

*HISTORY  
OF  
TYRRELL  
COUNTY*

*DAVID E.  
DAVIS*



*HISTORY OF*  
*TYRRELL COUNTY*

*by David E. Davis, M.A.*

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To My Sister •

ETHEL DAVIS ARMSTRONG

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## FOREWORD

For many years there has been a need for a concise and thorough history of Tyrrell County. Most of the material that has been published previously has been scanty, especially considering that this county was one of the original precincts of Albemarle.

There is a great need today for an understanding of local history among young people. It is hoped that this little book will help fulfill this need and make a contribution to historical research in northeastern North Carolina.

The author does not intend this to be a source book for genealogists or researchers. It has been written in informal style since it is planned for general use at the local level. For this reason footnotes and bibliographical references have been held to a minimum.

It is hoped that through reading this book the interested observer may become better informed about Tyrrell County's past, which to a great extent is the key to the future.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank the following persons for their assistance in bringing the research for this history to a successful close. Their help and advice have been sincerely appreciated: Mrs. Madge L. Van Horne, member of the faculty of Columbia High School; Mr. J. W. Jacocks of Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Mr. William Tarleton of the North Carolina State Archives at Raleigh; Miss Sara L. Taft, register of Deeds of Tyrrell County; Mrs. Eugenia R. Babylon, former director of the Pettigrew Regional Library; the late Mr. J. W. Alexander of Pasquotank County; Mrs. Blanche W. Cohoon, Tyrrell Representative for observance of the Tercenary of the King Charles Charter; the custodians of the Sergeant Mermorial Room of the Norfolk Public Library, Norfolk, Virginia; Mr. W. R. West of Columbia and Burlington, North Carolina; Mrs. Ruth Reynolds, Librarian of the Tyrrell County Public Library; Mr. W. J. White, Jr., member of the faculty of Columbia High School; Mr. Melvin Pledger, Clerk of the Superior Court of Tyrrell County; Mr. John W. Melson of Tyrrell County; Mr. T. W. Armstrong of Columbia, N. C.; and Miss Thadine Hopkins of Columbia, N. C.

DED

Columbia, N. C.

May 1, 1963



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword. . . . .	i
Acknowledgments . . . . .	ii
Table of Contents . . . . .	iii
Chapter One . . . . .	1
Chapter Two . . . . .	5
Chapter Three . . . . .	10
Chapter Four. . . . .	13
Chapter Five. . . . .	17
Chapter Six . . . . .	21
Chapter Seven . . . . .	27
Chapter Eight . . . . .	32
Chapter Nine. . . . .	38
Chapter Ten . . . . .	42
Chapter Eleven. . . . .	48
Chapter Twelve. . . . .	53
Chapter Thirteen. . . . .	60
Chapter Fourteen. . . . .	66
Chapter Fifteen . . . . .	71
Chapter Sixteen . . . . .	76
Chapter Seventeen . . . . .	80
Appendix . . . . .	87
Bibliography . . . . .	95

## CHAPTER ONE

Long before the first Englishman set foot on the rich soil of Scuppernong, staked a claim and erected his simple abode, the woods and river banks of what is now known as Tyrrell County were hunting grounds of the Secotas, a rugged and simple tribe of red men that occupied the peninsula between Albemarle and Pamlico sounds.

The Secotas were tall, straight and of a tawny color. Like all people of their race they made a living in the wilderness by hunting and fishing and raising small gardens. Their huts, which are commonly called wigwams, were made of bark and rushes.

Most of the Secotas lived in small villages. Two of their important villages in what is now Tyrrell County were Mecopen and Tramaskecoc. Located on the east bank of the Scuppernong River near Second Creek, Mecopen was probably the largest Secotan village west of Roanoke Island. Tramaskecoc, another village, was situated on the Alligator River near the point it turns north, probably in the vicinity of Grapevine Landing in present-day Gum Neck Township.

Little is known of the Secotas, especially those of ancient Tyrrell. Many large cooking kettles, arrowheads and other Indian relics were later discovered in the neighborhood of Fort Landing which is thought to have been a center of Indian life in early days.



The Secotas were never a strong or important tribe of Indians. They quickly began to decline, like all Albemarle Indian tribes, after the arrival of white people in eastern Carolina. Some of the Secotas probably migrated out of the region and united with related tribes. Most of the descendants of the tribe, however, are believed to have joined the Machapungas of present Hyde County. By 1701 only one small settlement of Machapungas remained and these settled with the Corees on the shores of Lake Mattamuskeet after the great Tuscarora Massacre in 1711. By 1743 there were only a few Indians remaining in Tyrrell County and in that year the Provencial Assembly passed a law prohibiting them from hunting on lands owned by the settlers.

The first white men to visit Tyrrell County were the English settlers on Roanoke Island about 1584. Phillip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, who led the colonizers to Roanoke Island for Sir Walter Raleigh, are believed to have explored the regions bordering Albemarle Sound. Legend related that the Mother Vineyard, an enormous Scuppernong grapevine growing today on Roanoke Island, was planted there by Amadas and Barlowe from roots they obtained from the banks of Scuppernong River.

John White, who later brought colonizers to Roanoke Island, made maps and pictures of the eastern part of what is now North Carolina. On one of his maps he described the

locations of the villages of Mecopen and Tramaskecoc. So it is evident that John White explored Scuppernong and Alligator rivers. His diary and pictures also give a vivid description of the way the Indians lived.

The Roanoke colony disappeared after Captain White returned to England for supplies. No one will ever know what became of this Lost Colony, though it is believed they went to live with the Croatan Indians on the outer banks. It was seventy years before white people again came to eastern Carolina.







A Secotan Warrior

## CHAPTER TWO

Because of the failure of Sir Walter Raleigh's colony on Roanoke Island, the English learned important lessons. The colonists must be willing to settle down to hard work in the new land and make friends with the Indians. They also learned that it took more money to start a colony than any one single man such as Walter Raleigh could afford to spend.

With the lessons in mind a number of London merchants formed a stock company, investing their money in starting colonies in the land of Virginia, as all the land in America was then called. This Company established a permanent colony in Virginia in 1607 at Jamestown. The colonists soon discovered Virginia's gold mine---tobacco. Smoking had become a fashionable fad in England since it had been brought there from Roanoke Island. More and more people came to Virginia to start tobacco plantations.

The colony in Virginia soon expanded southwards. It is not known the exact date of the first settlements of Englishmen in the Albemarle region. By 1660, however, settlers were living along the Chowan River. Within a few years settlements were scattered all over the region north of Albemarle Sound. Many settlers, who were dissatisfied with life in Virginia, migrated down into Carolina. In 1661 the first land grant in North Carolina was transacted by George Durant in what is today Perquimans County.



Very soon the growing settlements north of Albemarle Sound began to attract the attention of important people in London. Some noblemen saw an opportunity to make a princely profit from the settlers. In 1663 King Charles II was persuaded to grant or give eight of his friends the vast territory of Carolina, much of which was still unsettled. These eight noblemen were called the Lords Proprietors of Carolina and they became the sole owners and rulers of the small settlements north of Albemarle Sound.

These eight noblemen established for their colony a government and sent officers and governors from England to rule the settlers. They also had the colony divided into precincts or counties. The early counties of the colony were Chowan, Perquimans, Pasquotank and Currituck. The proprietors also allowed the settlers elect an Assembly to work with the governor and help make laws for the colony. These governors and agents of the Lords were often greedy, dishonest and stubborn and many were unable to get along with the Assembly. For many years they prevented progress in the infant colony.

What is now Tyrrell County, still a wild and unsettled wilderness, was part of the grant to Sir Ashley Cooper, an advisor to the King.

In the early days life was difficult in the Albemarle region. For many years the settlers remained north of the sound and rarely ventured across the waters to the South

Shore, as Tyrrell was then called. In 1680 Captain Thomas Miller and Colonel Joshua Tarkington of Edenton took an exploring expedition across the sound. They pressed up the Scuppernong River and viewed the surrounding region. In their report they described the South Shore as a "Heart's Delight".

Soon settlers were buying land and starting small farms along the Scuppernong River and Kendrick's Creek on the South Shore. Since the Lords Proprietors had already granted or rented much of the land north of the sound to settlers, the many colonists coming to Carolina in a steady flow from Virginia looked to the South Shore for land on which to start their small farms of tobacco and cotton. The exact date that the first settler came to the South Shore is not known, but Englishmen were living there by 1690.

At first settlements sprang up in the rich and fertile region around Kendrick's Creek. Legend relates that around 1700 a group of settlers crossed the sound and settled at the mouth of Alligator Creek. A simple wall of hewn logs was erected for protection from Indians or pirates. Their settlement became known as Fort Landing. For many years it was the only settlement along Alligator River.

The Scuppernong River attracted settlers because of the rich soil along its banks, good fishing and game-filled woods. By 1710 plantations had sprung up along this winding tributary.

Among the first families to establish themselves as



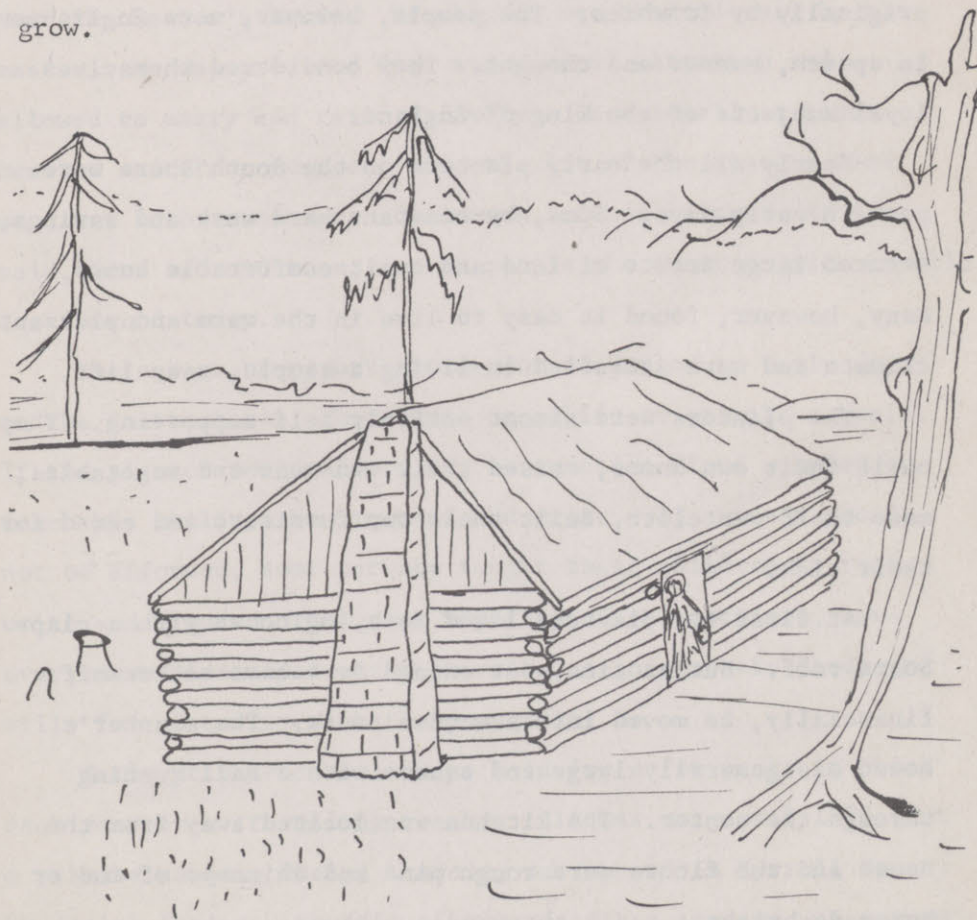
planters on the South Shore were the Lees, Blounts, Downings and Farleys around Kendrick's Creek; the Spruills, Holts and Batemans in what is now Scuppernong Township; the Hoskins and Chaplins around River Neck; the Hassells and Wimbles in the region around the present town of Columbia; the Fledgers, Davises, Howetts and McAllisters in the neighborhood of Fort Landing and Newfoundland; the Phelps, Davises, Tarkingtons, Batemans and Olivers around Southfork and Cherry; and the Armstrongs and Livermans at Cross Landing. Other planter families during the early days on the South Shore were the Alexanders, Cohoons, Davenport, Roughtons, Sawyers, Brick-houses and Etheridges.

As plantations were established along the South Shore Negro slavery soon appeared. Many settlers brought their Negroes to the region with them to clear the trees and break up the land. Most of the plantations grew from small beginnings however. In this wild territory land was plentiful but labor to tend it scarce. As a result many settlers purchased Negroes to work the fields.

The governors and agents of the Lords Proprietors were a constant source of trouble to the settlers. A farmer in these times paid quit-rents and taxes to the Lords and were really tenants. Many planters succeeded after many years of hard work in buying their lands from the Lords.

The land agents of the Lords were as a rule a dishonest

and deceiving lot. They sometimes sold the same tract of land twice and often attempted to harass and defraud the settlers at every opportunity. In the colonial records of Tyrrell there are more than one hundred deeds from Lord Granville alone. This nobleman's agents, it is said, often swindled and harassed the planters of their meager earnings. In spite of these problems, however, the colony continued to grow.



THE PLANTER'S FIRST HOME



## CHAPTER THREE

Most of the people who came to the South Shore in the 1700's came from the section north of the Albemarle Sound and from Virginia. The great majority were English and a few Scotch and Irish. Kilkenny, an early settlement along the southern banks of the Alligator River, was perhaps settled originally by Irishmen. The people, however, were Englishmen in speech, manner and thought. They considered themselves loyal subjects of the king of England.

Nearly all the early planters on the South Shore were poor in early days. Some, by constant hard work and savings, secured large tracts of land and built comfortable homes. Many, however, found it easy to live in the warm and pleasant climate and were satisfied in living a simple, easy life.

The planters were almost entirely self supporting. They built their own homes, raised their own meat and vegetables, made their own cloth, built their own furniture and cared for their sick.

At first the planters lived in a log house with a clap-board roof. But as time went on and he became better-off financially, he moved into a wooden house. The planter's house was generally large and square with a hall running through the center. The kitchen was located away from the house and the floors were rough pine and chimneys of mud or homemade bricks.

Planters on the South Shore were never large slave owners. Rarely even in later years did the planter own as many as ten. Josiah Collins, who later owned the immense Somerset Plantation near Lake Phelps, once owned more than three hundred, but this was a rare situation.

The Negro slave lived in a cabin called the quarters near the master's house. Usually he was treated well by his master. He was provided food and medical attention and allowed to marry and raise a family. Occasionally a hard-hearted master or overseer made the lot of the slave a hard one, but such cases were not common. Cruel masters, it is said, were scorned then just as people who treat animals cruelly are scorned today.

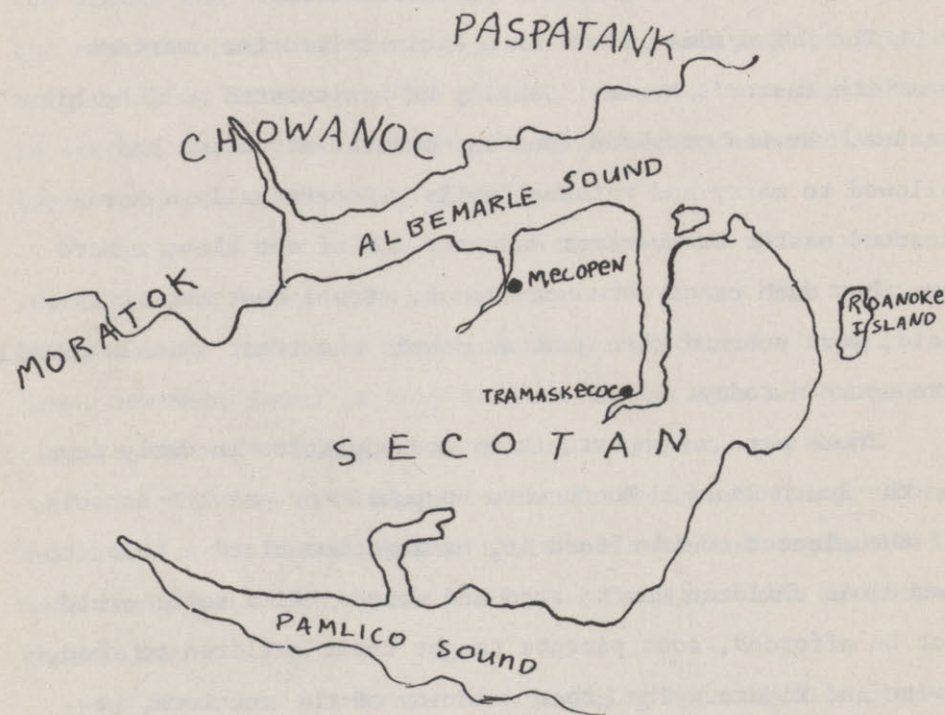
There were no opportunities for education in early days on the South Shore. There were no public or private schools. If the planter could afford it, he sometime hired a tutor to teach his children how to read and write. If a tutor could not be afforded, some parents taught their children to read, write and figure. The great majority of the settlers, however, never learned to read or write, signing their deeds and wills for posterity with the proverbial X.

