county. Willey was a Whig and had an equal distinction in his section. It is very probable that it was these men who stirred up political questions and put them before the people. The people evidently did not see many newspapers, and politics, so far as the principles were concerned, appealed to them very little. Their only interest was a personal one, centering about Stallings and Willey. These men formed their ideas and appealed to the people for support. It is most likely that this sectionalism in the county was due to the political feeling that these men had formed in their respective localities. The spirit, once created in the community where people had nothing to do but talk politics during the winter months, did not easily die out. It took the Civil War and its hardships on all the people alike to make them see that they had a common interest and the best way to get things done was for all to stand together.

The question of internal improvements also played an important part in the division of the county. The people who lived in Mintonville Township had the democratic spirit of the pioneer. Internal improvements would not help them and they were opposed to paying taxes to help the other part of the county develop. The men who came from this section were

always opposed to internal improvements, and it was Stallings that made such a fight with Willey, of Haslett's Township, over this question. There were no waterways that could be opened to their advantage, and according to the true democratic spirit they were bitter opponents of spending money to develop trade routes.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The people of Gates County were an optimistic people and when it came to financial affairs they were care-free and loose. Content with their three meals a day, they never worried over the perplexing problems that were threatening the economic development of the country. They had their slaves; every man that was of any consequence held a few, none were large slave owners. The slaves did most of the work, and then they were not worked very hard. As has already been stated no man in the county was a magnet who controlled its finances. At only one time in the county did any one man list as many as one hundred slaves. In 1860 Mills Roberts, who lived in the Mintonville section, listed this number.

The people raised only those things that were used at home. It was not profitable to raise cotton, for it would have to be hauled to Norfolk in a cart that would carry only one bale each trip, and only so much cotton as could be consumed at home was raised. The people sometimes raised a little corn to sell, however it took most of the corn produced to feed the hogs that were necessary to afford meat for the slaves. A large crop of corn, peas, potatoes and hogs usually constituted the crop of the Gates farmers.⁹⁴

Some of the people who lived on the edge of swamps secured a little cash by sending their slaves in the swamp to make shingles. Most of the shingles were hard to market, and this trade was followed only to a small extent. Those around Holley Grove and Coropeake sent their products down the Washington Ditch to the Dismal Swamp Canal and thence to Norfolk, while those around Gatesville marketed their crops, what little was left to market, after the slaves had been provided for, by sending them down Bennett's Creek to the Chowan River.

The land around Gates was fairly productive and the problem of providing for some easy way to market the crops once raised early arose. Before the Revolution the advantage of accessible markets, that could be obtained if an inward water system was opened, presented itself to the people.

Washington when in this section investigating the probability of internal improvements, says that a swamp runs near Farley's plantation, this plantation being 16 miles from Suffolk, and he indicates that a system of water-ways opening this country would be very profitable.⁸⁴ The people did not forget these things and they labored for a long time to get such a system of canals; after their day the fight was taken up by their children. In 1790 the Dismal Swamp Canal was chartered, but such a move was not of benefit to the inhabitants of Gates. It was impossible for them to get their products in this waterway that would carry them down to Norfolk to market.

The next step was to get some kind of canal to the county that would make the Dismal Swamp Canal of benefit to the people of Gates. The leaders in the county saw the advantage that such an outlet would afford and they began to work for it. The first attempt to get a canal in the county came in 1829, when an act was passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina, entitled "an act to incorporate the Lake Drummond and Orapeake Canal Company." This act provided that the canal since it would be a great benefit to the entire section, should be constructed and those furnishing the capital, since they would run some risk, be allowed to charge one-half the toll charged by the Dismal Swamp Canal Company. The capital was to be \$50,000 and the books for subscribers to stock were to be opened in Norfolk, Deep Creek and in Gates County on the first of April, 1830. In case one-third of the capital was subscribed by the second Monday in the following July the work of securing subscribers may continue until one-half the stock was subscribed and then the construction could begin. Tillery W. Carr, John C. Gordon, and John D. Baker were designated as the ones to receive subscriptions in Gates County. There was to be a president and three directors elected every three years who were to manage the

canal. The canal was to run from Lake Drummond to the south side of the Orapeake Swamp and was to be sixteen feet wide and five feet deep. The work must begin within two years and be completed in ten years. The canal company was chartered for forty years.⁸⁵

As to what steps were taken to get stock subscribed and as to the willingness of the people to back the project, it is hard to determine. It is evident that there were a few of the larger planters who had plantations situated near the proposed canal who were anxious to see the project materialize; but it is equally true that there were some in the county who fought the plan. The act chartering the canal was passed while W. W. Cooper represented the county in the senate and W. W. Stedman and Risup Rawles were the members representing the county in the lower house.⁸⁶ At least two of these men, Cooper and Rawles, were from near Gatesville, and from all account they took no special interest in the project one way or another. The people in one section of the county wanted the canal, and it did not matter materially to the people in the other sections. They had a roundabout way out of the county by the Chowan River and such a canal would not effect their interest.

