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To Mason & Peggy
with the hope that
this will inspire a
bit of interest in our
little old town on
the Pasquotank.

My love to both of you.
Dennee

Dec. 27, 1970

New-Betham Elizabeth City:

The History of a Great Town

Ante-Bellum Elizabeth City

The History of a Canal Town

Ante-Bellum Elizabeth City:

The History of a Canal Town

William A. Griffin

Elizabeth City, North Carolina

Ante-Bellum Elizabeth City:

The History of a Canal Town

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Elizabeth City, North Carolina

Ante-Bellum Elizabeth City
The History of a Coastal Town

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Roanoke Press, Inc.
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To our parents
whose encouragement enabled us
to write this book.

Foreword

This book would have never been written had not a thesis been a requirement for a Masters of Arts degree. This book was my thesis.

Yet, I did have freedom in the selection of a subject. Although the list of unexplored subjects is endless, I believed that the past of my adopted town held intriguing and worthwhile material that should be unearthed and revealed. Conflicting legends needed to be reconciled for the historian. While my research disproved some legends, it also brought to light others that still remain unconfirmed. Many questions remain for future generations to debate, and, hopefully, to solve.

The book presents the material in its thesis form. I believe that you would like to know the basis for my conclusions, therefore the footnotes have been placed on the same page as the statement. I have appended an index to save you some of the time I spent in researching.

It is my firm conviction that you cannot read this book without gaining a stronger appreciation for Elizabeth City. May it challenge us to pass on to future generations an even greater heritage than we received.

October 1, 1970

William A. Griffin

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I

The Albemarle and Pasquotank County

Elizabeth City was not chartered until 1793, a decade after the United States had won her independence. Pasquotank County, however, in which Elizabeth City was established, was one of the oldest settled areas of North Carolina. This area north of Albemarle Sound and east of the Chowan River in which Pasquotank County lies is known as the Albemarle region. This region played a prominent role throughout the entire period of English exploration, colonization, proprietary rule, and royal control of North Carolina. Settlers from Virginia had begun to move into the area in the 1650's and had easily displaced the weak Indian tribes which held the lands of the Albemarle. As a part of that portion of the Province of Carolina which became the colony of North Carolina, Pasquotank Precinct, later Pasquotank County, was one of the colony's four original units of local government. The area was steeped in history and tradition by the time that prospects of a canal through the Dismal Swamp demanded a terminal town to the south and led to the founding of Elizabeth City to meet this demand.

The earliest inhabitants of the area where Elizabeth City would be founded were Indians of the Algonkian family. The exact date of their first occupation is indefinite. One authority has declared, "It was not millenia ago that man first came into the region, but it surely was more than one thousand years ago."¹ The Algonkian peoples then held "the greater portion of

¹William G. Haag, *The Archaeology of Coastal North Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), p. 126.

the area now contained in the 17 eastern-most counties of the state, including most of the offshore islands." This embraced an area of some 6,000 square miles, or approximately one-sixth of the land area of present-day North Carolina.²

The North Carolina Algonkian "represented the Southern-most extension of the groups of the linguistic relation which inhabited the Eastern States . . . from New England . . . to the Neuse River . . ." ³ In the late sixteenth century, the Weapomei-ock or Weapemeoc tribe or confederation of the Algonkians were in control of the area that would become Pasquotank County.⁴ There were four towns within Weapemeoc limits: Pasquenoc, Chepanoc, Weapemeoc, and Mascoming. None of these appear to have been located within the boundaries of modern Pasquotank County. The supposed site of Pasquenoc was on Camden Point which lies between the mouths of Pasquotank and North rivers.⁵ Extant records reveal that the Weapemeocs included "500 warriors with a total population of 1500 to 1750."⁶

The Weapemeoc town of Pasquenoc was noted by Captain Ralph Lane, governor of Raleigh's first Roanoke Island Colony, who reported to Raleigh that it was one of the towns situated "about the water's side" called Passaquenoke or "the woman's town."⁷ There is nothing to indicate that Lane or any of the Roanoke colonists ever visited the site.

²Maurice A. Mook, "Algonkian Ethnohistory of the Carolina Sound," reprinted from *Journal of the Washington Academy of Science*, 34 (June 15, 1944), p. 181, hereinafter cited as "Algonkian Ethnohistory."

³*Ibid.*, 181.

⁴*Ibid.*, 186.

⁵*Ibid.*, 187.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷David Beers Quinn (ed.), *The Roanoke Voyages 1584-1590: Documents to Illustrate the English Voyages to North America under the Patent Granted to Walter Raleigh in 1584*, 2 volumes (London: For the Hakluyt Society, 1955), I, 110. William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps with an Annotated Check-list of Printed and Manuscript Regional and Local Maps of Southeastern North America during the Colonial Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), plate 14, reproduces a map drawn by the water colorist and surveyor, John White. The map shows Pasquenoke situated very close to the present location of Pasquotank County, hereinafter cited as Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*.

In fact, there is no data concerning the Indian population of the area for over a hundred years after the failure of the Raleigh colonies until John Lawson's census in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Lawson recorded that there were approximately 200 Indians known as the Chowanoc, Pasquotank, Poteskeet, and Yeopim living above the Albemarle Sound in the same area in which the Weapemeoc had been living in the late sixteenth century.⁸ His mention is the only record of the nation from which Pasquotank County supposedly received its name.⁹ His record is concise: ". . . Paspatank Indians, Town, 1; Paspatank River, Fighting men, 10 . . ." ¹⁰ His formula for deriving population totals was that the women and children equaled three-fifths of the population; the fighting men, the remaining two-fifths. Thus the Pasquotank tribe would have numbered only twenty-five. The Moseley Map, dated seventeen years later, did not list the Pasquotanks although it included the other tribes.¹¹ Lawson had remarked that they had adopted the way of the dominant white population and had thus become absorbed in the larger population.¹²

The first white men had come to Albemarle country southward from the successful Virginia colony. The year following the settlement of Jamestown, men were sent into the Chowan area.¹³ During the following years, a number of exploratory trips were made into the area west of the Albemarle country.¹⁴

⁸John Lawson, *Lawson's History of North Carolina*, edited by Frances Latham Harriss (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1951), p. 255, hereinafter cited as Lawson, *History*. John Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 89, concludes that Pasquotank, Chowanoc, Poteskeet, and Yeopim were all divisions of Weapemeoc.

⁹Mook, "Algonkian Ethnohistory," p. 221.

¹⁰Lawson, *History*, p. 255.

¹¹Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, plate 53.

¹²Lawson, *History*, p. 200.

¹³William S. Powell, *Ye Countie of Albemarle in Carolina: A Collection of Documents 1664-1675* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1958), p. xiv, hereinafter cited as Powell, *Ye Countie of Albemarle*.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. xiv-xxi; see also William L. Saunders (ed.), *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 volumes (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1886-1890), I, 1-17, hereinafter cited as Saunders, *Colonial Records*.