Early private schools were held for a few weeks in homes each year by a travelling teacher. It was not until 1797 that a private school, Phelps Academy, was opened in Tyrrell County by Josiah Phelps. Shortly afterwards Fikes Academy was opened



at Alligator.

It may be said that the early settlers of the South Shore were self-sufficient, hard-working and close to the land. It remained that way for many generations.



TYRRELL COUNTY BEFORE  
THE ARRIVAL OF WHITE SETTLERS

#### CHAPTER FOUR

An old Indian trail ran from the mouth of Kendrick's Creek on the South Shore through the wilderness to the town of Bath on the Pamlico River. Along this trail a struggling line of rude homes went up and soon extended to the Pamlico. Many of these settlements were in an area claimed by the powerful Tuscarora Indians.

At this time the Tuscaroras were a powerful tribe, for they occupied all the territory between Roanoke River and the Neuse River. They were led by several kings or chiefs, two of the most important being John Hancock and Tom Blount. Hancock was warlike leader of the southern Tuscaroras and King Blount ruled those living in what was later Tyrrell and Bertie Counties.

For some years the Tuscaroras had been getting more and more sullen about losing their hunting grounds to the whites. In 1711 there was trouble in Albemarle between the settlers and their governor, and the Tuscaroras saw that this was an opportunity to strike at the settlements. Only one of their chiefs, Tom Blount, refused to join the great massacre. Blount had become attached to the Blount family of the South Shore and had taken their name.

In the uprising the Tuscaroras were joined by the Corees and Machapungas and the descendents of the Secotas. Many



Indians lived among the whites and helped them in their homes and on their farms. On the night before the appointed day the Indians were in hiding throughout the region south and west of Albemarle Sound. At sunrise on September 22, 1711, just as the unsuspecting planters were opening their doors, a horrible war whoop shattered the stillness. It is said that no one will ever know how many settlers were put to death in Carolina. For three days they slew, burned and plundered until they were too tired or too drunk to continue.

All during this great massacre Tom Blount's people remained silent and the small settlements along the South Shore were therefore spared. However, along the Alligator River and on the Croatan peninsula the massacre had spread. Governor Pollock wrote in 1713:

The Machapungas have done us great mischief, having killed and taken about 45 on Croatan and Alligator River. There were about fifty or sixty of them who got together between Machapunga River and Roanoke Island, which is about 100 miles in length with all manner of lakes, quagmires and swamps, and is, I believe, one of the greatest deserts in the world, where it is almost impossible for white men to follow them. They have boats and canoes and are expert watermen so they can transport themselves wherever they please.

Governor Pollock raised troops in Albemarle to put down the rebellion. He signed a treaty with Tom Blount, who agreed not to wage war against the whites. Troops from South Carolina helped the settlers defeat the Indians.

Following the war much of the settlement south of Albemarle Sound was again a wilderness. Fortunately for the South Shore, King Blount kept his promise. As a reward for this, Governor Pollock gave his people territory near Rainbow Banks on the Roanoke River near the place Williamston, N. C. is now located. Here Tom Blount moved his people and later they migrated out of Carolina to New York.

The defeated Machapungas of the South Shore were allowed to settle on the shores of Lake Mattamuskeet. They slowly dwindled away until by 1761 there were only about eight men remaining. Thus ended one of the saddest episodes in the early history of Carolina.

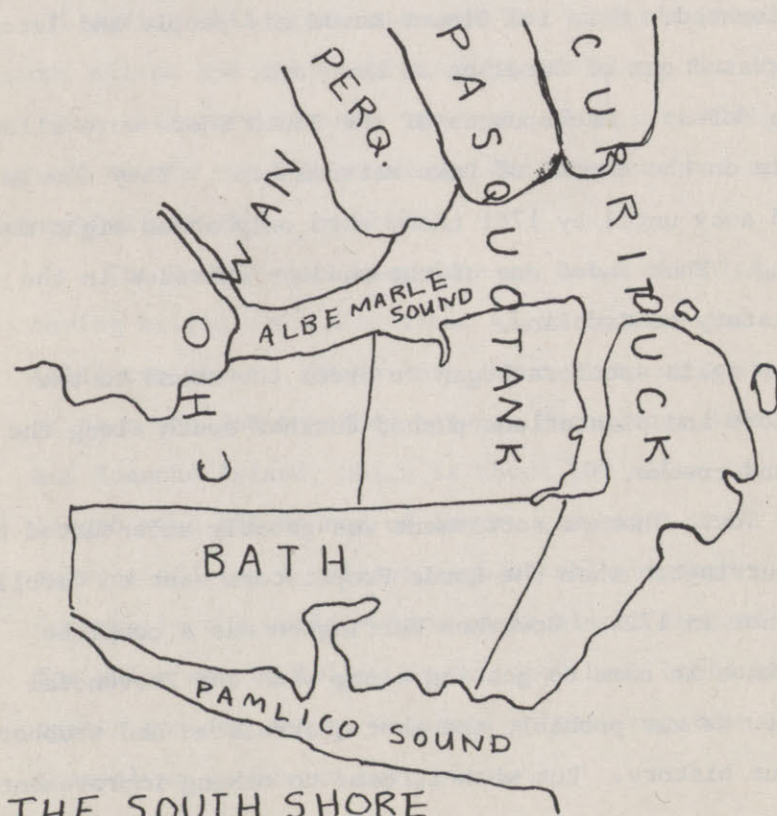
Once again settlers began to cross the sound to the South Shore and plantations pushed further south along the rivers and creeks.

The South Shore's settlement was greatly accentuated by George Burrington whom the Lords Proprietors sent to Carolina as governor in 1724. Governor Burrington was a complete failure when it came to getting along with the Provencial Assembly. He was probably the most quarrelsome and stubborn man in our history. But when it came to making improvements,



Burrington was an energetic, sensible leader. He laid out roads and had bridges built across rivers and swamps. Mackey's Ferry from Edenton to the mouth of Kendrick's Creek was started during his governorship and was the first water link between Albemarle and the South Shore.

More and more immigrants came to the South Shore during Burrington's time in office. Between 1724 and 1725 over a thousand families moved to the colony, many of these taking up homes on the South Shore.



THE SOUTH SHORE  
IN 1690

## CHAPTER FIVE

What was later Tyrrell County, it must be remembered, was part of the counties north of the Albemarle Sound in early days. For example, the Scuppernong area was part of Pasquotank County and the Kendrick's Creek area was part of Chowan County. The people of the South Shore were a long distance from their county seats. Many had to travel miles over water and bad roads to reach their county courts. They began to ask that the South Shore be created as a new county. However, the agents of the Lords Proprietors did nothing about their requests.

In England about this time a new king came to the throne, King George II. The growing colony of Carolina had become an important source of trade and commerce. In 1728 he asked the Lords Proprietors to sell the colony of Carolina to him. All of the Proprietors except Lord Granville consented. Carolina became a royal province and the rule of the Lords ended. The king gave Lord Granville his share of the colony in land, some of which, unfortunately, was on the South Shore.

In 1729, a year after North Carolina was restored to the crown, the General Assembly of the Province, meeting in Edenton, decided to establish all of the South Shore into a county, or precinct, as it was then called. The bill passed the Assembly on November 27, 1729 and was approved by Sir Richard Everard, the king's new governor. The law was



entitled: An Act to Appoint that Part of Albemarle County lying on the South Side of Albemarle Sound and Roanoke River, as high as Rainbow Banks, to be a Precinct, by the name of Tyrrell Precinct.

This act created a county out of the area which now includes Dare, Tyrrell, Washington and Martin counties. It was one hundred miles long and fifty miles wide. Tyrrell, the largest county in land area, was allowed two representatives at first in the Assembly which met at Edenton to help the king's governor make laws for the colony. The area was also created into a parish of the Church of England. All of Tyrrell County was to be known as Saint Andrew's Parish.

The Assembly that created Tyrrell Precinct also directed that a courthouse be built. The location chosen was on the east side of Kendrick's Creek near Farley's Bridge on the lands of William Farley or William Downing. As we will later see, it was many years before a courthouse was actually started.

At the time of its establishment Tyrrell had about 1,500 people, one-fourth of whom were Negro slaves. It was one of the smallest precincts in population, yet largest in size. Much of it was still unexplored, and Lake Scuppernong, which we call Lake Phelps today, had not even been discovered.

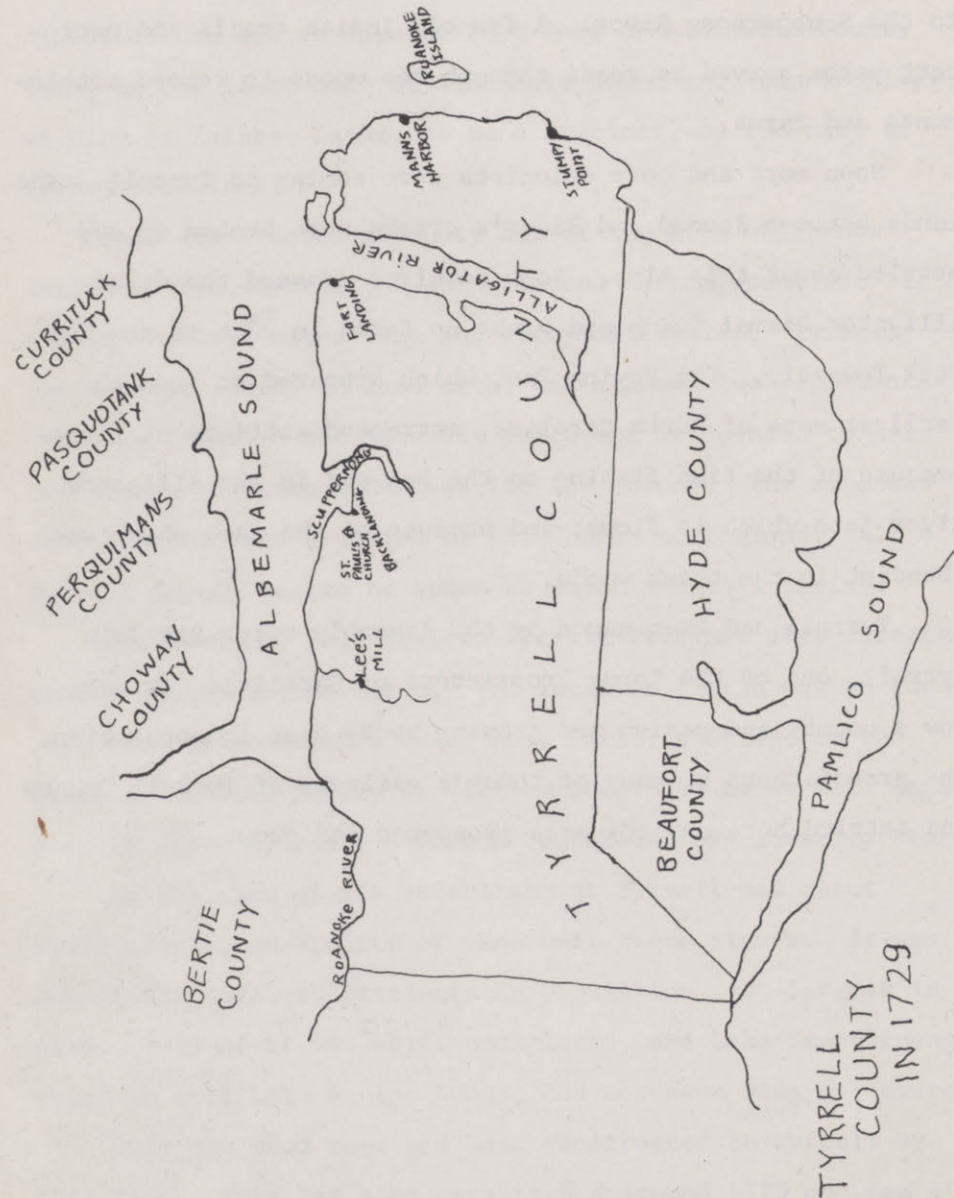
Only one good road had been constructed in Tyrrell by this time. This had been established around 1715 and ran along the general route of present highway 64 from Kendrick's Creek

to the Scuppernong River. A few old Indian trails and narrow cart paths served as roads through the woods to remote settlements and farms.

Soon more and more colonists were coming to Tyrrell. The lands between Second and Rider's creeks were broken up and settled about this time. Some settlers crossed the Great Alligator Dismal Swamp and broke up farms in what is now Gum Neck Township. The Frying Pan, which appeared on even the earliest maps of North Carolina, attracted settlers at first because of the fine fishing on the Pan and in the Alligator River into which it flows; and because of the game which was abundant in the thick woods.

Tyrrell had been named by the Assembly after Sir John Tyrrell, one of the Lords Proprietors of Carolina. It was now a county and parish and growing every year in population. The grandfathers of many of today's citizens of Tyrrell County had settled here and the area prospered and grew.





## CHAPTER SIX

On January 15, 1735, Captain William Downing and Stephen Lee took their seats in the Assembly of the Province at Edenton as the first representatives of Tyrrell County. Both men were prosperous planters around Kendrick's Creek. The Assemblymen, out of respect for Tyrrell's representatives, unanimously elected Captain Downing Speaker of the House.

The courthouse, however, was not built as quickly as had been expected. In fact, it was twenty years before the first county courthouse was started. The Inferior Court of county was held in private homes during these times. The most frequent place for holding court was on William Farley's plantation on Kendrick's Creek. The first Clerk of the Court was Francis Ward.

The first Register of Deeds of Tyrrell County who had the duty of recording the first deed in Tyrrell was James Craven. This deed was recorded in 1736 when Joseph Buncombe, a wealthy planter from the West Indies, bought 1,025 acres of land on Kendrick's Creek and built his house.

There were no towns in early Tyrrell County. The largest settlement was then at Lee's Mill on Kendrick's Creek, which is present-day Roper. This settlement had been started around 1700 when Captain Thomas Blount of Chowan County, a blacksmith, had settled on the eastern bank of Kendrick's Creek and in 1712



built the first mill in this section. His widow married Thomas Lee, and in time the mill and the settlement was called Lee's Mill. This mill was operated continuously until 1920. Lumber for many of the historic buildings of eastern North Carolina were sawed here. The village of Lee's Mill later became the first county seat of Tyrrell County.

In colonial days nearly all the settlers were of English descent and they supported the Church of England, which has the only legal and lawful church in North Carolina. As time went on, however, settlers of other religious beliefs came to Tyrrell County, among them the Kehukies or Primitive Baptists. However, there was probably not a minister of any denomination in the county for many years.

One of the earliest churches in North Carolina was built around 1710 in what is now Tyrrell County. This church was located on Spruill's Plantation at Backlanding on the west side of Scuppernong River, and is mentioned in records as early as 1720. This church, known as Saint Paul's Church, was often called Spruill's Chapel and was attended by the planter's around Backlanding and what is today Scuppernong Township.

On May 28, 1747 James Craven, the county register, entered in his record book a land grant signed by Joseph Spruill. Spruill ceded to the people of Tyrrell or Saint Andrew's Parish the church and its land:

NORTH CAROLINA. To all people to whom these presents

shall come greetings. I, Joseph Spruill of the County of Tyrrell and province aforesaid, send greetings, etc. Know ye that I the said Joseph Spruill of Saint Andrew's Parish in the County aforesaid for and in consideration of love, good will and affection which I have and do bear to ye Inhabitants of Scuppernong and of the parish and county aforesaid have given and granted and by these presents do purely, clearly and absolutely give and grant unto the Inhabitants aforesaid one acre of land where the Chapel now standeth known as Saint Paul's as aforesaid lying near Backlanding and on the main road and excepted by me in a deed of sale given to Hammon Henderson for the use which said acre of land I do freely give to the Said Inhabitants and their heirs for Ever and I the said Joseph Spruill Do warrant the same ground the claim of any of my heirs, executors, administrators as witnessed my hand and seal this 28th day of May, 1747.