However the next year there was a change in the lower house and a man came in who was always an ardent Democrat and therefore always opposed to anything that looked like internal improvements. Whitmel Stallings, of Mintonville Township, made his début in the political history of the county. Associated with him was John Willey, another Democrat and the brother of Henry Willey who later became the leader of the Whigs of Gates County. The question of the canal took on a political aspect and was made a party issue for several elections in the county. Stallings and the Democrats in Mintonville Township fought the canal because they were Democrats and as such were opposed to internal improvements; and again if the canal was constructed it would still leave their section without any available markets. If the lands in Holley Grove Township were opened, it would make the land in Mintonville have a comparatively smaller value.⁸⁷

The first check to the canal was made when the session

of 1830-31 met. During this session an act was passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina, entitled, "an act to amend an act, passed at the last session of the General Assembly of this state, entitled an act to incorporate the Lake Drummond and Orapeake Canal Company." This act provided that the said company should be compelled to extend their canal from the Orapeake Swamp to the Bennett's Creek or the act would be null and void.⁸⁸ This was probably a frame-up of the member from Mintonville and the members from around Gatesville. The company would in all probability not care to cut a canal over this high hand, and if they did, the people in Gatesville would also be benefited. The charter was extended to seventy instead of forty years.

The next session of the General Assembly passed another act that virtually nullified all that the act passed in 1830 had accomplished. The former charter was to be amended; the canal must go to Bennett's Creek; and was to be increased \$50,000, making a total of \$100,000; the right to construct a canal from Orapeake Swamp to Bennett's Creek, in order to be retained, must be begun in two and finished in ten years after the completion of the Orapeake Canal.⁸⁹

It is hard to say exactly what all of these laws meant, only one thing is certain and that is that Whitmel Stallings was at this time fighting the canal with all of his power. However, the people were determined to have a canal and they were equally strong in their opposition to Stallings. It is noticeable that at this time Holley Grove Township is inclined to go Whig. Even as late as 1850, Mr. Willey, the Whig candidate for the State Senate, polled 48 votes to Stallings' 25.⁹⁰ From all probability little was done to construct the canal. The reasons cannot be obtained. The matter must have been dropped for the time being, but we find another act passed by the General Assembly in its session of 1844-5.

"An act to revive and continue in force an act passed at General Assembly of 1831-32, etc." This provided that the work on the canal must be finished in ten years or the charter forfeited. In all probability new men had taken hold of the affair for we find that this act names Jesse Wiggins, Samuel R. Harrell, J. R. Lassater, Andrew Voight, Isaac S. Har-

rell, Dr. John Gatling and Burrell Brother to open the books in Gates County. As soon as \$25,000 of the capital is subscribed the stockholders are to meet and elect officers and proceed with plans.⁹¹ The plans of these men like the plans of those planters of 1829-30 seems to have fallen by the wayside. The capital was not raised and everything must have been dropped for we hear nothing more of the canal.

However in the early fifties a few men of the neighborhood got together and decided to cut a large ditch that would put them in touch with Norfolk. A ditch about twelve feet wide was cut from a point they called Hamburg, within one-half mile of Holley Grove, to the Washington Ditch and this ditch in turn ran into Lake Drummond and from there boats could go down the Dismal Swamp Canal to Norfolk. Col. Robert R. Hill, Samuel Harrell and Timothy Lassiter were the most active in getting this work done. This was the outcome of the twenty-odd years of strife in the county for a canal.⁹²

The people did not get the kind of a canal they wanted and the one that they did get came too late to save the economic condition of the county. There were several other canals proposed to come to the county and two were actually chartered, one was the Gates County Canal Company, referred to in Laws of 1830-1, Chapter 109, page 95; where this canal proposed to go is not known. Another was a canal referred to in Laws of 1829-30 and chartered about 1827. This canal was to go from the woods in Camden County to the White Oak Spring Marsh in Gates County. From all the facts that can be obtained concerning this canal some work must have been done on it. Now if all of the canals proposed and talked about had been constructed Gates County would have had a financial history, but politics was too rampant and the good of the county was sacrificed to petty party strife.

While the people on one side of the county were trying to get a canal, the people on the other side were sending their goods down the Chowan river. We find that laws are passed prohibiting the felling of timber in Bennett's Creek from Norfleet's Mill, and imposing a fine of \$10 for every offense. A similar law was passed concerning Catherine Creek.

These small creeks were not sufficient to stimulate the people of the county to any great activities, and they were never as prosperous as they would have been if they had secured a canal system that would have made nearby markets easy to reach.

CONCLUSION

As was said in the beginning, this account of Gates County has not been written because of any great achievements that its citizens have accomplished. There have been no great men or great movements in Gates that have stirred State and Nation; it has been a mediocre county and its people have been a mediocre people. What these people in Gates did and thought and how they lived, is characteristic of most of the people of North Carolina before the Civil War. There were only a few James Iredells and Elisha Battles; most of the people fell in the same class with the people of Gates County, and the value of this paper, aside from its local interest, is that it gives an account of that average class.

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