By the 1650's, the Virginian fur traders had begun to look longingly toward the area in which Elizabeth City would eventually be established. Construction of a fur trading post for Nathaniel Batts began as early as July, 1654.¹⁵ The Comberford Map of 1657 locates a house, labelled "Batts House," on the neck of land between Roanoke River and Salmon Creek.¹⁶ Undoubtedly this was the fur trading center erected for Batts by Francis Yeardley, the Virginia explorer and trader.¹⁷ George Fox, on his visit to Albemarle in 1672, spoke of Nathaniel Batts, "Governor of Roan-oke," who came to hear him.¹⁸

Batts holds the distinction of having the earliest recorded deed for property in North Carolina. The property conveyed in the deed is of more interest than that on Salmon Creek to Elizabeth City as it was located in lower Pasquotank County. On September 24, 1660, the chief of the Yeopim Indians deeded to Batts "all the land on the Southwest side of Paccotank River from the mouth of said River to the head of New Begun Creek."¹⁹ The second extant deed, dated March 1, 1661/62, transfers from Kilcanenan, King of the Yeopim Indians, to George Durant, land on North Roanoke Sound and next to Perquimans River, later known as Durant's Neck.²⁰ Both deeds include names of people who had earlier grants. Therefore there must have been numerous

¹⁵Lindley Smith Butler, "Life in Albemarle County, Carolina, 1663-1689" (unpublished master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1964), p. 37, hereinafter cited as Butler, "Life in Albemarle County."

¹⁶Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, plate 32.

¹⁷Butler, "Life in Albemarle County."

¹⁸Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 217.

¹⁹Norfolk County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Chesapeake Municipal Building, Chesapeake, D, 293. Now also recorded in Pasquotank County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Pasquotank County Court House, Elizabeth City, 286, p. 240, hereinafter cited as Pasquotank County Deeds. See also Elizabeth G. McPherson (ed.), "Nathaniel Batts, Landholder on Pasquotank River, 1660," *The North Carolina Historical Review* XLIII (January, 1966), pp. 66-81.

²⁰Perquimans County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Perquimans County Court House, Hertford, Book A, Instrument 374.

deeds which have been destroyed or are still hidden in old deed books.

Further evidence for early Virginian settlement in the Albemarle is found in a will written February 1, 1659, in which James Tooke, of Isle of Wight County, Virginia, bequeathed to his daughter, Dorothy, among other items, "four cows and heifers that is [*sic*] already in the custody of her husband John Harvey at the Southwest."²¹

By the close of the decade of the 1650's there must have been a considerable number of Virginians who had settled in the Albemarle, for on October 9, 1662, the Council of Virginia appointed Samuel Stephens to be "commander of the southern Plantation."²² This general term was used for the region then being settled in Carolina.

By this time a number of influential Englishmen had become interested in planting a colony south of Virginia. Eight of these powerful Englishmen who had supported Charles II during his exile and who had been leaders in restoring the throne—Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon; George Monck, Duke of Albemarle; William, Lord Craven; John, Lord Berkeley; Anthony, Lord Ashley, later Earl of Shaftesbury; Sir George Carteret; Sir William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia; and Sir John Colleton—virtually forced Charles to grant their request for a patent in America.²³ The charter for the land between 31° and 36° north latitude, called for the first time Carolina, was granted on March 24, 1663.²⁴

In the meantime, Virginians were continuing to migrate into the area. On September 25, 1663, Virginia's Governor Berkeley

²¹Butler, "Life in Albemarle County," p. 39.

²²H. R. McIlwaine, *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia: with Notes and Excerpts from Original Council and General Court Records into 1683, Now Lost* (Richmond: Virginia State Library Board, 1924), p. 507.

²³For an excellent study of the proprietors, see William S. Powell, *The Carolina Charter of 1663* (Raleigh: The State Department of Archives and History, 1954).

²⁴Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 20-33.

issued twenty-eight land grants in the Albemarle.²⁵ Eleven of these grants hold especial interest to Elizabeth City. One of them was for property that later became part of Elizabeth City, although it was not part of the original town. This grant of 750 acres on the southwest side of the "Paspentanke River" was made to Thomas Relfe, and later became known as Relfe's Point.²⁶ This grant is also of primary importance because it was a pivot point for four other grants.

Relfe's patent ran along the land of Thomas Keele and by "Mr. Fortson's marked trees."²⁷ Keele (Keely) was granted 800 acres in a bay of Pasquotank River.²⁸ Mrs. Mary Fortson received 200 acres on the west side of the Pasquotank.²⁹ This land was also adjacent to a 640-acre grant to John Battle.³⁰ The land of Robert Peele, consisting of 350 acres, was on the southwest side of the river between the Relfe and Battle grants.³¹

Five of the remaining patents were at New Begun Creek (eight miles south of Elizabeth City). Henry Palin received 450 acres at the mouth of the creek;³² Richard Buller was granted 1200 acres along the creek.³³ Robert Lowry's patent was for 300 acres in a bay at the mouth of the creek between the lands of Palin and William Jennings.³⁴ Jennings was granted 550 acres on the creek between those of Lowry and Philip Evans.³⁵ Evans' grant was for 300 acres also on New Begun Creek.³⁶

The remaining patent was to Katharine Woodward and Philarette Woodward, her daughter. This grant contained 750 acres

²⁵Nell Marion Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers: Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1963), pp. 425-429.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 427.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 426.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 428.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 426.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*, p. 425.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 428, 429.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 427.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 428.

"on the west side of the Paspentanke River, beginning at a point above the mouth of a large creek falling into said river. . . ."³⁷

Each of these patents was given by Berkeley in exchange for transportation of people to America. Fifty acres of land were granted for each person transported.

As the patent descriptions of these tracts are so indefinite, their exact locations cannot be pinpointed. But it is possible that the grants just listed could have covered the river shore from New Begun Creek to modern Elizabeth City. And, there is no question but that the Relfe grant is proof of settlement within the immediate Elizabeth City area. Perhaps most important is the proof that these early grants offer of the fact that the Pasquotank area represents one of the first settled areas in North Carolina. No other region can claim a more ancient heritage in North Carolina.

During the administration of the first proprietary governor, William Drummond,³⁸ the first assembly of Albemarle was held in 1665 at Hall's Creek in what is today Pasquotank County. More legend than fact surrounds this meeting as no minutes of the assembly survived.³⁹ The appointment of Drummond as governor and the meeting of the assembly mark the beginning of the government of the County of Albemarle as the proprietors called the settlements in the northeastern corner of their province of Carolina.

The proprietors were soon shocked to learn that their grant did not include the Albemarle settlement. The northern boundary of 36° actually ran through Albemarle Sound, south of Albemarle County. Thus, a second charter was granted on June 13, 1665, by which the northern boundary was established at 36° 30' to include the valuable settlement north of the sound.⁴⁰

According to Governor Drummond, Albemarle was an area of

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 426.

³⁸Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, xiii.

³⁹See Mrs. Max Abernethy, "First Tar Heel Assembly Studied," *Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook*, 2 volumes (Elizabeth City: Pasquotank Historical Society, 1955), I, 20.

⁴⁰Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 102.

40 miles square or 1600 square miles.⁴¹ By 1668, this area had been divided into four precincts: Chowan, Perquimans, Pasquotank, and Currituck.⁴² From records of the period and also from the fact that the counties were formed from the precincts,⁴³ the Pasquotank Precinct boundaries can be established as basically the same as Pasquotank County before the American Revolution (*i.e.*, before Camden County was separated). There is some slight evidence that Pasquotank Precinct extended into the northern section of modern Perquimans County.⁴⁴

The year following Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia, Pasquotank Precinct was the scene of another rebellion. Culpeper's Rebellion, as it has been called, climaxed on Relfe's Point. The disagreement began as a factional feud between those in the Albemarle who favored the proprietary rule and those who opposed it. Thomas Eastchurch and Thomas Miller, leaders in the proprietary faction, sailed for England to report happenings in the Albemarle to the Proprietors. The opposite side soon sent George Durant to represent their position before the august body.