Sealed and delivered in Presence of:

Joseph Spruill

James Craven  
Register



At Lee's Mill a parish or glebehouse was later erected and Saint Luke's Church was built here. The Chapel of Ahunt, on the Harding Jones plantation was mentioned in early records and was probably a Baptist Church, but its location in Tyrrell County is not known. Saint John's Church in Tyrrell was another early church, but it was not chartered until 1771.

Colonial records show that from September, 1729 to March, 1732, the land-holders of Tyrrell paid to the king's tax collectors 616 pounds, 11 shillings, 2½ pence. The collectors usually canvassed the county and collected the rents and taxes from the planters. Many times the people paid their taxes in beeswax, tobacco, pork, hides and rice, for money was scarce in the colony.

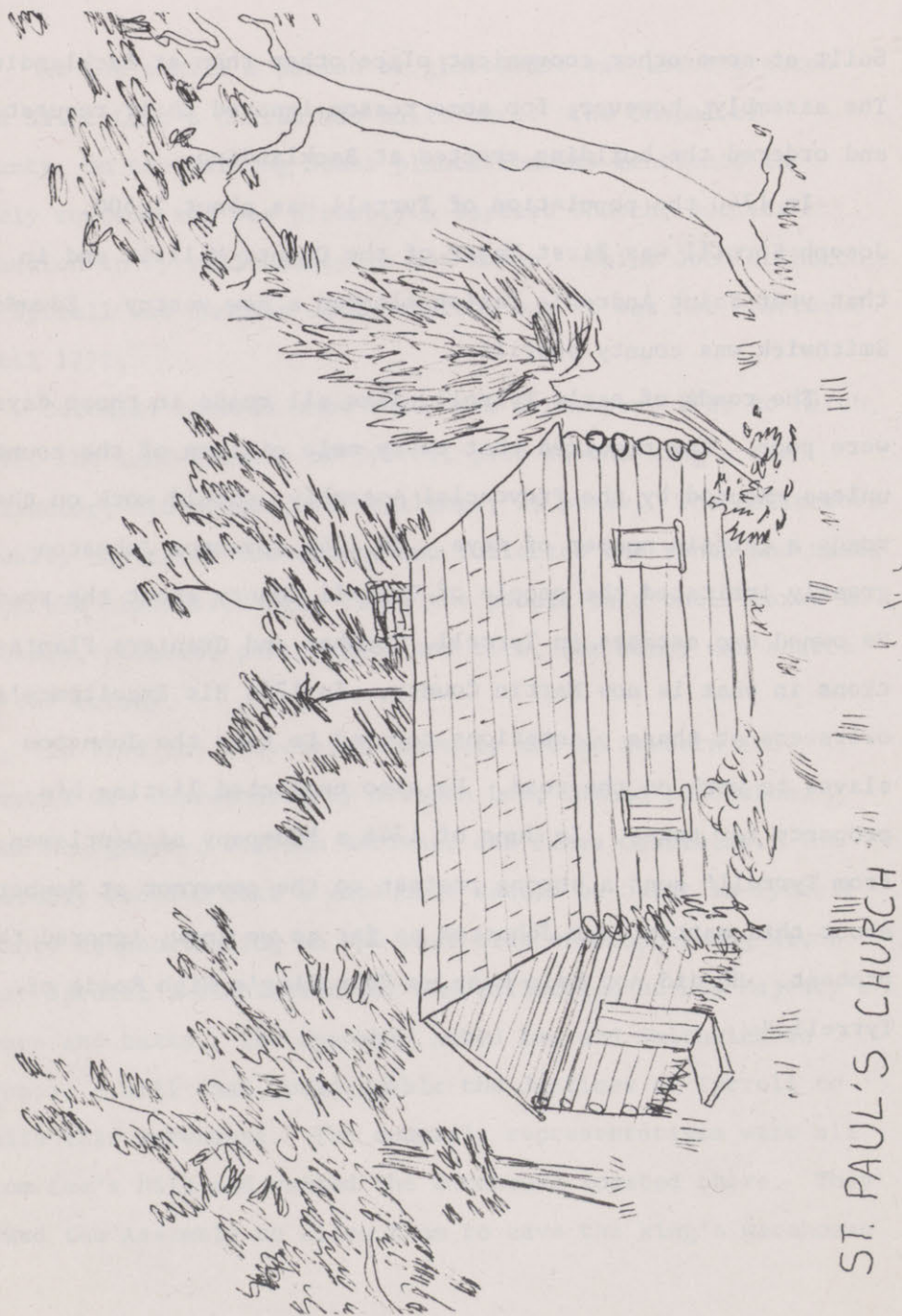
In 1740 the Provincial Assembly met at Newbern and Tyrrell was represented by Stephen Lee, Edmund Smithwick, John Montgomery, William Gardener and James Castlelaw. The assembly decided that a warehouse should be built in Tyrrell County at Backlanding on the west side of Scuppernong River near Spruill's Plantation for the collection of His Majesty's rents and taxes. The assembly asked Lee and Smithwick to propose a bill that would enable the Justices of Tyrrell to build this warehouse. The county's representatives were all from Lee's Mill and wanted the warehouse located there. They asked the Assembly to allow them to have the king's warehouse

built at some other convenient place other than at Backlanding. The assembly, however, for some reason ignored their request and ordered the building erected at Backlanding.

In 1740 the population of Tyrrell was about 2,500. Joseph Spruill was First Major of the County Militia and in that year Saint Andrew's Parish elected a new vestry. Edmund Smithwick was county sheriff.

The roads of early Tyrrell, like all roads in those days, were poor. Law required that every male citizen of the county, unless excused by the Provincial Assembly, should work on the roads a certain number of days. In 1746 Governor Johnston greatly irritated the people of Tyrrell County about the roads. He owned two estates in Tyrrell, Conahoe and Graniers Plantations in what is now Martin County. In 1746 His Excellency's overseers at these plantations refused to take the Johnston slaves to work on the road. He also neglected listing his property for taxes. In June of 1746 a "Company of Gentlemen from Tyrrell" sent a strong protest to the governor at Newbern about this matter, but Johnston as far as we know, ignored the protest. He did not help keep up "the King's High Roads of Tyrrell."





ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Governor Johnston was not a popular man in Albemarle. He wanted to make several changes that the older counties around the Albemarle Sound opposed. The Governor wanted to move the capital from Edenton to Newbern and he wanted to change the number of representatives these older counties had in the Provencial Assembly.

The old Albemarle counties each had five representatives, whereas the newer counties in the southern part of the colony had only two. The Albemarle counties, therefore, controlled the Assembly and Governor Johnston could not get his way.

The Governor, a clever man, found a way to trick the Albemarle counties. While the Assembly of 1746 was meeting at Edenton the Governor ordered it to adjourn and announced that it would meet again in November in Wilmington. He knew that because of flooded rivers and bad roads at that season that few of the Albemarle counties would be able to send representatives.

The representatives from Tyrrell and the other northern counties were furious over this action. James Craven, John Banburry, Stephen Lee, James Blount and William McKay were Tyrrell's five representatives at the assembly in Edenton in the Fall of 1746 and they took a large part in the reaction against the Governor whom they already disliked because of



his failure to help keep up the roads.

A signed statement by an observer at Edenton in 1747 was found in the colonial records that told of the attitude of Tyrrell's delegates:

George Johnson of Tyrrell County in the Province of North Carolina, bricklayer, maketh oath that he was in the Year of Our Lord 1746 in the month of October at Edenton before the meeting of the Assembly that stood adjourned to Wilmington on the Cape Feare in New Hanover County, and heard it talked and consulted between Mr. John Hodgson, Mr. James Craven, Mr. John Banburry, Mr. Stephen Lee, Mr. James Blount and Mr. William McKay, the last four being representatives of Tyrrell, not to go or attend at the said assembly to be held at Wilmington, and after having severally declared that they would not go, Mr. Hodgson said if we don't go nor any of the Northern members, by God there can't be a house and they must come back (to Edenton) again; meaning the Governor and such members of the other counties that should go to the assembly--and further this deponent saith not.

GEORGE JOHNSON

Just as the governor had expected, the northern members made no effort to attend the assembly. Only fourteen members were present when the assembly met in Wilmington. It was

custom that the assembly could not meet unless twenty-eight were present, but Governor Johnston declared that the fourteen made up a lawful assembly. Thereupon, laws were passed giving every county only two representatives, and changing the capital from Edenton to Newbern.

The Albemarle counties joined together and declared that the laws made by the assembly at Wilmington were illegal and they refused to obey them. For eight years Tyrrell and the other northern counties sent no members to the assembly. Moreover, the northern counties agreed that since they had no part in the government that they would pay no taxes. Governor Johnston found himself in serious trouble, since the southern counties also stopped paying taxes, claiming that they should not have to bear all the expenses of the colony.

During the first year of the nullification against the Governor, the people of Tyrrell decided that it was time that a courthouse be built. For twenty years the court had been meeting in private homes and the county records had been kept by the officers on their own plantations.

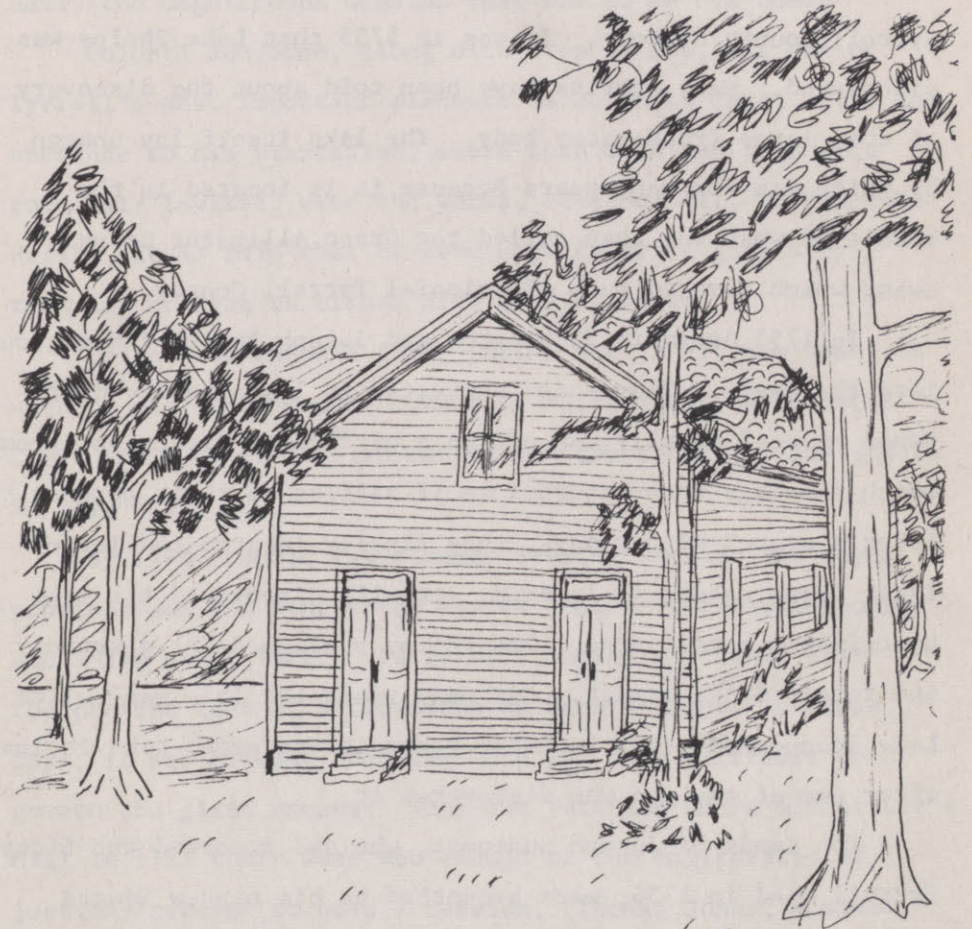
Stephen Lee, who was one of Tyrrell's most prominent colonial planters and who represented Tyrrell for many years in the Assembly, took a leading part in having the courthouse erected. On June 8, 1748, he gave land to the county on his plantation near Lee's Mill for a courthouse. The Justices of the County accepted the offer. The courthouse was started and



in 1751 the Inferior Court opened in the first Tyrrell County courthouse at Lee's Mill. Hence, after twenty years one of the oldest counties in North Carolina finally had a county seat.

When the king heard that Governor Johnston was having trouble in North Carolina, he asked the Board of Trades, which advised him on colonial matters, to investigate the trouble. In 1754 the Board advised the king that the Provencial Assembly was at fault. It had had no right to create new counties and give them representation.

The King agreed and on April 3, 1754, sent instructions to the governor that all counties that had been established by the Provencial Assembly without his permission were to be abolished. The king, therefore, ordered that Tyrrell and five other precincts be dissolved. This act was opposed in the colony, and within a year the king was forced to give in. In January, 1755, the crown sent word to Governor Dobbs, who had succeeded Johnston, that the assembly could pass laws that would reestablish these counties. Tyrrell and the other abolished counties were, therefore, reestablished in 1755.



TYRRELL COURTHOUSE  
AT LEE'S MILL-1749



## CHAPTER EIGHT

The year 1755 is an important and interesting one in Tyrrell County history. It was in 1755 that Lake Phelps was discovered. Many stories have been told about the discovery of this large fresh-water body. The lake itself lay unseen by white men for many years because it is located in the middle of what was then called the Great Alligator Dismal Swamp which covered much of colonial Tyrrell County.

In 1755 Benjamin Tarkington and Joseph Phelps led a group into the swamp. They were interested in learning why deer "when pursued usually ran off in a particular direction, from which the dogs soon returned as if baffled in their pursuit." After a search of two days, they finally located the large lake. Tarkington, it is said, actually discovered the lake by climbing a tall tree. But Phelps published the discovery and received the credit. For many years the lake was called Lake Scuppernong, but in later years it was named Lake Phelps after one of the men who discovered it.

The lands of Joseph Buncombe, who had recorded the first Tyrrell deed in 1736, were bequeathed to his nephew Edward Buncombe who lived in the West Indies. In 1766 he came to Tyrrell to inspect his Carolina lands and liked them so much that he decided to settle there. Before returning to the West Indies to get his family, Buncombe arranged with Stephen Lee

to have a large plantation house built on his land. Buncombe returned with his family to Tyrrell County in 1768 to Buncombe Hall, the magnificent mansion that was to be his home.

Colonel Buncombe, along with Stephen Lee, was one of Tyrrell's most important planters in colonial days. Over the entrance to his plantation, where both rich and poor were cordially invited, were the words, "Welcome All, To Buncombe Hall". It is said that he even kept favorite guests by removing bridges on either side of his estate.

Colonel Buncombe's first public act in his new home was when he was elected as a member of "His Majesty's Inferior Court for Tyrrell", which met at the courthouse at Lee's Mill in May, 1769.

By 1770 trouble was already brewing between the royal province and the king which was to lead to the Revolutionary War a few years later. In Tyrrell, which stretched from the present town of Williamston to Mann's Harbor in those days, it was already becoming more and more difficult to govern the giant county. When the Inferior Court met at Lee's Mill in 1771 there were not enough of the magistrates or justices present to hold a session. Thomas Jones, a member of the court, wrote Sir Nathaniel Dunkenfield, a member of the governor's council, describing the 1771 session of the Tyrrell Court:

Sir Nathaniel Dunkenfield



Newbern, North Carolina

Pardon the trouble I am about to give you touching an affair that has very much disgraced the Magistracy of this County; you must know then Sir, that last Tuesday was the day appointed by Law for holding the Inferior Court of Tyrrell on which day appeared six attorneys, the Sheriff of the County and the Clerk of the Court at the Courthouse, who continued there until Thursday evening with the Grand and Petit plaintiffs and defendents with their witnesses as also constables and during thich time only two Justices appeared viz. Colonel Buncombe and John McKildoe. Of course, no court could be held for want of a third Magistrate. Until Thursday, the people attended with becoming decency and patience. They at length grew clamorous, damned the absent Justices (I think with propriety) and then prevailed upon McKildoe to adjourn the Court over to the next term, and went to their respective homes. Some Gentlemen of property and fair character in this County then met together, and agreed upon the persons set down in the enclosed list to be placed in the council. I immediately offered my service on this occasion, and have taken the liberty to state with truth the ill

conduct of the Justices who neglected the public business in so shameful a manner. The Sheriff and Clerk of Tyrrell will attend the council board. It will be further necessary for me to add that no county tax is laid, no lists of taxables are returned, no Sheriff qualified, in totiden verbis all is in confusion, anarchy and uproar; pray therefore lend your helping hand to remove this injury from a good people, and restore peace to His Majestices ancient County of Tyrrell.