The proprietors listened more readily to the Eastchurch-Miller report. Eastchurch was appointed governor of the Albemarle. Miller was given the dual appointment of Secretary of the Colony and Collector of Customs. On the return trip to Albemarle, Eastchurch married in the West Indies, and sent Miller on to the Albemarle with all the powers of the governor until Eastchurch arrived.

Miller began collecting customs properly for the first time in

⁴¹*Ibid.*, I, 93.

⁴²The earliest mention of any precinct is in a letter from Governor Samuel Stephens to Peter Carteret, dated October 28, 1668, in which he mentions Pasquotank Precinct. The original is in North Carolina under the Proprietors: Original Documents to Governor Stephens and Governor Carteret between 1664 and 1674 in the North Carolina Department of Archives and History. A copy can be found in Powell, *Ye Countie of Albemarle*, pp. 32, 33.

⁴³Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina*, 16 volumes (Winston and Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 1895-1914), XXIII, 126, hereinafter cited as Clark, *State Records*.

⁴⁴Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, plate 53.

the life of the colony. All seemed to go well until Captain Zachariah Gillam's *Carolina* with George Durant aboard sailed into the Albemarle Sound from London in December, 1677. Miller demanded that Gillam pay duty on tobacco he had earlier transported from the Albemarle. Gillam refused and was arrested.

Miller rowed out to the *Carolina* and declared Durant under arrest as a traitor. But Miller was overpowered and held in confinement. John Culpeper, the next morning, drew up a "Remonstrance" for the "Pasquotanckians." All of the proprietary party that did not flee to Virginia were arrested. The life of Miller, and probably the lives of other proprietary leaders, was saved by the arrival of Eastchurch in Virginia. In the meantime, Timothy Biggs, one of the proprietary faction, escaped to England.

Culpeper sailed to England to counter the charges that Biggs had presented. Culpeper was arrested in England for confiscating the King's customs and fines. He was later charged with being a principal contriver of the rebellion. Although Culpeper had acted in direct opposition to the proprietors, the Earl of Shaftesbury defended him in his trial. The proprietors wanted to bring peace in the colony to prevent the King's reclaiming the charter of Carolina. Culpeper's acquittal was a welcome relief to the inhabitants of the Albemarle.⁴⁵

Although some have gone so far as to call Culpeper's Rebellion the "first blow for American independence," it was not such. It was the outgrowth of a local feud among men who intended to "rule or ruin."

There is no question as to one "first" that Pasquotank Precinct claims, however. Charles Griffin, a lay reader of the Church of England, who came to the Albemarle area from the West Indies, opened the first school in North Carolina in 1705. His school was held in such high esteem that even the Quakers sent their children to him.⁴⁶ Griffin was equally successful in the religious field. William Gordon, Anglican minister to the Chowan and

⁴⁵Hugh F. Rankin, *Upheaval in Albemarle: The Story of Culpeper's Rebellion 1675-1689* (Raleigh: The Carolina Tercentenary Commission, 1962), pp. 1-17.

⁴⁶Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 714.

Perquimans parishes, gave Griffin the credit for Pasquotank's superior position in both religious life and worship.⁴⁷ Yet, by 1709, Griffin had moved to the Chowan precinct.⁴⁸ Although his school was taken over by the new Anglican minister, James Adams,⁴⁹ this first school of North Carolina fades from history.⁵⁰

The dense population of Pasquotank Precinct was probably the deciding factor that had caused Griffin to locate his school in a Quaker area. His successor Adams stated in 1709 that there were 1,332 people in the Pasquotank Precinct.⁵¹ Although the area did not keep the distinction,⁵² at this time Pasquotank was the most thickly settled area of North Carolina. As such, it was the center of colony activity in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Pasquotank Precinct became Pasquotank County by a law passed in 1738 which stated "the several Precincts within this province shall be called Counties" after March 25, 1739.⁵³ In the meantime, Carolina had become a royal colony. The crown's growing dissatisfaction with the proprietors' administration led to the purchase from seven of them of their rights to Carolina on July 25, 1729.⁵⁴

During the precinct period, a court house had been built in Pasquotank. No record establishes the exact date for the erection; yet several records of the period enable an approximate date to be fixed. On April 12, 1726, William Reed was brought before the Carolina assembly for having appointed commissioners and assessed five shillings per poll for the year 1724 on inhabi-

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, I, 684, 714.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, I, 702.

⁵⁰For a more complete study of Charles Griffin, see Herbert R. Paschal, "Charles Griffin: Schoolmaster to the Southern Frontier," *Essays in Southern Biography* (Greenville: East Carolina College Department of History, 1965), II, 1-16.

⁵¹Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 720.

⁵²See following, p. 23, for a comparison in 1790.

⁵³Clark, *State Records*, XXIII, 126.

⁵⁴Saunders, *Colonial Records*, III, 32-48.

tants of Pasquotank Precinct. He had collected the tax under the pretense of building a court house in "some place unknown" although the justices of Pasquotank Precinct had earlier agreed with several persons to build a court house "in the said precinct in a certain piece of land." Reed was ordered to return the money; and the justices were to proceed with their court house.⁵⁵

On October 17, 1717, a John Palin and his wife, Susannah, sold one acre of land on a small creek which ran into New Begun Creek to John Palin, Edward Gall, David Bailey, and John Connor, commissioners for erecting a court house.⁵⁶ Moseley's Map, survey for which was made the following year, showed a court house on the north bank of New Begun Creek.⁵⁷

Thus, within the two-year span the Pasquotank Court House was built at New Begun Creek. The earliest extant minutes of the Court of Quarter Sessions and Pleas, dated April 12, 1727, stated that the court was then meeting at this same location, known as Broomfield.⁵⁸ Court was held at Broomfield until 1757-1758. By 1758, complaints of the dangerous journey across the river at such a wide point made by citizens living on the northeast side caused the authorities to move the court house to a more convenient location.

The inconvenience of crossing the river to attend court had been a constant source of irritation to citizens on the northeast side of the river. As early as 1744, several of the inhabitants of that area had entered a petition before the legislature "praying a bill may be brought in to erect the east side of the Pasquotank River into a distinct County."⁵⁹ Six days later, William Burgess, one of Pasquotank's representatives who lived on the east side, introduced a bill for a county to be formed and named Middlesex.⁶⁰ The bill was not passed.

⁵⁵Saunders, *Colonial Records*, II, 615, 616.

⁵⁶Pasquotank County Deeds, A, 410.

⁵⁷Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, plate 52.

⁵⁸These minutes which are located at the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, are hereinafter cited as Quarter Sessions.

⁵⁹Saunders, *Colonial Records*, IV, 740.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, IV, 743.