I am Dear Sir,

THO. JONES

Tyrrell Courthouse

29th November, 1771

In 1774 the Provencial Assembly finally decided that Tyrrell County was too big and a law was passed creating Martin County out of the western-most section of Tyrrell. A county seat for the new county was established at the present-day site of Williamston.

This created a problem for Tyrrell County, for its courthouse was no longer in the center of the county, but located far to the west at Lee's Mill. The planters of Scuppernong had always been interested in having the county seat located in their section. In 1774 the Assembly changed the county seat from Lee's Mill to Backlanding on the west side of Scuppernong River. This site was located on the plantation of

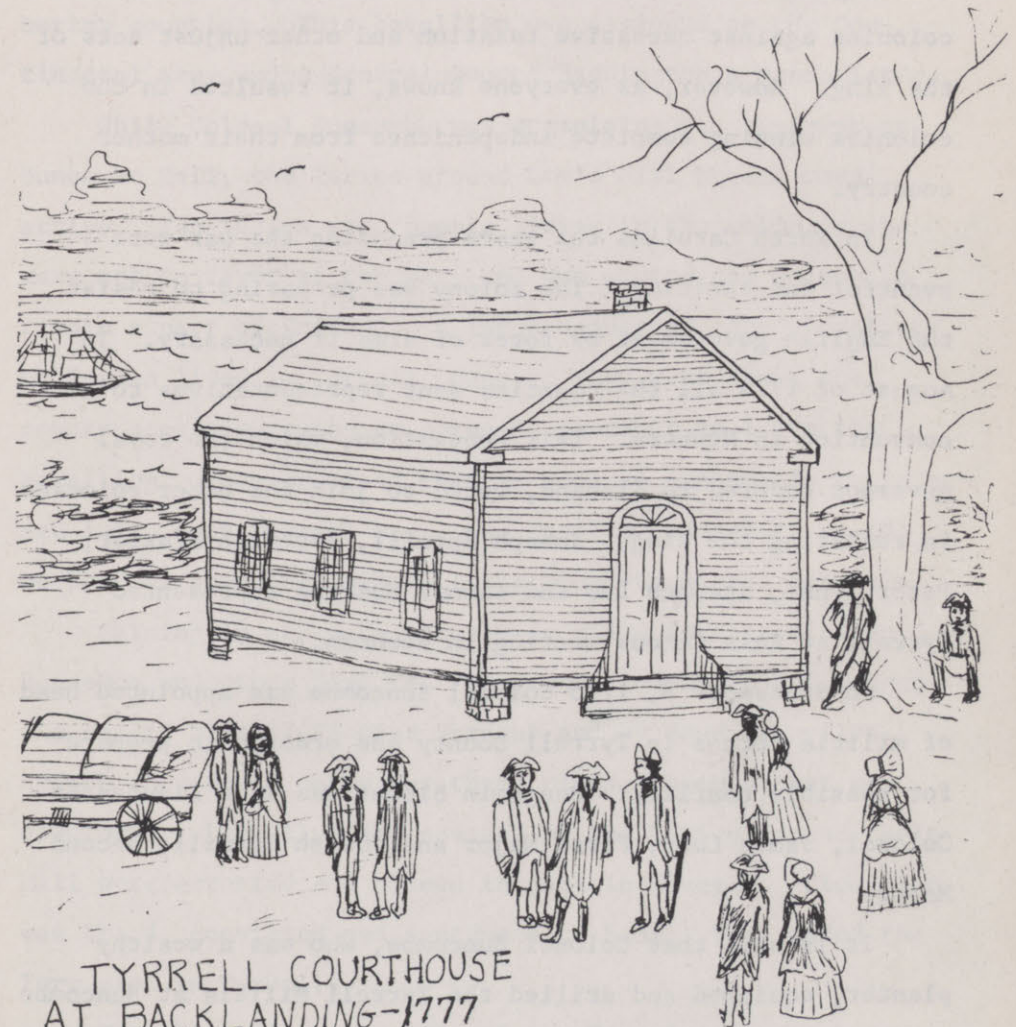


Benjamin Spruill, a son of Joseph Spruill who had given Saint Paul's Church to the people, and on whose land the king's warehouse had been built in 1740.

The first court at Backlanding on Spruill's plantation was held on "the third Tuesday in May, 1774." At this court Colonel Edward Buncombe presented a commission appointing him clerk of the court. Colonel Buncombe was the last clerk of court for Tyrrell County under the colonial government. A successor was appointed in February, 1777 after Buncombe had become fully engaged in the Revolution. The courthouse at the new county seat at Backlanding was completed in 1777.



BACKLANDING TODAY





## CHAPTER NINE

The Revolutionary War started out as a protest by the colonies against excessive taxation and other unjust acts of the king. However, as everyone knows, it resulted in the colonies winning complete independence from their mother country.

In North Carolina the years preceding the war were eventful and exciting. The colony was preparing to resist the English government by force of arms if necessary. In August of 1774 all the counties sent representatives to a convention in Newbern. This convention, which the royal governor ordered to disband, voted to join the other colonies in resisting the king. Joseph Spruill, Jeremiah Frazier, Peter Wynne, Stephen Lee and Thomas Hoskins represented Tyrrell at this famous meeting in Newbern.

On September 9, 1775 Colonel Buncombe was appointed head of militia forces in Tyrrell County and ordered to prepare for possible conflict. Benjamin Blount was made Lieutenant Colonel, James Long, First Major and Joseph Spruill, Second Major.

It is said that Colonel Buncombe, who was a wealthy planter, equipped and drilled the Tyrrell Militia at Buncombe Hall largely at his own expense. In April, 1776 another convention met at Halifax, of which Archibald Corrie was Tyrrell's only representative. This assembly placed Colonel Buncombe

in command of the Fifth North Carolina Battalion which was composed of a large number of men from Tyrrell and neighboring counties. This battalion was assigned to the Continental Army under General George Washington a month later.

While Colonel Buncombe was organizing his regiment at Buncombe Hall, the Tories around Lee's Mill became very active. The Tories were people living in the colonies who were not in favor of the war, and who wanted the colony to remain a part of England. A large number of these Loyalists or Tories lived in Tyrrell County. They went about the county secretly trying to persuade patriots to leave the battalion. They promised that as soon as Buncombe's regiment had left, that General Howe, the English commander, would occupy the area and seize all the property of the rebels.

Gaining in strength, they made plans for assassinating Buncombe and other leaders. They were led by Daniel Legget who called himself "Senior Warden" and by John Llewellyn. Before they could carry out their plans, their secret was disclosed. Llewellyn and several of the Tories around Lee's Mill were arrested and placed in jail in Edenton. Llewellyn was tried, convicted and sentenced to hang. This ended the Tory plot in Tyrrell.

Mary Llewellyn, the wife of the Tory leader, went to John B. Beasley of Scuppernon, later a Senator from Tyrrell County, and asked him to plead with the Governor for her



husband's life. Mr. Beasley wrote Governor Caswell, but Llewellyn was not pardoned. He was later executed at Edenton. Legget, the Tories' ring leader, when he heard of Llewellyn's death, surrendered and asked for mercy from Governor Caswell. He appears to have escaped with his neck.

In the Summer of 1776 the regiment of Tyrrell soldiers left Lee's Mill for Wilmington under Colonel Buncombe. In a letter to Governor Caswell, Joseph Hewes of Edenton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, stated that Tyrrell and Perquimans sent the first revolutionary volunteers to the Continental Army from the Albemarle section.

Colonel Edward Buncombe led the Fifth Battalion in many of the early engagements of the Revolution. He was finally wounded and taken prisoner at Germantown in Pennsylvania. He died from his wounds while a prisoner in Philadelphia in 1779 at the age of thirty-seven. His family tried to manage the large Tyrrell Plantation after his death, but it was later divided among his heirs. Buncombe Hall, one of the most elegant mansions of colonial North Carolina, was deserted. It was later demolished by Carpetbaggers after the War Between the States several years later.

It is not known exactly how many men from Tyrrell County served in the Revolutionary Army, though the number probably exceeded one hundred. The war finally ended with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis to General Washington at Yorktown.

North Carolina, as well as the other twelve colonies, found itself a free and independent state after more than one hundred years under the English crown.



MACKEY'S FERRY TODAY



## CHAPTER TEN

In 1788 a convention was called at Hillsboro, N. C. to decide whether the new State of North Carolina would enter the United States. Elections were held throughout the state. Tyrrell County was represented at the famous Hillsboro Convention by Hezekiah Spruill, Edmund Blount, Thomas Stuart, Josiah Collins and Joseph Tipton.

In the same year the General Assembly passed a law providing for two voting precincts in Tyrrell County. The county was still quite large for it stretched from the present town of Plymouth to Manns Harbor on Croatan Sound. The Assembly provided that in addition to the courthouse at Backlanding voting precincts were to be established at Fort Landing for the people in the eastern part of the county and at Lee's Mill for those in the far western part of the county.

The same General Assembly passed a charter for the establishment of a town in Tyrrell. This town was to be called Newport and was to be surveyed and built on John Harriner's land at Backlanding near the place where the courthouse was then located. The town of Newport, the first ever chartered in Tyrrell County, never materialized.

Four years later in 1793 the Assembly chartered another town in what was then Tyrrell County. This town was to be called Elizabeth Town and was to be located on the east bank of the Scuppernong River near the place then called Shallop's

Landing. Thomas Hoskins and Zebidee Massell later sold land for the courthouse. The plans for the village, which were drawn up by Joseph Phelps and are found in the early records of Tyrrell County, included a courthouse, goal or jail, public green, taverns and homes. The town was laid off in 1793 and it was made the county seat in 1799. The name of this town was changed to Columbia in 1810 because of growing confusion with another Elizabethtown in North Carolina. Court was first opened in the Tyrrell courthouse in Elizabeth Town in 1800. The town was incorporated in 1855 as a tax-levying district.

Another town to be chartered in Tyrrell about this time was the town of Plymouth. Land for this settlement was donated by Arthur and Milly Rhodes as early as 1790. A few years later the General Assembly again decided that Tyrrell was still too large to be one county. In 1799 the county was split for a second time and the western portion was created as Washington County with its county seat at Lee's Mill and later Plymouth. This division of Tyrrell reduced the county by half its original size and it lost many of its more prosperous plantations and settlements to the new county. Much of the county's history before the Revolution had been centered around Lee's Mill, which now became part of the new county of Washington.

Backlanding, which had been the county seat of Tyrrell from 1774 to 1799, for many years remained part of the



immense holdings of the Spruill family of Tyrrell County. This family played a leading part in Tyrrell history from 1728 until 1860. The courthouse, wharf, king's warehouse, historic Saint Paul's Church and other buildings at Back-landing have long ago deteriorated. The location in recent years has been owned by various members of the Davenport family of Scuppernong Township. This area of Tyrrell was the center of civic life in Tyrrell from the time of the Revolutionary War until the War Between the States.

In 1790 the first census of the United States was conducted. According to this census there were 3,037 people living in the county of Tyrrell of whom 1,152 were Negro slaves.

The years between 1780 and 1799 also witnessed the establishment of two great plantations in the wilderness around Lake Phelps by the Collins and Pettigrew families. In 1783 Josiah Collins of Edenton, who had made a fortune in shipping and related businesses, persuaded two other Edenton merchants to form a land company known as the Lake Company. The purpose of this endeavor was to buy the great swampland around Lake Phelps and undertake the great task of draining it. After buying 125,000 acres of land, they fitted out a slave ship in Boston and sent it to Africa for a load of slaves to dig the proposed drainage works, clear the plantations and work the projected rice fields. The Somerset Canal was completed in

1787 connecting Scuppernong River with Lake Phelps. Hundreds of Negroes were needed to dig the large waterways and clear the land. Rice was grown successfully for a few years, but later the plantation shifted to corn.

About 1800 Josiah Collins bought out his partners and became sole owner of the company lands and plantations. In time the greater part of the 125,000 acres was sold off, much of it to the Pettigrew family. Josiah Collins's grandson, Josiah Collins III built the beautiful Somerset Manor on the shores of Lake Phelps in 1829. This mansion became the center of lavish social life and the plantation itself consisted of more than 2,000 acres of cropland and was worked by 328 Negro slaves.

The Pettigrew family of Tyrrell County produced three generations of famous men: Ebinezzar Pettigrew, Rev. Charles Pettigrew and General James J. Pettigrew. The family was established in Tyrrell County in 1789 when Rev. Charles Pettigrew, a former rector of historic Saint Paul's Church in Edenton, purchased land from Josiah Collins and started developing Bonarva Plantation on the north-eastern end of Lake Phelps. The Rev. Pettigrew later moved his home to Belgrade, another Pettigrew plantation near present-day Creswell. While at Belgrade he was elected first bishop of the Episcopal Church of North Carolina. However, he died at Belgrade while preparing to sail to England to be consecrated. Saint David's



Church, started in 1803, was built by Parson Pettigrew at Belgrade at his own expense. The "Old Parson", as he was known by the people of the county, was a kindly man who preached and taught throughout the area to people of all denominations.

His son Ebinezzar Pettigrew later developed Magnolia Plantation, the second Pettigrew estate at Lake Phelps, and erected the most curious plantation house in Tyrrell County, The Oddity. Ebinezzar Pettigrew was elected to the Senate of North Carolina in 1809. In 1835 he was elected to the United States Congress. He is the only Tyrrell County citizen known ever to be elected to Congress. He is also credited with inventing the corn sheller in 1839 and putting it into operation at Magnolia.

Between the end of the Revolution and 1800, therefore, much was taking place in Tyrrell. In addition to the establishment of new plantations, the creation of new towns, the erection of a new courthouse and the building of new churches, efforts were being made for the first time to provide education for the children of the area. In 1797 Joseph Phelps opened Phelps Academy on his plantation and around 1799 Pike's Academy was started.



Somerset manor house



Saint David's Church



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Columbia must have been a simple village in the early 1800's for it started out from very small beginnings. At first a lonely trading post called Shallop's Landing, it was finally chosen as the location for Elizabeth Town because of the failure of efforts to build Newport four miles upstream on the opposite side of the river.

By 1840 Columbia had grown considerably. A census about this time listed three carpenters, two tavern keepers, one overseer, one peddler, five merchants, three lawyers, two physicians, a shoemaker, three boatmen, two blacksmiths and several laborers among its population.

Tyrrell County's planters were becoming more productive. In 1840 the county produced 108,641 bushels of corn, 22,961 pounds of cotton, 8,081 bushels of wheat, 2,517 bushels of oats, 2,928 pounds of wool, 4,149 barrels of fish and \$74,194 worth of lumber. The population by 1850 had grown to 4,448. Of this number 3,296 were whites, 130 were free Negroes and 1,702 were slaves.

General Hezekiah G. Spruill was Tyrrell's most prominent citizen during these years. In 1836 he was elected to the North Carolina Senate from Tyrrell and in 1851 the Governor appointed him a member of the North Carolina Board of Internal Improvements.

Educational opportunity continued to grow. In 1844 Miss Mary Mann, a lady of intelligence, founded Columbia Academy and became its first headmistress or principal. She helped the school grow until 1847 when Dr. Samuel Terry of New York became its principal. This school was the forerunner of today's Columbia High School. Other early headmasters were George W. Adamson, a well-educated teacher from New York; and Lemuel Rice, a scholarly man who was principal until 1856. Most of the early history of Columbia Academy is recorded in Coon's North Carolina Academies, but we are not sure of its early location in Columbia.

Mrs. Caroline Alexander and her daughter Martha Simmons, a graduate of Salem College, taught at the school in 1857. Broughton W. Foster became headmaster in 1859 and was principal of the school until 1866. Apparently Columbia Academy remained open during the War Between the States.

Besides the academy at Columbia, other teachers were "keeping" school throughout the county in 1850. Among them were Benjamin Foster, Henry Gray (a Methodist minister), Frederick Davenport, John E. Brickhouse (a Methodist minister), John Maitland of New York, Samuel B. Dozier (a Methodist minister), and Benjamin Francis of Virginia. Of course, there were no public schools at this time. No schools were supported from public taxes. Schools for many decades were private institutions operated by an enterprising teacher.