Since the situation was not alleviated by the creation of a new county as requested, a partial appeasement was accomplished by moving the court house to a location where the river was not as wide, Relfe's Point, or Winfield. But the court would not wait for the completion of a new court house. Rather, it met in the Relfe home until a new court house could be completed.⁶¹

Moving the court house to Winfield did not alleviate the situation entirely, and the issue of a separate county was not dead. Joseph Jones introduced a bill in 1777 to establish the county of "Cambden [because of] the width of the Pasquotank River, and the difficulty of passing the same, especially in boisterous weather . . . to attend courts."⁶² This time the bill was passed, and Pasquotank County lost the northeastern half of its area.

Since the court house had been moved to Winfield to appease residents across the river, and this need for appeasement had been removed, momentum now grew to move the county seat to the county's newly incorporated town—Nixonton. In 1758, a bill was passed in the legislature to establish a "Town on Land formerly belonging to Zachariah Nixon lying on the North East side of the Little River in Pasquotank,"⁶³ which the governor named Nixonton.⁶⁴ The prestige of the county's first and only town would be even more greatly enhanced by moving the court house there. Thus, in the middle of the court session on September 23, 1785, when it was ascertained that a new court house building had been completed according to specifications at Nixonton, the court moved to that town.⁶⁵ The court remained in this location until the establishment of Elizabeth City.

During the period that the movement to form the northeastern section of the county into Camden County was being pushed to a

⁶¹Minutes are not complete between the court sessions of September, 1757, and June, 1758. The September session was held at Broomfield; the June session was in the new court house at Winfield. In the scattered pages covering the period between, mention is made of the session being held at Relfe's house, but no date is included.

⁶²Clark, *State Records*, XXIV, 26, 27.

⁶³Saunders, *Colonial Records*, V, 1019.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, V, 1056.

⁶⁵Quarter Sessions, September, 1785.

successful conclusion, the colonies were engaged in the war for independence. Records show that a number of men from the Camden section, including Isaac Gregory, Peter Dauge, Abner Lamb, Selby Harney, and Dempsey Burgess, made outstanding contributions to the effort.⁶⁶ Yet, not one name from the southwestern side of the river stands out. Two regiments were created in the county in 1776. The officers of the second regiment were men on the Camden side of the river. The officers for the first regiment were Thomas Boyd, Spencer Ripley, Othniel Lascelles, and John Casey.⁶⁷

Not only were there few heroes from Pasquotank in the Revolutionary War; at least one source placed the county in the ranks of the loyalists. A letter in the Lee Papers included the following statement: "This North Landing is at the head of North River, which communicates with a great part of Carolina, and that the most disaffected, particularly the counties of Pasquotank and Currituck."⁶⁸ Scarcity of records prevents the substantiation or rebuttal of the charge.

One reason for a charge of loyalism as well as the lack of Revolutionary heroes from Pasquotank County may have been the heavy Quaker population in the area. As early as 1672, George Fox, the founder of the sect, had visited the area. He found only a few Quakers at the time.⁶⁹ Much prestige, however, was added to the sect when one of their members, the proprietor John Archdale, was appointed governor in 1695.⁷⁰ By the turn of the century, the Quakers were the strongest sect in the area. The center of their strength was in Pasquotank and Per-

⁶⁶Jesse F. Pugh, *Three Hundred Years Along the Pasquotank: A Biographical History of Camden County* (Old Trap, N. C.: privately published, 1951), discusses the records of all these men.

⁶⁷John H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1964), p. 339.

⁶⁸*The Lee Papers, 1754-1776* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1872), pp. 384, 385.

⁶⁹Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 216-218.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, I, 389, 390.

quimans counties.⁷¹ In the Quaker Minute Book for 1703, the Quakers have an entry stipulating a "meeting house shall be built at Pasquotank with as much speed as can be."⁷² A Quaker meeting house was built at Symons Creek, near Nixonton.⁷³ In 1731, the Quakers were still the largest religious group of the area.⁷⁴

When the United States declared independence from Great Britain, Quakers refused to take the oath of allegiance to the newly established government.⁷⁵ Although they were actually more pacifists than loyalists, they were more often placed in the latter category by the patriots. Hence, since no other evidence can be presented, this may have been the basis for the charge of Tory sentiment.

Although the Quakers were one of the strongest religious groups in the area, they were by no means the only group. The Church of England had been represented in the area since the earliest settlement; but it had been greatly neglected in the early years. This condition changed, however, with the appointment of Henderson Walker as governor to succeed Archdale. Walker secured the passage of the Vestry Act in 1701 by which the Church of England was established as the religion of the colony. This was only a temporary victory as the proprietors rejected the law.⁷⁶ Walker then wrote to the Bishop of London that "for fifty years in this place" they had been "without priest or altar." He entreated the bishop "to send a good man among us to regain the flock."⁷⁷ Walker wanted "a good man" because Daniel Britt, the

⁷¹ Francis C. Anscombe, *I Have Called You Friends: The Story of Quakerism in North Carolina* (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1959), p. 63, hereinafter cited as Anscombe, *I Have Called You Friends*. See also Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 712-714, 720-722.

⁷² Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 63.

⁷³ Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, plate 53.

⁷⁴ John Brickell, *The Natural History of North Carolina with an Account of the Trade, Manners, and Customs of the Christian and Indian Inhabitants* (Murfreesboro, N. C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1968), p. 35, hereinafter cited as Brickell, *The Natural History of North Carolina*.

⁷⁵ Anscombe, *I Have Called You Friends*, p. 155.

⁷⁶ Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, xxv.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 571-573.

only minister that had been sent to serve the Anglicans of the area, had hurt the cause more than he had helped.⁷⁸ Thus the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts sent John Blair to the Albemarle in 1704.⁷⁹ Blair, overworked and underpaid, soon returned to England.⁸⁰ In 1708, James Adams was sent for Pasquotank and Currituck counties. He reported that 900 of the 1,332 people of Pasquotank were members of the Church of England.⁸¹ Yet, there was no edifice, although the members had promised to build a church and two chapels of ease, "the precinct being of too great an extent to meet all at one or two places."⁸² The minutes of the Pasquotank vestries have been lost, so no records as to the dates or locations of these houses of worship exist.⁸³

There were some Presbyterians in the Albemarle before 1700, but they were not organized as a church group. John Blair spoke of Presbyterians in the area.⁸⁴ John Brickell wrote, in 1731, that after Quakers Presbyterians were the second numerous group in eastern North Carolina, but they were mainly around the Neuse River.⁸⁵ The Baptists, according to an early Baptist historian, were represented in the area as early as 1695.⁸⁶ In 1729 Shiloh Baptist Church was established on the northeast side of the Pasquotank River.⁸⁷ By the time of the Revolution, the Baptists had become the most numerous sect of the colony.⁸⁸

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 597, 600.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 603.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, I, 720.

⁸² *Ibid.*, I, 681.

⁸³ George F. Hill, *Brief History of Christ Episcopal Church Parish* (Elizabeth City: privately published, 1948), pp. 3, 4.

⁸⁴ Saunders, *Colonial Records*, I, 601, 602.

⁸⁵ Brickell, *The Natural History of North Carolina*, p. 36.

⁸⁶ Morgan Edwards, quoted by George W. Paschal, *History of North Carolina Baptists 1663-1805*, 2 volumes (Raleigh: The General Board, North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 1930), I, 123.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 146, 147.

⁸⁸ Hugh T. Lefler and Albert R. Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 129.

No Methodist activity was recorded in the area until ten years before Elizabeth City's establishment. In 1782, Edward Dromgoole and Jesse Lee, two Methodist preachers arrived in Edenton. They had been sent to lay out a circuit in the unoccupied territory of upper Albemarle. They formed the Camden Circuit which extended as far as Currituck and which reported twenty-two members in 1783.⁸⁹

There were thus four religious bodies represented in the Albemarle at the time of Elizabeth City's establishment. By 1793, the Quakers seem to have been declining rapidly in numbers, and the other religious groups, especially the Baptists, were beginning to come into prominence.

On the eve of the town's beginning, the first national census was taken. In this census of 1790, Pasquotank County had a population total of 5,497. This ranked the county thirty-fourth among the fifty-four counties of the state. Of the total population, 1,623 were slaves; there were 79 free Negroes. The remaining white population of 3,795 was divided into 799 families.⁹⁰

The white population of Pasquotank would average approximately seventeen people per square mile if it were evenly divided. Probably the people were mainly scattered to this extent throughout the county. Nixonton was the only town, and all evidence indicates that it was the size of a small village. In Pasquotank County—in fact, in all of the Albemarle except for ancient Edenton—there was no important town. But action of a number of enterprising citizens for the building of a canal through the Dismal Swamp to connect the Chesapeake Bay and the Albemarle Sound would be enough incentive to change this condition.

In February, 1787, the Virginia Legislature passed a bill for the digging of the Dismal Swamp Canal.⁹¹ North Carolina passed the necessary legislation in November, 1790.⁹² Plans were being

⁸⁹Leroy M. Lee, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Jesse Lee* (Charleston: John Early, 1848), pp. 105-109.

⁹⁰Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 872-888.

⁹¹*Hening's Statutes at Large from the First Session in the Year 1619*, 13 volumes (Richmond: privately published, 1820-1823), XII, 478.

⁹²Clark, *State Records*, XXV, 83-93.

made for commencement of the digging. There must be a town at the southern terminal of the canal as Norfolk stood at the northern terminus. Elizabeth City would supply that need.

II

The Formative Years: 1793-1800

Nature, it seems, had almost decreed that the location of Elizabeth City would become an important area. The Pasquotank River is approximately three miles wide at its mouth on the Albemarle Sound. As one sails up the river, the width decreases very gradually until it abruptly narrows to a width less than one-fifth of a mile at the spot where the town was established. Hence, the earliest name for the area was the Narrows.¹

The earliest recorded mention of the Narrows² is in a 1764 law which designated "the Narrows of the Pasquotank River" as an inspection station and landing "for . . . Hemp, Flax, Flax Seed, Pork, Beef, Rice, Flour, Indigo, Butter, Tar, Pitch, Turpentine, Staves, Heading, Lumber, and Shingles."³

The location was given another boost toward prominence by virtue of its being ideal for running a ferry across the Pasquotank River. A ferry was a necessity in the period before 1774 when Camden County was formed from the area on the northeast side of the river. As all legal business, especially the quarterly sessions

¹ See map following p. 20.

² Legend pushes the date of the site's importance back much earlier. Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina*, 4 volumes (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Co., 1954-1965), I, 359, repeats a legend that a port existed there as early as 1722. "Speaker [Jerome B. Flora] Cites Pasquotank History," *Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook*, 2 volumes (Elizabeth City: Pasquotank Historical Society, 1955), I, 54, stated that the port was called Shingle Landing as early as 1750, hereinafter cited as *Yearbook*.

³ Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina*, 16 volumes (Winston and Goldsboro: State of North Carolina, 1895-1914), XXIII, 641, hereinafter cited as Clark, *State Records*.

The map facing is part of *Albemarle Sound Region, Post-1770*, from the Clinton Collection (#293), William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

LEGEND

- A — Site of Elizabeth City
- B — Nobscrook Creek (Knobb's Creek)
- C — Solley's Ferry
- D — Trueblood's Mill
- E — Newbegun Creek
- F — Areneuse Creek
- G — Nixonton



of the county court, had to be transacted on the southwest side of the river where the court house was located, those on the opposite side needed transportation across the river. Since the court house was always located in the southern portion of the county, the river bridge, located in the northern portion where the river is almost narrow enough for one to jump across it near its head, was of little benefit to anyone attending court. A ferry was a necessity.

The earliest known ferry crossing the Pasquotank was Sawyer's Ferry, which was the crossing for the road from Edenton to Norfolk shown on the Moseley Map (surveyed in 1728).⁴ However, this ferry was inconvenient for people on the northeast to use since it shared the same distinction as the river bridge of being too far north, especially when the court was at Broomfield.

Sawyer's Ferry is not mentioned in the county court minutes. The earliest mention of a ferry found in these records is the permission granted Samuel Plommer in 1741 to run a ferry from Areneuse Creek on the northeast side over to New Begun Creek near the Broomfield Court House.⁵ This could have been the second ferry, but since no further mention of this ferry has been found, it is probably safe to conclude that Plommer never used his privilege.⁶

The ferry most frequently mentioned in the records of the eighteenth century is Solley's⁷ which ran from present-day Chantilly to Relfe's Point, the location of the second court house. Although the river was not as wide here as at the crossing

⁴William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps with an Annotated Checklist of Printed and Manuscript Regional and Local Maps of Southeastern North America during the Colonial Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), plate 53, hereinafter cited as Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*.

⁵Minutes of the Pasquotank County Court of Quarter Sessions and Pleas, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, September, 1741, hereinafter cited as Quarter Sessions.

⁶Jesse F. Pugh, *Three Hundred Years along the Pasquotank* (Old Trap, N. C.: privately published, 1957), p.43, hereinafter cited as Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*.

⁷Quarter Sessions of the period abound in mention of Solley's Ferry.

proposed for Plommer's Ferry, it was still dangerously broad. Thus, the establishment of a new ferry at the Narrows in the 1770's⁸ quickly overshadowed Solley's Ferry.

The Narrows ferry, originally run by the Sawyer family, but remembered by present-day residents of Elizabeth City as Lamb's Ferry,⁹ ran from a location near the home of Enoch Sawyer on the Camden side to a destination just north of the mouth of Knobb's Creek. Even though Camden County had been established by this time, the need for crossing the river did not vanish. If one came across the ferry with plans to go into southern Pasquotank County, he passed through the plantation that would later be Elizabeth City. The location of Lamb's Ferry dock on the west side of the Pasquotank probably was a factor in the choice of the Narrows as a site for a town.¹⁰

The road from Lamb's Ferry formed one arm of a developing crossroads at the Narrows. Collet's Map (ca. 1770) reveals that the road leading from Norfolk to Nixonton passed by the Narrows.¹¹ Thus a land traveller would pass through Great Bridge to Moyock, come across the river bridge (approximately half-way between Elizabeth City and Morgan's Corner) and then pass through the plantation which would soon become Elizabeth City; at Winfield he would turn right to go on to Nixonton. However this did not mean that only the traveller from Norfolk would come through the Narrows; but, of much greater importance, the residents of northern Pasquotank County passed the site on their way to court when the court house was at Broomfield and Winfield; and many probably also chose the Narrows route when the court moved to Nixonton.

⁸The exact date of its establishment is not known although the date of 1774 is assigned in Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p.44.

⁹Author's interview with Mrs. W. T. Jackson, Jr., Elizabeth City, May 1, 1967 (notes on interview in possession of author).