Many churches were springing up in Tyrrell County by 1850. During colonial times most churches had belonged to the Church of England, which is called the Episcopal Church today. However, as early as 1789 a Baptist Church had been erected. The deed to the first Methodist Church was recorded in 1831. The Chapel Hill Church, a Negro church in Scuppernong Township, was chartered in 1855 and is one of the oldest churches standing in Tyrrell County today. In 1845 Sharon Church on Second Creek, a Disciples of Christ church, had been built and in the same year a meeting house was erected in Gum Neck. By 1850 there were three ministers of the Methodist Church alone in Tyrrell County.

Most of the people of Tyrrell County at this time continued to depend on the land for a livelihood. The plantations in Tyrrell County were never large. The average farm was about fifty acres and few of the planters could afford Negro slaves. Most families were large and healthy and the entire family worked the farm. Many people by 1850, however, were skilled in trades or business. The census of that year lists several mechanics, shoemakers, tailors, ships carpenters, sailors and merchants.

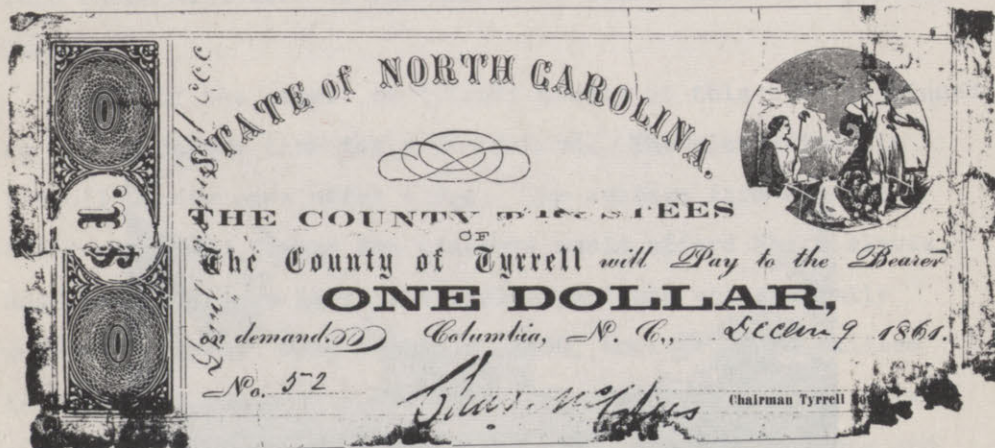
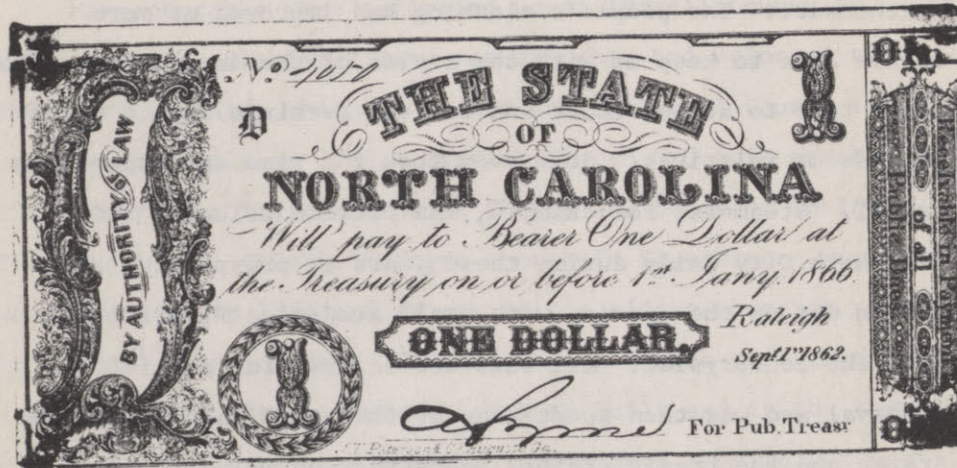
By 1860 North Carolina was one of the most prosperous states of the South. Southern culture by this time reached a peak not rivaled until fairly recent years. More and more homes were displaying fine furniture and dishes of pewter and

earthenware. The people's clothing had improved as more became able to keep up with the styles of the day. The people found time to attend court and revival meetings and to visit friends or relatives. Some even took the time and expense to travel. Steamers, for example, ran between Columbia and Elizabeth City daily during these years of prosperity. Education was on the upswing with small academies flourishing over the countryside. All this was enjoyed for a brief interval and was then swept away by the great War Between the States and the tragic era of Reconstruction which followed.



"The Oddity"





Currency Issued by Tyrrell County  
and the State of North Caro-  
lina during Civil War.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

The War Between the States began in 1861 when the Confederacy bombarded Fort Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Very soon North Carolina had entered the war on the side of the South and everywhere men were flocking to join the glorious Confederate Army that was going to end the war in a few weeks and preserve the independence and dignity of their State.

Company A of the Thirty-Second North Carolina Regiment was formed in Tyrrell County in May of 1862. This unit consisted of seventeen officers and eighty-four enlisted men. The regiment was placed under the command of Major Edward C. Brabble of Tyrrell County and was ordered to duty at Murfreesboro, North Carolina.

All officers of the Thirty-second regiment were members of the same church, a coincidence not occurring again in the whole Confederate States Army. To their credit it is recorded that with one exception, not one of them ever tasted spiritous liquor.

Probably no regiment in the Confederate service, writes one observer, was more fortunate in its officers and in their influence on the men. Colonel Brabble was a strict disciplinarian, yet considerate of his men's comfort. In the midst of battle it is said that all obeyed his orders and had entire



confidence in him. After his death in May, 1864, he was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel David Coward of Bertie County.

This regiment was given the honor in 1863 of flying the first Confederate battleflag. This flag, having been sent down from General Lee's headquarters, was presented to the 32nd North Carolina in an impressive review and ceremony in Virginia.

Many men from Tyrrell County had enlisted in other units before Company A, 32nd Regiment was formed in Columbia. Among these was Lieutenant Colonel William F. Beasley. He was the youngest man of his rank in the Confederate Army, having been given the rank of Lieutenant Colonel when only eighteen years of age. He enlisted in the Seventy-first North Carolina Regiment.

Other Tyrrell men enlisted in the Third Battalion, Light Artillery, North Carolina Troops of the Confederate States Army. The majority of men in Company B of this unit were from Tyrrell. The Battalion trained at Raleigh and served under General Stonewall Jackson during the early years of the war.

Other Tyrrell men had joined the Nineteenth North Carolina Battalion in December, 1861, when it was organized in Edenton by Captain William Badham. In this battalion was the famous artillery unit "The Bell Battery" composed of men from Chowan and Tyrrell counties. Its cannon were cast from the bells of the town of Edenton and were named the Saint Paul,

the Fannie Roulhac and the Columbia. The Albemarle Sound, however, was never well-defended by the Confederates and after the fall of Roanoke Island to the Union Navy, Edenton, Elizabeth City and later Plymouth were occupied by the enemy.

It is said that union troops captured and ransacked Columbia and burned the bridge across the narrows of the Scuppernon in 1863. However, no record has been found documenting this raid. One story goes that a union gunboat anchored off Columbia after the fall of the Albemarle Sound and that the town was pillaged. Thomas H. Alexander, the Tyrrell Register of Deeds at this time, is reputed to have saved the county's records. Another story says that Columbia was razed by local Union sympathizers.

Tyrrell's greatest contribution to the Confederate cause was General James J. Pettigrew, who was born at Bonarva on the shores of Lake Phelps in Tyrrell County, the son of Ebinezzar Pettigrew. James had attended the University of North Carolina where he was considered one of the most brilliant and able students ever to graduate. He took highest honors in the Class of 1847. When the war started Pettigrew entered the Confederate Army and quickly rose to the rank of General. He won fame in the historic battle of Gettysburg when he led his North Carolina regiment farthest north in the bloody charge of Pickett's Brigade. Pettigrew was wounded in the Confederate retreat through Maryland and died of his wounds.



His body was brought back to Tyrrell County and interred in the Pettigrew Cemetery on a hill overlooking 2,000 acres of Magnolia and Bonarva plantations. Beside him lay the body of Rev. Charles Pettigrew and Ebinezzar Pettigrew, three generations of a famous North Carolina family. The cemetery was later purchased by the University of North Carolina and preserved by the school in honor of one of its most outstanding students. In addition the school named one of its dormitories Pettigrew Hall at Chapel Hill. The cemetery is now part of Pettigrew State Park.

Two women from Tyrrell County served the Confederate cause as nurses. Mrs. Mary A. Beasley, born in Tyrrell County in 1811, devoted four years to nursing Confederate soldiers who are said to have called her "Mother Beasley". She was the mother of Lieutenant Colonel William F. Beasley.

Mary Pettigrew of Tyrrell County, the sister of General Pettigrew, became matron of a hospital in Petersburg, Virginia during the war. Her service and devotion to the wounded and dying are said to have won her the name of the Florence Nightingale of the South.

Two Tyrrell physicians, Dr. Edward Warren and Dr. Abner Alexander, served the Confederacy through their profession. Dr. Warren, who was born in Tyrrell County in 1828, was Surgeon-General of North Carolina during the war, and later was Chief Surgeon of Egypt. He died after the war in Paris,

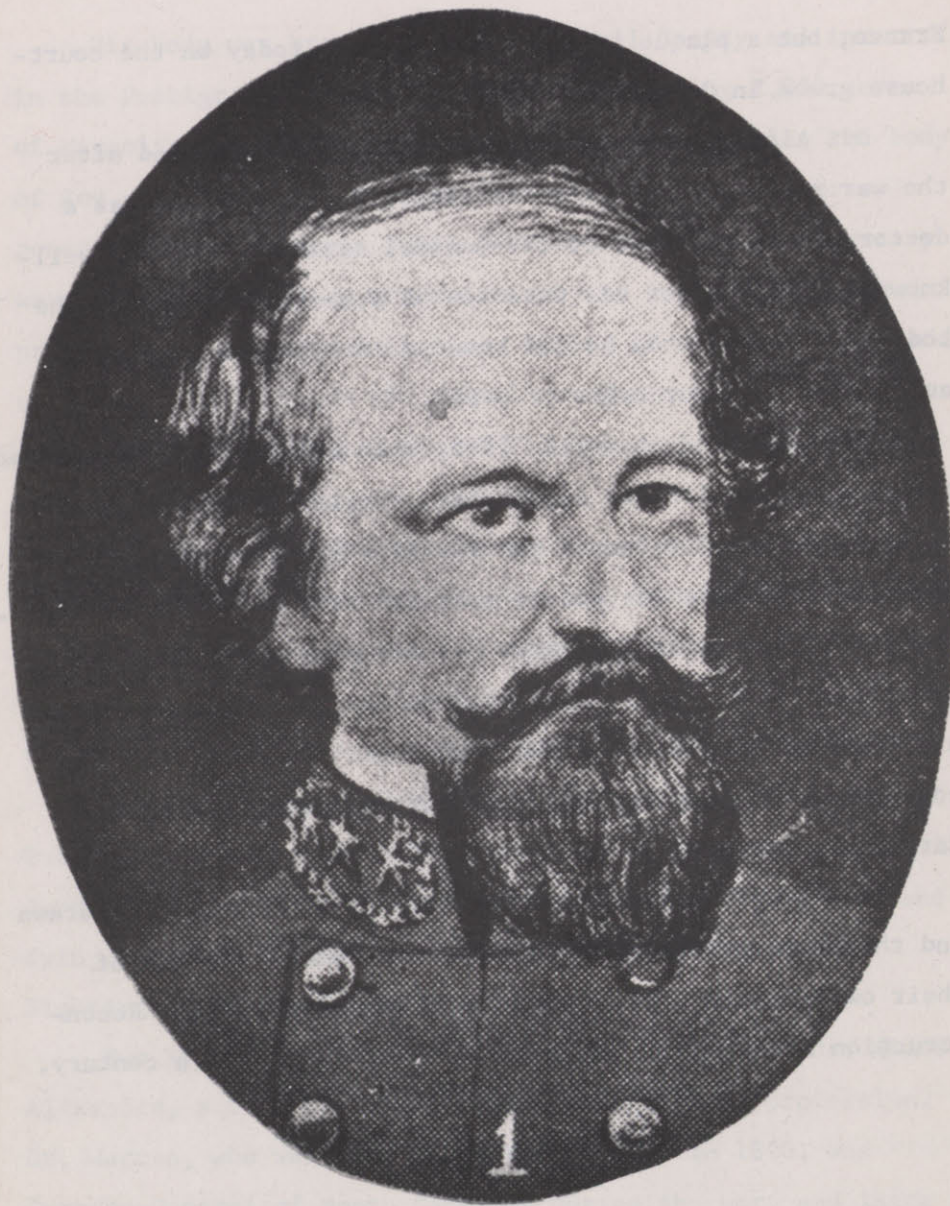
France, but a plaque to his memory stands today on the courthouse green in Columbia.

Dr. Alexander served in the Confederate Army and after the war returned home where he served his county both as a doctor and as a member of the General Assembly. He was well-known in Tyrrell for his practice of secretly digging up the bodies of people whom he had treated in order to perform an autopsy to find out cause of death.

The war ended in April, 1865, when General Lee surrendered the Confederate Army at Appomattox, Virginia. Thousands of soldiers returned to homes now desolate and poverty-stricken. However, the worse was yet to come for them and their families. For almost ten years the State was occupied by Federal troops and was ruled by freed Negroes, Carpetbaggers from the North and Southern turncoats called Scalawags. It was a time of corruption, lawlessness and violence unequalled in North Carolina's history.

It was 1877 before the last Federal soldier was withdrawn and the white people of North Carolina resumed control of their own affairs. It is often said that the war and Reconstruction set progress in North Carolina back over a century.





General James J. Pettigrew



Col. E. C. Brabble



Lt. Col. W. F. Beasley



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Following the War Between the States it was a long time before conditions returned to normal in Tyrrell. With all of the slaves freed, many of the larger plantations were rented out to tenants or divided and sold. Many families that had lived comfortable lives before the war were suddenly reduced to poverty. Such large holdings as those of the Collins, Pettigrews, Spruills, Hoskins and Alexanders came to an end.

In 1875 a convention met at Raleigh to rewrite or amend the State Constitution that had been forced on the State by the Carpetbaggers during Reconstruction. Dr. Edward Ransom was Tyrrell's representative at this meeting and he was elected President of the Convention. Dr. Ransom served in the General Assembly from Tyrrell until 1877.

In 1870 the last partition was made of Tyrrell County when the territory between Alligator River and Manns Harbor was created as Dare County by the General Assembly. This final splitting of the county reduced Tyrrell to about one-fourth its original size.

Columbia in the 1880's was a small village of wooden houses and dusty streets. In 1885 the town's charter was amended by the General Assembly. The town aldermen were given authority to condemn land for streets, to make a law prohibiting cows and hogs from running at large in the town, and

to make it an offense for indecent exposure the practice of some boys swimming in Scuppernong River near the bridge. This law did not keep livestock out of the streets, and in 1905 it was again necessary to make a law against letting hogs run wild in Columbia.

Such was Columbia in the 1880's and since that time history has moved so fast that it is difficult to record it without missing many important points along the way. Therefore, we shall try to touch only some of the high spots in Tyrrell's story since 1885.

In 1884 the first public school paid out of tax money in Tyrrell County was started in Columbia in the building now occupied by the Negro Methodist Church. In the years following district schools were built in communities throughout Tyrrell County. Although a term only lasted two or three months out of a year, it was in these schools that many hundreds of Tyrrell County children learned to read, write and cipher for the first time. Progress in education in Tyrrell County reached a climax by 1915 with the establishment of three public high schools in the county. These were Columbia High School in Columbia, Travis High School in Scuppernong and Gum Neck High School in Gum Neck. S. R. Bateman was an early Superintendent of public schools in the county.

Blanche M. Walker, now Mrs. C. E. Cohoon, received Columbia High School's first diploma May 6th 1919 from Senator



H. L. Swain. Miss Julia B. Farmer was headmistress at the school at this time.

Efforts were also being made to improve the county roads. In 1905 a special law was passed to allow Tyrrell County to collect a special tax for road building. A road to Cherry Ridge Landing was under construction. In addition, the road across Piney Marsh Swamp over the river from Columbia was also approved. Even as late as 1920 all men were expected to give a number of days work each year on the county roads as had been the custom in colonial times. The law of 1905 made it unlawful to force persons under 21 to work on the roads in Tyrrell.