¹⁰One need only look at Mann's Harbor in Dare County before and after the building of the bridge crossing Croatan Sound to see the advantages of a ferry dock to a community. During the period of the ferry, there were thriving stores at the dock. Today these stores no longer thrive as people hurry across the bridge to the Dare beaches.

¹¹Cumming, *Southeast in Early Maps*, plate 65.

The fourth arm of the crossroads led to Pritchard's Mill. Numerous road building acts of the period speak of a road from "Pritchard's Mill to the Narrows." The earliest mention is in the county court records of December, 1784, when Corban Weymouth was appointed overseer of the road from Pritchard's Fork to the Narrows.¹² Six months later he was instructed to make a cart road leading from his plantation to the "old road, from thence to . . . Pritchard's Mill road leading to the Narrows to the Main Road."¹³ The Price-Strother map (1808) shows this mill to be approximately four miles west of the river on Knobb's Creek.¹⁴

There was limited business activity in the area before the birth of the town. Grist mills were not uncommon, for wills and deeds of the area speak quite frequently of them. Two mills of the region are especially prominent in the late eighteenth century. These are Pritchard's Mill, just mentioned, and Trueblood's Mill. Daniel Trueblood received permission in 1757 to build a mill;¹⁵ his mill adjoined the property of Elizabeth Taylor (later Mrs. Adam Tooley) on whose land Elizabeth City was subsequently established.¹⁶ The mill was probably situated on the one hundred acres of land that Trueblood had bought in 1754 which extended from "the fork of Nobscrook Creek [Knobb's Creek] . . . to Rum Quarter Branch."¹⁷ A 1776 map shows Trueblood's Mill on present-day Charles Creek¹⁸ which may have been the name later given to Rum Quarter Branch.

No record which pinpoints the beginning of Pritchard's Mill

¹²Quarter Sessions, December, 1784.

¹³*Ibid.*, June, 1785.

¹⁴This map is in a collection compiled by W. P. Cumming, along with a book describing them, W. P. Cumming, *North Carolina in Maps* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1966).

¹⁵Quarter Sessions, September, 1757.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, March, 1783.

¹⁷Pasquotank County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Pasquotank County Court House, Elizabeth City, C, 214, hereinafter cited as Pasquotank County Deeds.

¹⁸See map following p. 20.

has been found, but James Pritchard willed to his son David, in 1796, the mill pond, water mill, and new stones.¹⁹

Like gristmills, ordinaries were not uncommon in Pasquotank, although ordinaries at the Narrows were slow in appearing. Joseph Edney was given permission by the county court in June, 1792, to keep an ordinary at the Narrows "at the house Richard Smith formerly lived in."²⁰ No further mention of an ordinary, inn, or tavern at the Narrows is found until Samuel Cobb was given permission to keep an ordinary at his dwelling house in Elizabeth City in December, 1797.²¹

Both a school and a church existed in the vicinity of the Narrows before the town was established. Jeremiah Murden deeded land in the area to the Anabaptist Society on August 30, 1783.²² The deed gave no location of the land, other than that it adjoined a road and an unnamed branch.²³ The church was admitted to the Kehukee Baptist Association as Knobbscrook Church on May 26, 1786.²⁴

All that is known of the school is that it is mentioned in a road building act of 1784 as "the school house on Pritchard's Mill road leading to the Narrows to the Main Road."²⁵

It was this typically rural area in one of the oldest settled areas of North Carolina which in 1793 became the location for the southern terminus of the Dismal Swamp Canal. The Narrows found itself thrust into prominence, and the 1793 North Carolina General Assembly, sitting at Fayetteville, moved to meet the

¹⁹Pasquotank County Will Books, Office of the Clerk of Court, Pasquotank County Court House, Elizabeth City, M, 39, hereinafter cited as Pasquotank County Wills.

²⁰Quarter Sessions, June, 1792.

²¹*Ibid.*, June, 1797.

²²Pasquotank County Deeds, J, 259.

²³A. H. Outlaw, *History of First Baptist Church of Elizabeth City, N. C.* (Elizabeth City: privately published, 1961), p. 37, speculates that the property was just south of the Knobb's Creek Bridge on Highway 17, a short distance to the west of the road.

²⁴Lemuel Burkitt and Jesse Read, *History of the Kehukee Association* (1803) which is Part I in Joseph Biggs, *A Concise History of the Kehukee Association in Two Parts* (Tarboro, N. C.: George Howard, 1834), p. 70.

²⁵Quarter Sessions, June, 1785.

situation. Stating that a town at this location would be "conducive to the welfare of [Pasquotank] County and of public utility,"²⁶ the Assembly proceeded to charter the town of Redding (soon to be Elizabeth City) at the Narrows.

The act of incorporation appointed John Lane, Isaac Sawyer, Timothy Cotter, Bailey Jackson, and Benjamin Jones, or any three of them, as commissioners or directors of the town to be known as Redding and ordered them to obtain fifty acres of land from Adam and Elizabeth Tooley as a site for the town. The commissioners were instructed to divide this land

in half acre lots on the back ground, and quarter acre lots on the water, at such price for each lot as the said Commissioners, or a majority of them may think proper, and streets not less than fifty-six feet in width for the front principal streets, and not less than thirty three feet in width for the side and cross streets; which lots and streets the said Commissioners are required to lay down in a regular plot, numbering the lots therein laid down

. . . as soon as fifty lots shall be subscribed for, all the numbers of the lots of the said town shall be placed in one box, and the names of the subscribers in another, and when a name is drawn out and a number at the same time, his shall be the lot the number of which was drawn with his name²⁷

On June 10, 1794, the Tooleys sold the land to Commissioners Lane, Sawyer, Cotter, and Jackson. The deed stated that the property was commonly called the Narrows Plantation and listed the selling price as 500 pounds.²⁸

The name Redding was to be short-lived. It is assumed that this first name was to honor the Redding family, one of the early influential families of the area. The first Pasquotank deed to a Redding records a transfer of land to Elizabeth Redding from her father, John Jennings, on January 1, 1707.²⁹ In 1712, one

²⁶*Laws of North Carolina, 1793, c. LV, hereinafter cited as Laws, with appropriate date.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Pasquotank County Deeds, M, 355.

²⁹*Ibid.*, A, 45.

Jo [?] Redding bought land from William Relfe.³⁰ Joseph Redding represented Pasquotank in the Colonial Legislature in 1773³¹ and in the First Provincial Congress of North Carolina.³² He was sheriff of the county in 1784.³³ His brother Thomas was elected to the North Carolina Legislature in 1782 and was re-elected virtually every term through the 1793 session in which Redding was chartered. He was serving in the senate when the bill was passed.³⁴ Moreover, members of the family were original owners of eight lots in the town. Joseph bought only one (73),³⁵ and the family of Thomas accounted for the other six: Thomas bought three (7, 8, and 10);³⁶ his wife, Miriam, two (19 and 25);³⁷ and his eldest son, Jesse, two (5 and 47).³⁸ Despite the prominence of the Redding family, the name of the new town was changed in 1794 when the General Assembly renamed the town Elizabeth (Elizabethtown).³⁹ This name, too, was destined to be short-lived; for the county seat of Tyrrell was also named Elizabethtown, and much confusion ensued. Thus in 1801 the Legislature renamed the Tyrrell seat Columbia; and the Pasquotank town was given the proud but presumptuous name of Elizabeth City.⁴⁰

Before any speculations can be advanced as to why the name Elizabeth was given to the town, one must return to the Tooleys who sold the land for the town. The land has an interesting history. Mrs. Tooley's paternal grandfather, Thomas Taylor, had

³⁰*Ibid.*, A, 30.

³¹William Saunders (ed.), *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 10 volumes (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1886-1890), IX, 716ff, hereinafter cited as Saunders, *Colonial Records*.

³²*Ibid.*, IX, 1042ff.

³³Clark, *State Records*, XXI, 1076.

³⁴John H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1964), p. 339, hereinafter cited as Wheeler, *Historical Sketches*.

³⁵Pasquotank County Deeds, O, 157.

³⁶*Ibid.*, O, 430; S, 325.

³⁷*Ibid.*, O, 1427.

³⁸*Ibid.*, N, 469.

³⁹*Laws*, 1794, c. LVIII.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 1801, c. LXII.

owned considerable property in the Knobb's Creek area. Mr. Taylor was Clerk of the Pasquotank Court from 1741 to 1768.⁴¹ He was one of the four persons named to oversee the building of the court house at Nixonton in 1756.⁴²

Either of two pieces of property bought by Thomas Taylor in the region of the Narrows in the 1740's and 1750's may have been the Narrows Plantation. In October, 1743, he bought a plantation at the Narrows from Caleb Coen,⁴³ and in November, 1755, he bought fifty acres southwest of the Pasquotank River from John Scarfe.⁴⁴ Thomas Taylor's will divided his land among his children in 1771.⁴⁵ His son, William, died the year after his father's death. William bequeathed two-thirds of his estate to the child his wife, Mary, was then carrying.⁴⁶ This child, his only offspring, was a daughter named Elizabeth. Among the properties that Elizabeth inherited from her father was the Narrows Plantation, as is seen in a report of her administrator and step-father, Emperor Moseley. He reported that he rented the Narrows Plantation out in 1776 and 1778.⁴⁷

The heiress Elizabeth married Nathan Relfe at an early age. They had been married less than a year before his death.⁴⁸ Elizabeth was with child at the time of his death. Within a year and a half, she had married Adam Tooley of Princess Anne County, Virginia.⁴⁹ The following year, the Tooleys sold the Narrows Plantation to the commissioners of the new town of Redding.

There are two legends concerning Elizabeth Tooley that

⁴¹Pasquotank County Deeds, B, 353; I, 71.

⁴²Quarter Sessions, December, 1756.

⁴³Pasquotank County Deeds, B, 496.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, F and G, 60.

⁴⁵Chowan County Will Books, Clerk of Court's Office, Chowan County Court House, Edenton, I, 42.

⁴⁶North Carolina Wills, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, XXXI, n.p.

⁴⁷Pasquotank Orphans' Accounts, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, 1771-1780.

⁴⁸Quarter Sessions, September, 1789; September, 1790.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, March, 1792.

should be studied. The first states that she and Adam ran a tavern and grog shop (some even say she was a barmaid).⁵⁰ No record can be found to substantiate this. Although numerous ordinaries and taverns were given permission to operate by the Court of Quarter Sessions and Pleas between the years of 1780 and 1800, there is no mention of Elizabeth, her parents, or her husbands in these permits.⁵¹

The second legend says that Elizabeth City is named for Elizabeth Tooley.⁵² No absolute evidence can be produced either for or against this legend. But one is urged to consider the following two lines of reasoning. First, those who have advanced that belief that the town is named for her state it was because of her outstanding contributions and social position in the town. However, the child which she bore to Nathan Relfe was taken from her and given to Relfe's brother.⁵³ Additionally, Adam Tooley was never selected to be on the jury of the Court of Quarter Sessions and Pleas (one time he was on a special jury to try one case).⁵⁴ He only served once before 1800 on a commission to determine a road route.⁵⁵ He was never appointed to audit an administrator's account.⁵⁶ And, additionally, in 1798 he was listed as an insolvent on a tax list.⁵⁷ One must question the assertion that the Tooleys were a family of outstanding reputation in the area and county.

There are, of course, many other possibilities why the town

⁵⁰This can be found in many sources, e.g., Sharpe, *Geography*, I, 360.

⁵¹One variation of this legend states that the grog shop was located in the incorporated town—on the waterfront on lot number 1 (see "A Walking Tour of Elizabeth City," mimeographed by Elizabeth City Chamber of Commerce). This could not be, for this was part of the property sold by the Tooleys to the commissioners. The first owner of this property paid approximately the same price as all other purchasers of lots had to pay.

⁵²This can be found in many sources, e.g., Fred P. Markham, III, "Barmaid or Aristocrat," *Yearbook*, I, 53.

⁵³Quarter Sessions, June, 1792.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, September, 1793.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, September, 1791, (this may have been before they were married).

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 1790-1800.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, June, 1799.

was named Elizabeth. Some have suggested that the name was to honor Queen Elizabeth I, England's sovereign at the time of the Roanoke Island expeditions.⁵⁸ Others have suggested a possible link between residents in this area and those in Elizabeth City County, Virginia,⁵⁹ although it has never been established that such a relationship ever existed. The historian must admit that no definite reason for the name Elizabeth City can be established with the available evidence.⁶⁰ Folklore and local legend will undoubtedly continue to advance answers to the mystery.

Some consideration should be given to those men who had the honor of being Elizabeth City's first commissioners. Although Benjamin Jones' name was listed by the legislators as one of the commissioners, there seems to be no other connection between Jones and the town. The Tooley deed transferring the property mentions only the other four. None of the deeds which transfer the lots from the town to the first owners include Jones in the listing of the directors. Jones was a resident of Camden County. During his lifetime he purchased over 12,000 acres in that county. In the 1790 census, he is listed as Camden's largest slave owner with thirty-six slaves.⁶¹ In addition, he owned 3,000 acres in Pasquotank County.⁶² He was an original director of the Dismal Swamp Canal, a partner in the New Lebanon Company, and a

⁵⁸There may be a problem here, since America had only shortly before won her independence from Great Britain, and anti-British feeling may have been strong enough to prevent the use of a British sovereign's name.

⁵⁹John Elliott Wood, "Brief Sketch of Pasquotank County," *Yearbook*, I, 22.

⁶⁰Another possibility arises from a study of the county's representation in the General Assembly. Thomas Redding, although he had served virtually every term since 1779, was not serving in the 1794 session, or any subsequent session. It is possible that the new slate that was elected in 1794 represented a political faction that was hostile to the Redding faction and that the new name Elizabeth was to honor some member of their families. However, no genealogical chart has been found on Joseph Keaton, Devotion Davis, or Thomas Banks, the three legislators of 1794. (A list of members of the General Assembly can be found in Wheeler, *Historical Sketches*, p. 340.)

⁶¹Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 349.

⁶²Pasquotank County Deeds, J, 77; L, 41, 431; M, 280; N, 165, 430; O, 76, 168, 452; P, 119, 121, 123; Q, 31.

co-owner of a mercantile business.⁶³ Prior to 1791 he had built a turnpike which ran from Newland through the desert to the head of the Cypress Branch in Perquimans County.⁶⁴ Why did Benjamin Jones never serve with the Redding incorporators? It can only be speculated that the Redding interests were presumptuous in having a man of such importance placed on their list and that he was entirely too busy with his many business investments to spend time dividing a farm into a city.