Joseph Spencer, overseer of the road being built to Frying Pan in 1905, was awarded a salary of \$1.50 per day by the General Assembly.

In 1908 a great step forward was made in connecting Tyrrell County with the outside world when the Norfolk and Southern Railroad extended its tracks to Columbia. Two trains left Columbia daily in the early years of the railroad carrying lumber, cotton, livestock and other freight as well as passengers. The Branning Lumber Company, a tremendous saw mill located in Columbia about this time, was a great source of employment and income during the years preceding the First World War. The Branning operations saw several miles of private railroads throughout the county, one of which ran

from Columbia to Gum Neck. At Columbia working facilities were extensive and the mill itself employed seven steam boilers and dry kilns.

The first automobiles were soon seen chugging up the dusty streets of Columbia and about 1910 Johann F. Schlez, a German immigrant, and W. T. Reynolds helped form the Columbia Amusement Company and opened the first Columbia Theatre in the building formerly occupied by the Tyrrell Hardware Company on Elm Street. Here in September, 1910, the first modern movie was shown. It was a silent film entitled Granddaddy Longlegs and starred Mary Pickford.

The year 1910 also saw the opening of the first drug store in Columbia by C. B. McKeel. Columbia was a town on the move it seemed.

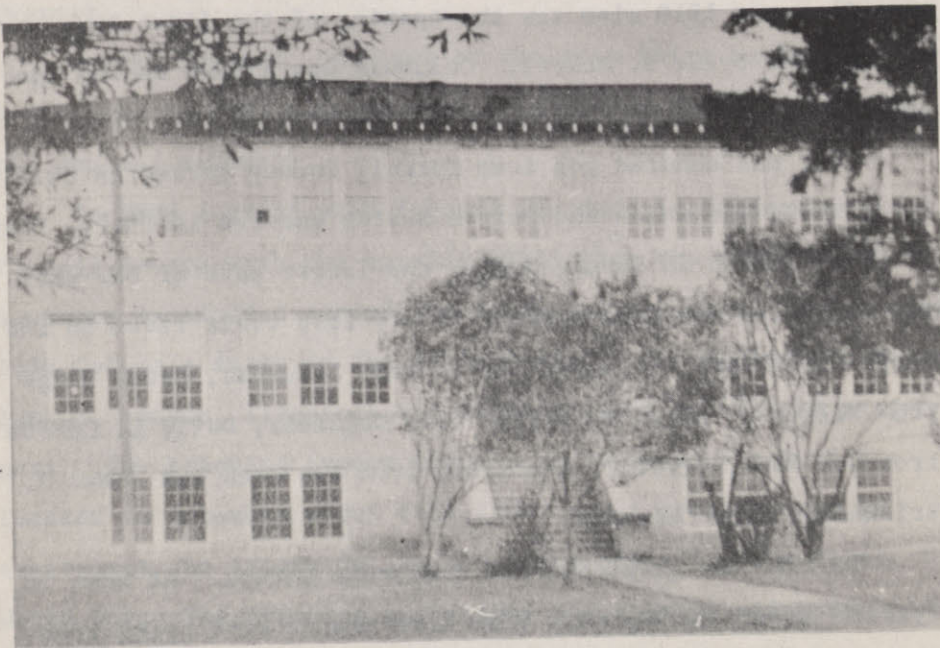
Over one hundred men from Tyrrell County served in the First World War which the United States entered in 1917. Many of these served in Europe during the latter part of the war. The following men from Tyrrell County lost their lives in the First World War: Columbus Morris from Columbia, Oscar Dodge from Kilkenny, Lloyd H. Dillon from Columbia, David L. Cohoon from Gum Neck, Clyde B. Armstrong from Gum Neck and James M. Brickhouse from Columbia.

In 1918 the great Spanish Influenza struck. At home in Tyrrell County during this time more people were dying from this killer than from the enemy. All over the county whole

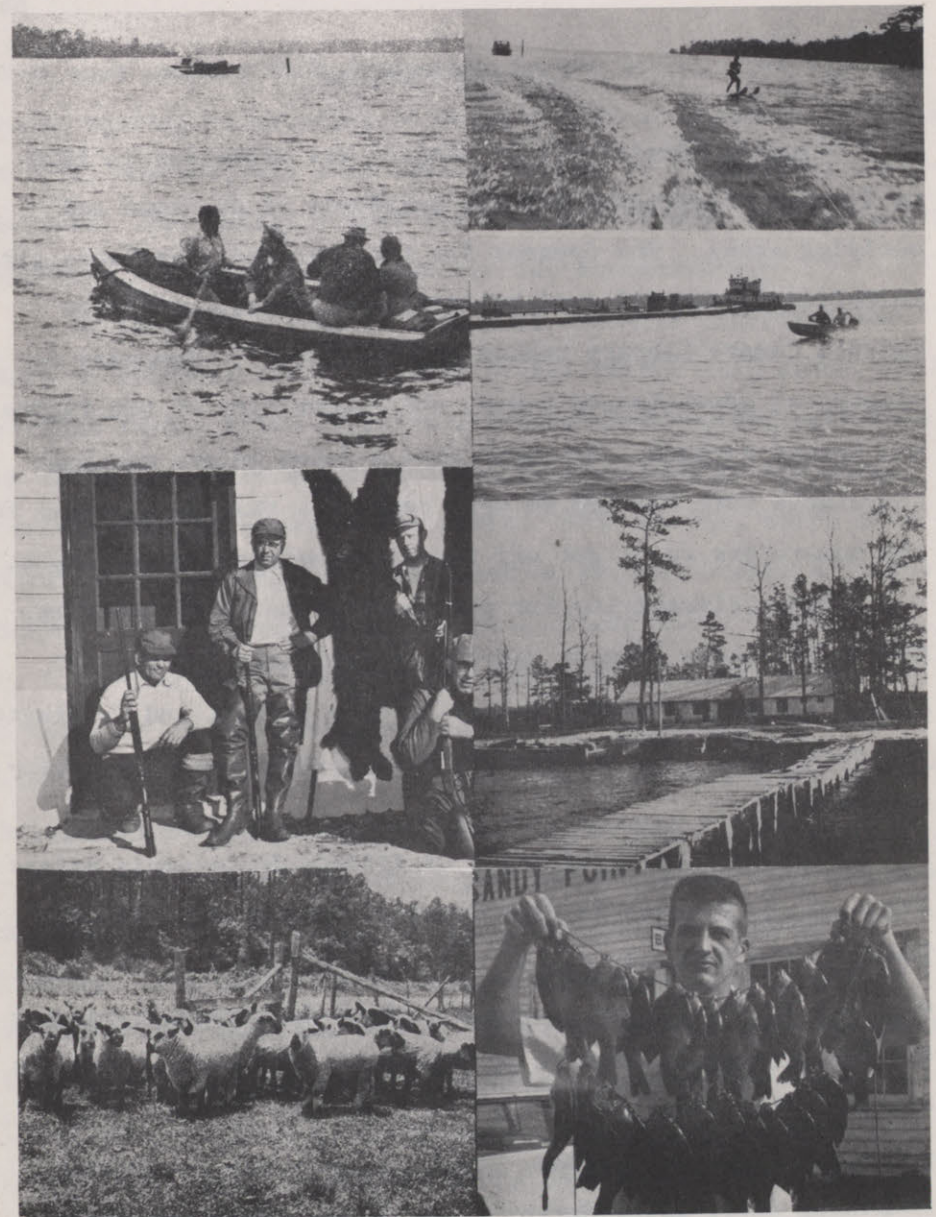


families were stricken with few left to wait on the sick. People, it is said, were dying by the hour. Dr. Clarence Flowers and Dr. B. W. Cohn, the two resident doctors in the county, sought help from the government. Meetings were held in the courthouse to teach necessary precautions, and to recruit volunteer nurses. Many persons died before the epidemic finally wore itself out.

In 1919 the new \$60,000 building was completed for Columbia High School on the present campus. The first graduating class from the school on this site were Louise Holloway, Ruth Norman and John Melson in the Spring of 1920. Mr. J. W. Hamilton was first principal of the school at its new campus.



Columbia High School  
1923



Scenes from Modern Tyrrell County



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Columbia Electric Light Company was organized in 1920 to furnish electricity for the residents of the town and outlying areas. The dynamos for this pioneer plant were first installed in the old jail building later occupied by the Tyrrell County Library behind the courthouse. Compared to electrical conveniences today, the electricity of the 1920's was indeed antique. At about five minutes before midnight the lights were blinked to warn residents that it was time for the generators to be cut off for the remainder of the night.

Before electricity for public use came to Columbia the Cohoon Telephone Company had been established and by 1927 there were three hundred subscribers in Tyrrell and Washington counties and a long distance line to Plymouth was under construction.

There were no paved roads or streets in Columbia before 1926. U. S. Highway 64 from Creswell through Scuppernong Township had been paved, but the pavement ended at the edge of Piney Marsh, (point of marsh), which is a swamp bordering the Scuppernong River west of Columbia. The highway did not extend across this marsh, but the swamp was spanned by a punching or cordurory road. This causeway was inadequate, remaining under water during times of abnormal high tide.

In 1925 the General Assembly passed a law that a paved

road must connect each courthouse in the State. The railroad began hauling in material to build the Piney Marsh Road. This effort, however, was soon abandoned due to engineering difficulties. [For nearly a year the town of Columbia was isolated; crossing the swamp was impossible for automobiles.]

It is said that A. J. Cohoon of Columbia conceived the idea of spanning Piney Marsh by bridge rather than road. With various lumber mills in Tyrrell County contributing materials, he is said to have supervised the construction of the long causeway bridge across Piney Marsh. This bridge, which afterward due to sinking into the swamp in places, became a "wash-board" road. It connected the Scuppernong River Bridge with U. S. Highway 64 in Scuppernong Township. Shortly after the completion of the Piney Marsh Road, the State Highway Commission paved Columbia's Main Street, and constructed the new draw bridge across the narrows of the Scuppernong.

The completion of the Scuppernong Bridge in 1927 was the occasion of the most gala celebration in Tyrrell County's history. The headlines of nearly every newspaper in North-eastern North Carolina read: "There'll be some real goings-on in Columbia" or "No cows on Columbia's Main Street anymore". There were parades, a beauty pageant, barbecues, speeches and an airplane show. Hundreds of visitors came by train, automobile or steamboat to help Tyrrell County celebrate the dedication of the Scuppernong Bridge. The County was stepping out.



To those of the younger generation living in Tyrrell County today, the Columbia of the 1920's would resemble the wild western town we once saw at the "horse opera" on Saturday night, or on television today. Buggies and Model T's lined the dusty streets and people sat casually on the long benches that lined the porches of many stores.

Among the more imposing buildings of Columbia in the 1920's was Davis and Cofield, one of the largest general stores in northeastern North Carolina. This firm, which occupied the two story brick building now used by the Tyrrell Furniture Company, sold almost everything imaginable at that time.

"The Columbia" was at this time the largest of three hotels in Columbia. This building was located on the corner of Main and Broad streets where now stands Floyd Spencer's Station. Directly across the street, where now stands the C. E. Cohoon Building, was The Old Hotel.

Besides a drug store, movie house, post office and a variety of stores, Tyrrell County's only town also had a hospital. This institution was established by Dr. S. C. Chaplin, a native of Tyrrell County, who graduated from Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia in 1920 and returned to Columbia to practice medicine. The first hospital was located across Broad Street from its present site and had only eight rooms. Due to the success of Dr. Chaplin's practice, the Columbia Hospital by the time of his death in 1952 boasted

thirty beds and modern facilities.

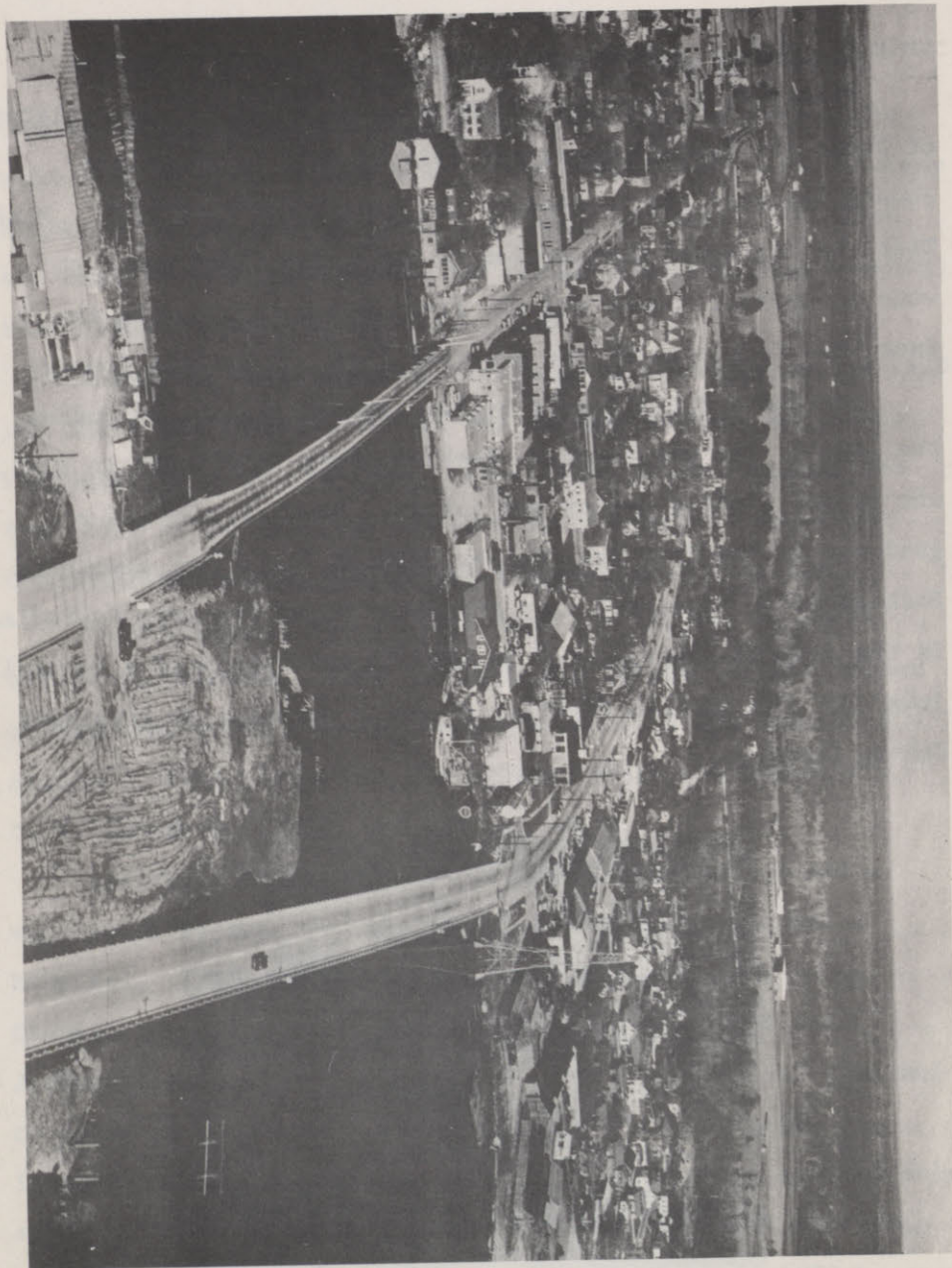
Miss Sara L. Taft was first elected to office as Register of Deeds for Tyrrell County in 1926, a post to which the county has seen fit to reelect her ever since that time. Miss Taft has the noted distinction of being the first woman to vote in Tyrrell County and the first woman selected to the Executive Committee of the Democrat Party in Tyrrell County.

Another Tyrrell County native reached prominence during the 1920's. He was Isaac M. Meekins, born in Tyrrell in 1875, who became a noted orator and jurist. Meekins, who was a graduate in law from Wake Forest College, was first appointed Postmaster of Elizabeth City and later Alien Property Custodian in the federal government. In 1923 he was appointed a federal judge for the eastern district of North Carolina by President Calvin Coolidge.



Columbia Hospital today





## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The decade of the 1930's will always be remembered as the time of the Great Depression. The economic plight of the nation was shared by the hard-pressed farmers of Tyrrell County. Such was the extent of the depression in North Carolina that there was talk of closing the schools. Had it not been for the relief programs of the New Deal of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, no one can estimate the course the Great Depression would have taken.

One of the lasting benefits of the economic recovery programs of the 1930's was the work of the Works Progress Administration. This program gave work opportunity for many thousands of jobless people. In Tyrrell County the W. P. A. undertook such public improvements as planting trees and shrubs, landscaping cemeteries and digging drainage canals. The Agriculture Building on Broad Street in Columbia was one of the public buildings completed during the days of the Works Progress Administration. C. W. Tatem, a leader in the county during this time, represented Tyrrell County in the General Assembly during the 1930's. For many years he worked for better roads, bridges and schools in the county at the General Assembly in Raleigh.

About 1939 the first local newspaper was started in Tyrrell County. Edited by Miss Cora Barksdale, the Tyrrell



Tribune began circulation in December, 1939. This newspaper was a weekly and was published by the Times Printing Company of Manteo. Miss Barksdale wrote a most glowing tribute to Columbia. This article appeared in the Coastland Times in June, 1940, and perhaps describes in a sentimental sort of way Columbia in the 1930's:

#### COLUMBIA

The town I've imagined in my dreams  
but never believed existed.

I wish for once that I still believed in fairies,  
and could meet one who could touch her magic wand  
and transform me into a gifted writer so that I  
could tell all the world that my impressions of this  
lovely little town is.

When I received a wire to go there and help  
get a newspaper established, I wasn't any too well  
pleased. "Just another tank town," I said to myself.  
But how quickly I changed my mind! Never in all my  
life have I met such lovely and gracious people;  
who welcomed me so warmly into their midst that I  
felt that I had been away on a long journey and had  
arrived home at last. Southern hospitality has  
often been written of and sung of, but expressing  
it is an art. The people of Columbia seem to be  
banded together with one common thought, "I love  
my fellow man."

This place has intrigued me. I want to find  
out how so many good people came to live all in one  
spot. I want to pry into their private lives, to  
affiliate myself with their churches, to romp with  
their children---surely somewhere there can be found  
a clue to their gracious mode of living.

Mingling with the crowds on Saturday night,  
going to the movie, to the drug store, strolling  
up and down the street, I encountered the same  
spirit. There was a smile and a word of good cheer  
from each person to the other. I saw smiles and  
handclasps exchanged, and "Hi there Tom, how's  
Mary and the baby", or "Hello John, old man, it's  
good to see you out again." All of this mingled  
with the happy laughter of children and the dis-  
creet and cheerful bantering of the colored folks,  
would cause almost anyone to think, as I do, that  
Columbia is truly the Arcadia of North Carolina.  
This could easily have been the place where Evange-  
line wandering hither and yon....The land of milk  
and honey.

The Tyrrell Tribune meant much to Tyrrell County. It  
averaged eight pages weekly and carried a wide variety of  
articles of national, state and county interest. Throughout  
the early years of the Second World War the paper continued



to publish, but the paper ceased to exist in 1944.

In February, 1930 the Tyrrell County Public Library was established by the Columbia Woman's Club and Miss Mae Pinner appointed librarian. Over one hundred books were donated by various people in the county. The first library was set up in the petit jury room of the courthouse. Later the old county jail, which had housed the towns electric generators, was converted into a library. By 1954 the library had over 11,000 books on its shelves and operated a book mobile and a Negro branch library.

Much of the work in promoting Tyrrell County's interests can be credited to the efforts of the Southern Albemarle Association, whose members came from Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell and Washington Counties. Victor Meekins of Manteo and C. Earl Cohoon, Wallace Tatem and W. J. White of Columbia were early leaders of this organization. The S. A. A. worked to promote better roads, bridges and other needs for the four counties.



Tyrrell Agricultural Building



Woodley's Chapel



The Pettigrew Cemetery



Columbia Post Office



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

During the years between 1935 and 1945 much happened that changed the physical facade of much of Tyrrell County. Many of the old wooden buildings on Columbia's Main Street were replaced by the present brick ones. The Post Office was in 1939 moved to its present site and Effie Adams Brick-house became Postmistress, a position she has held ever since.

Over one hundred Tyrrell County men served in the armed forces during the Second World War which began in 1941. Many of these served with distinction and were a credit to their families and community. Among these servicemen were thirteen who lost their lives in the great war. They were: Major Raymond Wilkins, Private Mary Lee Kemp, Captain J. D. Holloway, Private Pete Taylor, Private E. Colon Cooper, Seaman Doss Weatherly, Private Norman E. Smith, Private Charlie Sykes, Sergeant William Nelson McClees, Private Gaither Lassiter, Corporal Lindsey Jarvis, Sergeant Huron Voliva and Private Richard Wynne, Jr.

Major Raymond Wilkins, a native of Tyrrell County and a graduate of Columbia High School in the Class of 1934, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his bravery in the war in the Pacific. Major Wilkins, who entered the air force in 1936, was a lieutenant serving in the Phillipines when the war began. He fought as a fighter pilot in General

McArthur's forces for two years, completing 186 missions before his plane was finally brought down while engaged in an air attack of a Japanese base at Rabaul in New Britain in November, 1943.

Another Tyrrell flier was Captain J. D. Holloway, a native of Columbia. He entered the U. S. Army Air Corps in August, 1941 and served seven months in Italy making fifty missions as a pilot of a p-38 Lightning Fighter. He went on his second overseas assignment in May, 1945 to the Far East. He was killed in action near Kuki, China June 18, 1945. He was one of the two ace pilots at his base in India.

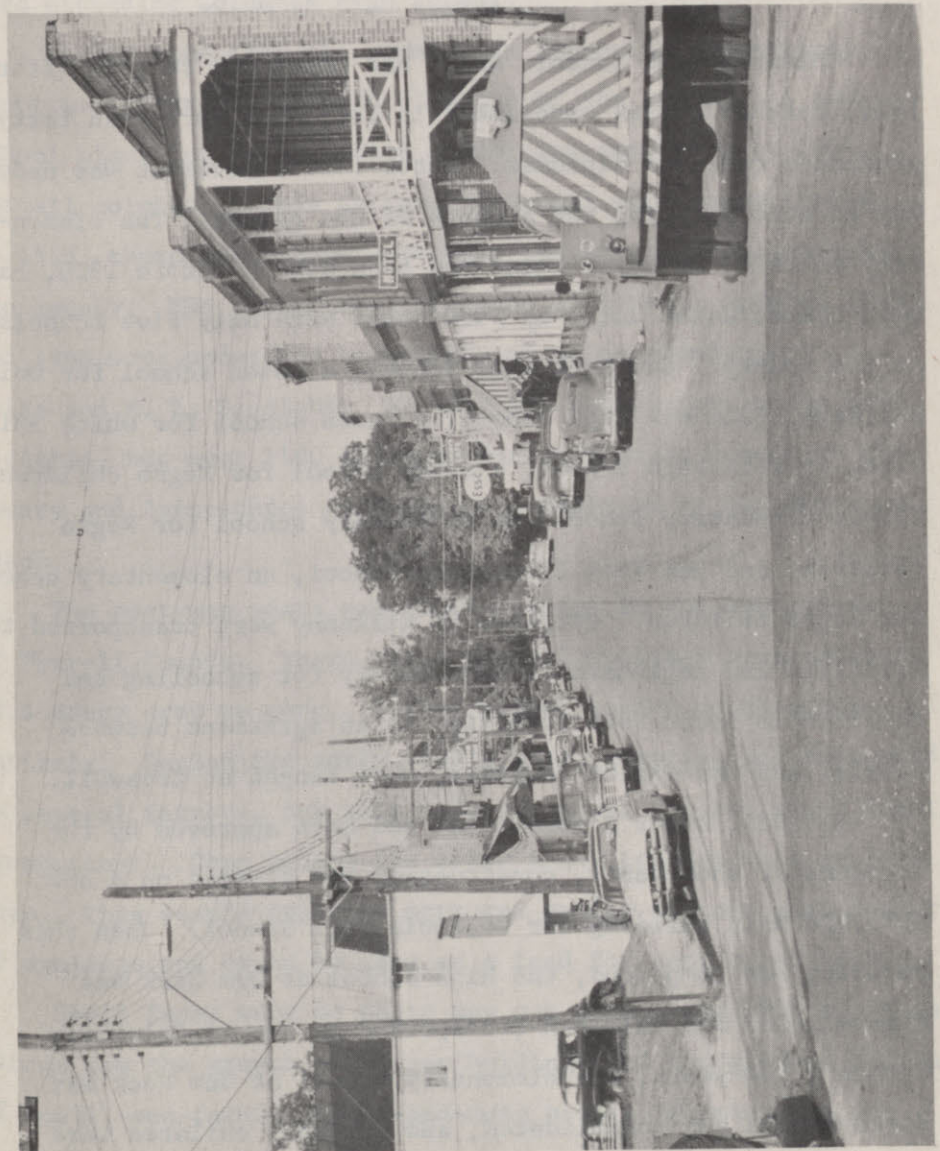
Due to the war effort the agricultural economy of Tyrrell County bustled during the 1940's. This was the era of "King Potato" for nearly every farmer was engaged in the growing of this valuable staple. Around Columbia a great market grew up, with a heavy investment being made in the grading, packing, shipping and marketing of potatoes. Tyrrell County became the number one potato producer in North Carolina. In Columbia, a busy trucking industry developed to meet the needs of shipping the potatoes. Broad Street, which was the main throughfare between Main Street and the potato warehouses and railroad depot, was redeveloped. The park which had graced the central part of this street and had been the location of the Confederate monument and an artesian fountain, was demolished to provide more room for the movement of motored traffic.



By 1945 the value of agricultural products of Tyrrell County was \$1,051,290. Of this amount \$593,830 were from potatoes, \$217,500 from corn and \$311,339 from livestock, mainly hogs. There were 568 farms in the county, the average size of which was 71½ acres. The average value of a Tyrrell County farm in 1945 was \$3,121. However, only three per cent of Tyrrell's farms in 1945 reported electricity, and only about twelve per cent used tractors or trucks. The mule was still the major farm machine.

1948 saw the discontinuance of Norfolk and Southern Railroad service for Tyrrell County. At about this time the railroad depot was closed and the tracks torn up between Columbia and Mackeys. Transportation services for Tyrrell County now devolved upon Hopkins Trucking Company and the Norfolk-Southern Bus Company.

Roads had always been poor in Tyrrell County as well as all of northeastern North Carolina. By the end of the 1940's the narrow dirt roads had become much too inadequate. Farming now required movement of trucks, tractors and automobiles. With the consolidation of schools, busses now travelled many miles over bad roads. Due to the road program initiated in 1948 by Governor Kerr Scott, many miles of badly-needed secondary roads were completed. This road improvement program continued on into the 1950's.





## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Columbia High School, which had continued to grow after 1920, reached a peak enrollment in 1943 when more than forty graduates received diplomas. After 1948 a movement was under way at consolidating the schools of the county. The elementary schools, of which there had been dozens before 1920, had been consolidated until by 1950 there were only five schools in the county: Gum Neck High School, a union school for white children; Columbia High School, a union school for white children; Tyrrell High School, a union school for Negro children; Travis Elementary School, an elementary school for Negro children; and Gum Neck Elementary School, an elementary school for Negro children. Children at Kilkenny were transported to Fairfield and Englehard in Hyde County for schooling and children in South Fork Township, by an agreement between Tyrrell and Washington counties, were taught at Creswell.

In 1950, after a bond issue had been approved by the citizens of the county, construction was started on a new \$175,000 main building for Columbia High School. When this building was completed, the high school at Gum Neck was discontinued and children transported by bus to Columbia. Within a few years, the elementary school at Gum Neck was discontinued and consolidated, and Kilkenny children were brought to Columbia. All white children in Tyrrell County with the exception of those living in South Fork Township

were attending Columbia High School.

At the same time the county was improving educational opportunity for the colored children of the county. A new school plant for Tyrrell High School was completed by 1954 and all colored schools in Tyrrell County were consolidated. By 1955, therefore, there were only two schools remaining in the county. The educational progress of Tyrrell between 1945 and 1960 were under the leadership of Superintendents W. J. White and M. L. Basnight. By 1963 the school population had declined, but over 1100 children were attending school in the county and forty-three teachers were employed by the State to teach.

The post-war years saw rapid changes in the agriculture of Tyrrell County. There was a gradual shifting from potatoes as a money crop to corn. Cotton almost ceased to be grown entirely. During the early 1950's truck cropping was attempted by several farmers, but this endeavor never reached significant proportions. Corn became the major money crop as well as feed crop. This staple could be marketed easily without much danger of spoilage and could be used as a feed for cattle and hogs.

Small farms were on their way out during the 1950's. This decade saw the growth of larger holdings and the gradual decrease of small, one-farmer, horse-and-mule plots. Farming now was becoming a business rather than a hand-to-mouth occupation. In Tyrrell County the growth of large tractor-operated,



mechanized farms added greatly to the area economy. The number of farms dropped from 643 in 1920 to 599 in 1940 to 542 in 1950 and to 374 in 1960.

The lumber industry greatly increased in activity during the post-war years. By 1949 there were ten saw mills in the county producing ten million feet of lumber per year. About six million feet was exported from the county annually. The largest timber holdings during this period was that of Richmond Cedar Works. This firm in 1953 sold its properties (138,000 acres) to the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company and with this exchange lumbering was on its way to becoming a big business in Tyrrell County. The West Virginia Company increased its holdings in the 1950's until by 1962 it owned 150,000 acres of timberlands in Tyrrell County. This amounted to about fifty per cent of the total land area of Tyrrell County. The company by 1958 was engaged in a tremendous drainage project which soon saw the county crisscrossed by 120 miles of roads and canals. In 1945 there were 110 people employed in lumbering and the value of lumber products was \$92,000. By 1960 there were over 200 employed by West Virginia Company alone. This company's investment is counted in the millions of dollars.

Besides the West Virginia Company, other firms such as Butler Lumber Company and Kent Timberlands increased their holdings. The Butler Land and Lumber Company by 1959 had erected an extensive mill at Travis in Scuppernong Township.

[Commercial fishing by 1951 accounted for about 525,000 pounds of fish. Herring, shad, mullet and bass were the main varieties of fish caught and marketed. Fishing has always been a minor economic enterprise in Tyrrell County, although the waters of Scuppernong River, Albemarle Sound and Alligator River are fairly rich for a fishing industry. R. K. Jagers Company of Columbia by 1960 was the major wholesaler of fish products in the county. Commercial fishing, for many farmers, was a seasonal activity during the off-season in agriculture.)

Tyrrell County has few natural resources other than the land, timber and game, and these are being more and more exploited to capacity. Due to relative isolation geographically, inadequate transportation and lack of skilled labor, the area has never been attractive to manufacturing. Any firm that could locate in Tyrrell County for manufacturing purposes, can produce, transport and market their products cheaper in neighboring communities where better transportation, a closer proximity to market and a more skilled working force are available.

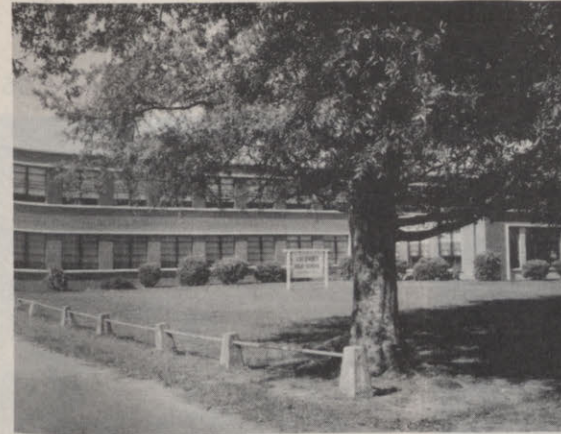
Since 1940 the population of the county has steadily decreased. With the decline of small farms and the mechanization of agriculture and lumbering, Tyrrell Countians have migrated elsewhere to seek a livelihood. Of the graduates of Columbia High School, which by 1960 only awarded about 24 diplomas annually, only about five are expected to remain in



the county. The population of Tyrrell County in 1920 was 4,849; in 1930 it was 5,164. By 1940 it reached its peak of 5,789. Thereafter, a steady decline has been the trend. In the census of 1950 there were 5,051 citizens residing in Tyrrell County. By 1960 the total population had dropped to 4,520, making Tyrrell the smallest county in population in North Carolina.

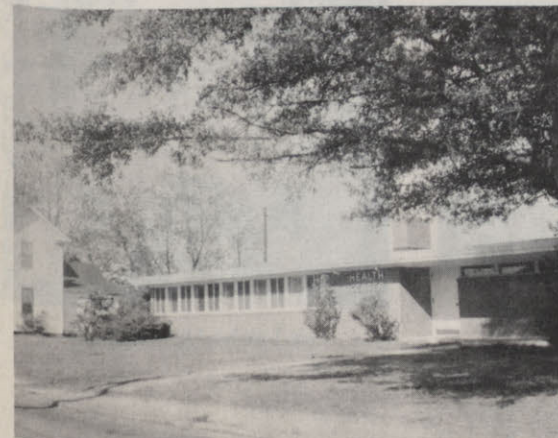


Lumber Operations in Tyrrell County



Columbia High School

Tyrrell High School



Tyrrell Health Center





Headquarters, West Virginia Pulp Company



The Columbia Waterfront



The New Scuppernong Bridge



Chapel Hill Church



Malachi's Chapel

# APPENDIX



# IMPORTANT DATES IN TYRRELL COUNTY HISTORY

Mapped and probably explored by John White. . . . .	1585
Granted to Sir Ashley Cooper by King Charles II . . . . .	1663
Created as parts of Pasquotank and Chowan Counties. . . . .	1670
Explored by Miller and Tarkenton. . . . .	1680
Early Settlements . . . . .	1690
Fort Landing Settled. . . . .	1704
Saint Paul's Church erected . . . . .	1710
Tuscarora War . . . . .	1711
Formed as a Precinct of Albemarle County. . . . .	1729
First represented in the Provencial Assembly. . . . .	1735
First Deed Recorded . . . . .	1736
King's Warehouse built at Backlanding . . . . .	1740
First Deed for a Church Recorded. . . . .	1747
First Courthouse built at Lee's Mill. . . . .	1749
First will probated in court. . . . .	1750
Court opens at Courthouse at Lee's Mill . . . . .	1751
Tyrrell Abolished by Royal order. . . . .	1754
Discovery of Lake Phelps. . . . .	1755
Buncombe Hall built by Edward Buncombe. . . . .	1766
Court held at Home of Benjamin Spruill. . . . .	1774
Buncombe becomes last colonial Clerk of the Court . . . . .	1774
Sends first Revolutionary Volunteers. . . . .	1775
Tyrrell Militia trained at Buncombe Hall. . . . .	1776
Courthouse erected at Backlanding on Scuppernong River. . . . .	1777



Tory outbreak in Tyrrell around Lee's Mill. . . . .	.1777
Lake Company organized by Josiah Collins. . . . .	.1783
Somerset Canal Completed. . . . .	.1787
Two Voting Precincts established. . . . .	.1789
Town of Newport chartered at Backlanding. . . . .	.1789
Pettigrew family settles in Tyrrell County. . . . .	.1789
Town of Elizabeth chartered . . . . .	.1793
Phelps Academy, first school, established . . . . .	.1797
Washington County created from Tyrrell. . . . .	.1799
Courthouse built at Elizabeth Town. . . . .	.1799
Pikes Academy started at Alligator. . . . .	.1799
First Court held in Elizabeth Town. . . . .	.1800
Somerset Plantation established . . . . .	.1800
Saint David's Church completed. . . . .	.1802
Elizabeth Town renamed Columbia . . . . .	.1810
First Methodist Church built in Tyrrell County. . . . .	.1830
Ebinezzar Pettigrew elected to Congress . . . . .	.1835
Columbia Academy founded. . . . .	.1844
Hezekiah Spruill, prominent leader in county. . . . .	.1851
Chapel Hill Church built. . . . .	.1855
Company A, 32nd Regiment forms in Columbia. . . . .	.1862
General Pettigrew killed in the war . . . . .	.1863
Union Troops sack Columbia. . . . .	.1863
Dare County formed from Tyrrell . . . . .	.1870
Dr. Ransom elected president of Constitutional Convention .	.1875
First Public School in Columbia . . . . .	.1884

Present Courthouse built in Columbia. . . . .	.1903
Railroad Comes to Columbia. . . . .	.1908
Columbia Theatre started. . . . .	.1910
High Schools begin in Tyrrell County. . . . .	.1915
First Graduation at Columbia High School. . . . .	.1919
Electric Lights come to Columbia. . . . .	.1920
Columbia Hospital founded . . . . .	.1922
Isaac Meekins becomes Federal Judge . . . . .	.1923
Piney Marsh Causeway completed. . . . .	.1925
Bridge Across Scuppernong at Columbia completed . . . . .	.1927
Tyrrell County Public Library established . . . . .	.1930
Agriculture Building Completed. . . . .	.1936
<u>Tyrrell Tribune</u> founded . . . . .	.1939
Present Post Office built . . . . .	.1939
Road Building Program initiated . . . . .	.1947
Railroad is withdrawn from Columbia . . . . .	.1948
Schools begin consolidation . . . . .	.1950
First Traffic Light in Columbia . . . . .	.1959
New Scuppernong Bridge at Columbia completed. . . . .	.1959
South Fork Road completed . . . . .	.1960
Alligator River Bridge completed. . . . .	.1962



## EXTRACTS FROM THE 1960 CENSUS OF TYRRELL COUNTY

## POPULATION

Total Population. . . . .	.4520
Total White Population . . . . .	.2545
Per cent White . . . . .	56
Total Negro Population . . . . .	.1975
Per cent Negro . . . . .	44
Total Rural Population. . . . .	.4520
Per cent Rural Non-farm. . . . .	68
Per cent Rural Farm. . . . .	32
Total Urban Population. . . . .	0

## MEDIAN INCOME OF FAMILIES

Total Population. . . . .	\$1927
White Population . . . . .	\$2371
Negro Population . . . . .	\$1487

## EDUCATION

## Median Years of Schooling

Total Population . . . . .	7.8 yrs
Negro Population. . . . .	6.1 yrs
Per cent of Population Age 14-17 in School. . . . .	84.3

## HOUSING

Per cent of Houses Occupied . . . . .	.61
Per cent of Houses Vacant year round. . . . .	9
Per cent of Houses Moved Into Since 1958. . . . .	.20.1

Per cent of Houses With More than 1 person per room	18.1
Per cent of Houses Heated With Wood . . . . .	48.0
Per cent of Houses Cooking with Wood. . . . .	15.0

## HOUSEHOLD STATISTICS

Per cent Without Water inside House . . . . .	53
Per cent Without flush toilet . . . . .	61
Per cent Without bath-tub or shower . . . . .	62
Per cent Without Washing Machine. . . . .	27
Per cent Without Clothes dryer. . . . .	82
Per cent Without Food Freezer . . . . .	66
Per cent Without Telephones . . . . .	59
Per cent Without Automobiles. . . . .	34
Per cent Without Air Conditioner. . . . .	84
Per cent Without Television Sets. . . . .	32
Per cent Without Radio Sets . . . . .	27



# AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
Number of farms	507	657	698	643	540	599	542	374
Average size of farms	127	95	81	85	70	67	75	100
Cultivated acreage	18,854	19,840	22,267	18,610	17,443	17,747	20,164	16,406
Corn acreage	6,125	7,132	7,360	7,389	7,113	9,756	6,338	6,992
Cotton acreage	2,709	1,122	1,620	2,291	1,046	114	450	187
Soybean acreage	-	-	-	1,583	3,855	5,480	8,402	7,843
Irish Potato acreage	75	268	721	483	2,235	2,394	1,494	1,811
No. of Tractors	0	0	0	0	12	16	239	261
No. of Cattle	3,320	2,151	3,139	1,812	982	909	1,679	1,608
No. of Swine	4,594	6,168	8,113	8,819	7,807	3,907	9,318	10,836
No. of Chickens	19,683	16,738	26,533	33,196	29,803	37,356	32,686	25,341
No. of Horses and Mules	498	803	655	962	931	959	796	168
No. of Sheep	1,274	1,437	2,174	1,044	577	414	1,251	433
Population	4,225	4,930	5,219	4,849	5,164	5,556	5,048	4,520

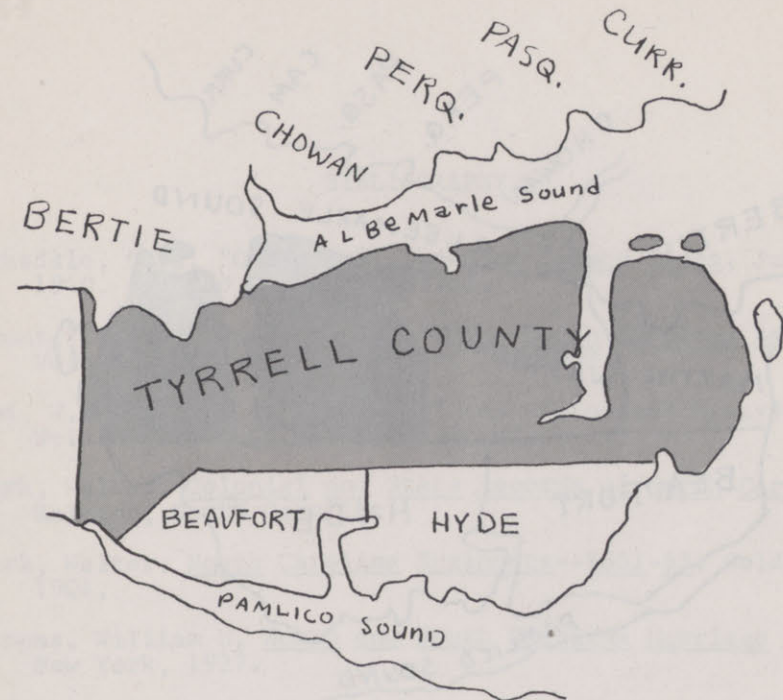
# TYRRELL COUNTY EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS

Total School Enrollment (1962) . . . . .	1179
Total Number of Professional Personnel Employed . . . . .	46
Number of Personnel paid by County . . . . .	5
Number of Personnel With Less than "A" Certificate . . . . .	2
Number of Personnel Holding Master's Degrees . . . . .	7
Per cent of Personnel Receiving Local Salary Supplement . . . . .	2
Number of High Schools . . . . .	2
Total Number of Graduates . . . . .	52
Number of Graduates (Tyrrell High School) . . . . .	29
Number of Graduates (Columbia High School) . . . . .	23
Number of Children Entering First Grade (1950-51) . . . . .	164
Number Entering Tyrrell High School . . . . .	90
Number Entering Columbia High School . . . . .	74
Per cent of First Grade that Graduates (County) . . . . .	31
Per cent Graduating from Tyrrell High School . . . . .	32
Per cent Graduating from Columbia High School . . . . .	31
Per cent of Students Dropping Out of School (County) . . . . .	67
Per cent of 1962 Graduates Entering College (County) . . . . .	-
From Tyrrell High School . . . . .	10
From Columbia High School . . . . .	56
Total Expenditures for Education in Tyrrell . . . . .	\$319,349
Cost per pupil for one year of schooling . . . . .	\$290.44

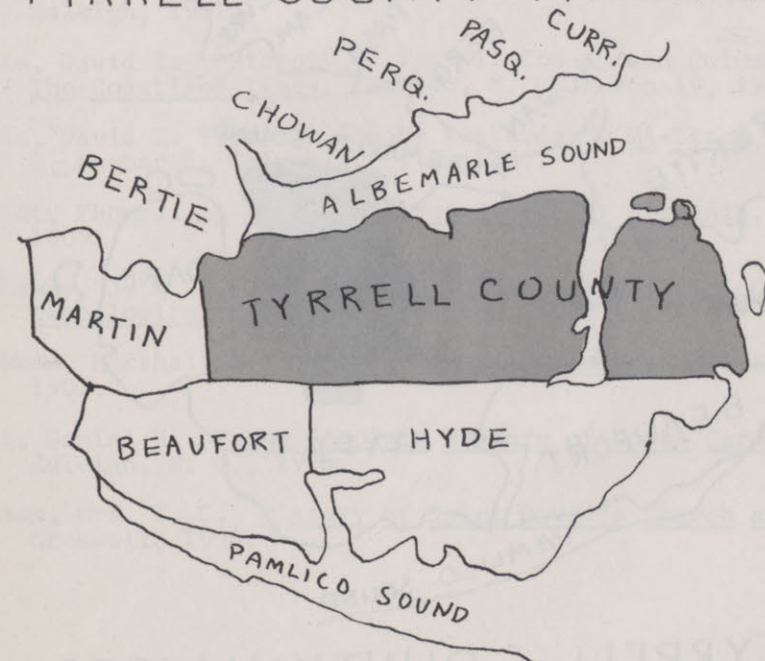


## Source of Funds for Education

From State of North Carolina. . .	\$277,164 (86 per cent)
From Tyrrell County . . . . .	33,422 (10 per cent)
From U. S. Government . . . . .	9,190 ( 3 per cent)

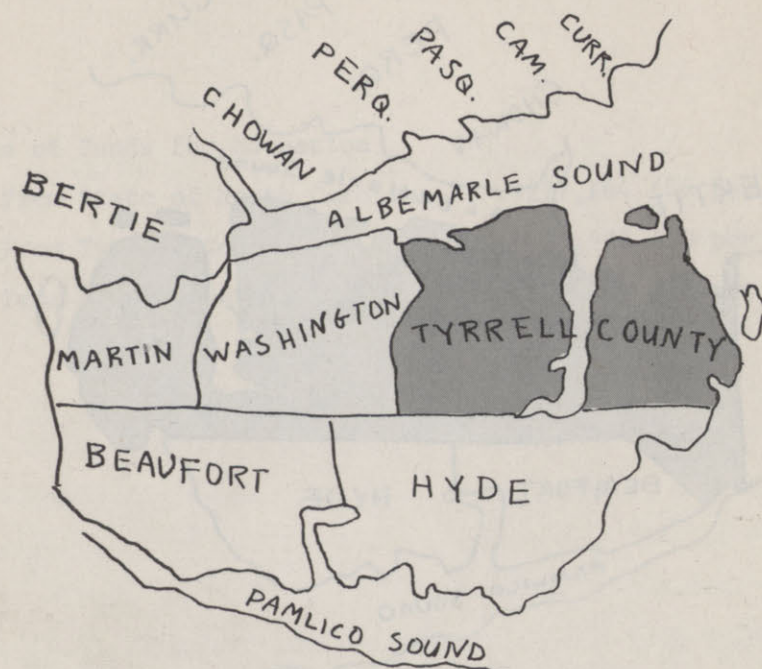


TYRRELL COUNTY IN 1729

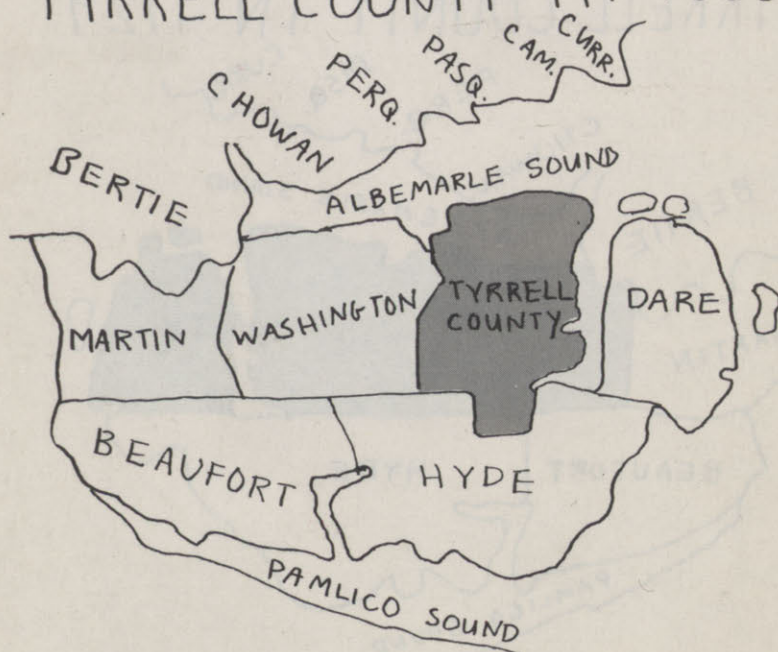


TYRRELL COUNTY IN 1776





TYRRELL COUNTY IN 1800



TYRRELL COUNTY IN 1870

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