If owning city lots qualified one to be a city father, John Lane was eminently qualified. By the time he was appointed director of Redding, he already owned nineteen lots in Pasquotank's first town, Nixonton.⁶⁵ He had also been appointed as one of the original incorporators of that town in 1755.⁶⁶ Moreover, Lane had purchased over 150 additional acres in the Nixonton-Hall's Creek area,⁶⁷ including a lot on Hall's Creek for the purpose of building a chapel and school building.⁶⁸ His occupation in one deed is listed as scrivener,⁶⁹ an extremely important occupation in an era when the majority were unable to write. He had been one of Pasquotank's five representatives at the convention held at Hillsborough in 1788 to vote whether or not to ratify the United States Constitution.⁷⁰ He was sheriff of Pasquotank from 1789 to 1792.⁷¹

The deed for the first land that Timothy Cotter bought in Pasquotank County stated that he was a resident of Camden County.⁷² He was also listed in the 1790 census in Camden County.⁷³ However, there is no Camden County deed for him. Since the Camden wills before 1822 are not extant, it can not be

⁶³Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, pp. 113, 114.

⁶⁴Quarter Sessions, March, 1789; September, 1791.

⁶⁵Pasquotank County Deeds, I, 212, 353, 513, 607, 676; J, 154; K, 240; M, 248.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, K, 11.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, K, 99, 210; M, 138, 139.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, M, 138.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, K, 210.

⁷⁰Clark, *State Records*, XXII, 3ff.

⁷¹Quarter Sessions, June, 1789; June, 1793.

⁷²Pasquotank County Deeds, K, 249.

⁷³Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 354.

shown whether or not he inherited land. He had bought twenty-one acres in the river bridge area of Pasquotank before he was appointed a commissioner of Redding.⁷⁴ However, following this appointment, his buying was confined to the Elizabeth City area, near Knobb's Creek, the region called the Body, or Pritchard's Mill. He amassed about 650 acres in the Narrows area in addition to his lots in Elizabeth City.⁷⁵ Following his appointment as town commissioner, he was elected county coroner in 1794,⁷⁶ and he received permission to run an ordinary in 1796.⁷⁷

The fourth director, Bailey Jackson, a cooper,⁷⁸ owned at least 700 acres of land, situated just to the east and south of the Taylor property, in the area of Knobb's Creek and Rum Quarter Branch.⁷⁹ His father had lived on Rum Quarter Branch, and he had given his son this plantation.⁸⁰ Commissioner Jackson served in the state militia and was a justice of the peace.⁸¹ He served for nearly a decade in the General Assembly.⁸²

The remaining commissioner, Isaac Sawyer, seems the least influential. An Isaac Sawyer owned property on both sides of the Pasquotank;⁸³ whether this was the same man or another can not be established.

Before all the lots had been sold, two more names appear among the incorporators: Thomas Redding⁸⁴ and David Prit-

⁷⁴ Pasquotank County Deeds, K, 249.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, N, 96; I, 273, 287, 386; Q, 181, 220.

⁷⁶ Quarter Sessions, March, 1794.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, December, 1796.

⁷⁸ Pasquotank County Deeds, C, 391.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, D and E, 482; F and G, 426, 441; I, 200, 367, 415; J, 302; K, 108.

⁸⁰ Pasquotank County Wills, HIJ, 22.

⁸¹ List of Justices of the Peace and Militia Officers, 1784-1806, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, n.p., hereinafter cited as Militia Officers.

⁸² Wheeler, *Historical Sketches*, p. 340.

⁸³ Pasquotank County Deeds, D, 162; C, 65; D and E, 82, 338, 491; F and G, 179, 418; I, 337; J, 90. Camden County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Camden County Court House, Camden, G, 388, 390, 393; H, 104; I, 200, hereinafter cited as Camden County Deeds.

⁸⁴ Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 233.

chard.⁸⁵ Presumably these men had been elected by the other commissioners as the act of incorporation had given them the opportunity to elect replacements. The first land that Thomas Redding had purchased had been on the northeast side of Pasquotank River (later Camden County) at Areneuse Creek.⁸⁶ He subsequently served as a lieutenant of forces drawn from that area for the French and Indian War.⁸⁷ By 1793 he was a substantial planter, maintaining his residence on the southwestern side of the river.⁸⁸ He had purchased over 2,000 acres of land in addition to the property he inherited from his father.⁸⁹ Redding listed seventeen slaves in the 1790 census.⁹⁰ He had been appointed a colonel in the North Carolina Militia in 1793.⁹¹ Previously he had served in the Revolutionary War,⁹² had served in virtually every legislature since 1779,⁹³ and was elected with John Lane as a Pasquotank representative in the 1788 convention.⁹⁴ He was serving as senator when the town was incorporated as Redding.

The name David Pritchard presents a problem, for there was a David Pritchard residing on both sides of the river. The distinguished historian of Camden County, Jesse Pugh, believes that it was the Camden David Pritchard's mills for which South Mills was named.⁹⁵ Pasquotank's David Pritchard was James Pritchard's son who inherited Pritchard's Mill. This latter David Pritchard was appointed Public Surveyor of Pasquotank County in 1785,⁹⁶ and

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, N, 472; I, 41, 185 cite a few examples.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, F and G, 196.

⁸⁷ Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 58.

⁸⁸ Pasquotank County Deeds, I, 157.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, F and G, 196; I, 147, 264, 318, 636; J, 187, 228; K, 151, 224; 437.

⁹⁰ Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 883.

⁹¹ Militia Officers, n.p.

⁹² Clark, *State Records*, XV, 23.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, XIII, 799ff.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, XXII, 355.

⁹⁵ Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 141.

⁹⁶ Quarter Sessions, 1785.

it seems more logical that he would be the Elizabeth City director.

The incorporators divided Redding into lots as instructed. Although no map of the original division is extant, a map of 1830 shows divisions of the city which seem to be exactly like the original descriptions.⁹⁷ The only changes are in the naming of the streets; by 1830 family names had replaced North, South, and numbers as street names. The first drawing for lots, called for by the act of incorporation, must have been held November 3-6, 1794, although it seems as if there were not fifty subscribers by this time. Only twenty-eight lots were sold on these four days. Following this sale, no more lots were sold until June, 1795. Of all the lots for which deeds can be found, all except one had been sold by the turn of the century. The most common price for a lot was twenty silver dollars.⁹⁸

As already noted, eight of the lots were sold to members of the Redding family. Two of the incorporators bought lots in the city: Timothy Cotter bought two (63 and 64);⁹⁹ John Lane added eight Elizabeth City lots (3, 11, 12, 37, 38, 43, 44, and 52)¹⁰⁰ to his Nixonton collection.

Three of the men who bought lots were "foreigners" to this area. Anthony Butler, who bought two lots among the first subscribers in 1794 (2 and 24),¹⁰¹ and two more in 1795 (4 and 9),¹⁰² was a merchant from Philadelphia. Little else has been found concerning Butler, except that he was later a partner in the mercantile firm of Charles Grice and Co.¹⁰³

⁹⁷See map following p. 34.

⁹⁸Conclusions for all statements in this paragraph are from Pasquotank County Deeds as listed below in original owners.

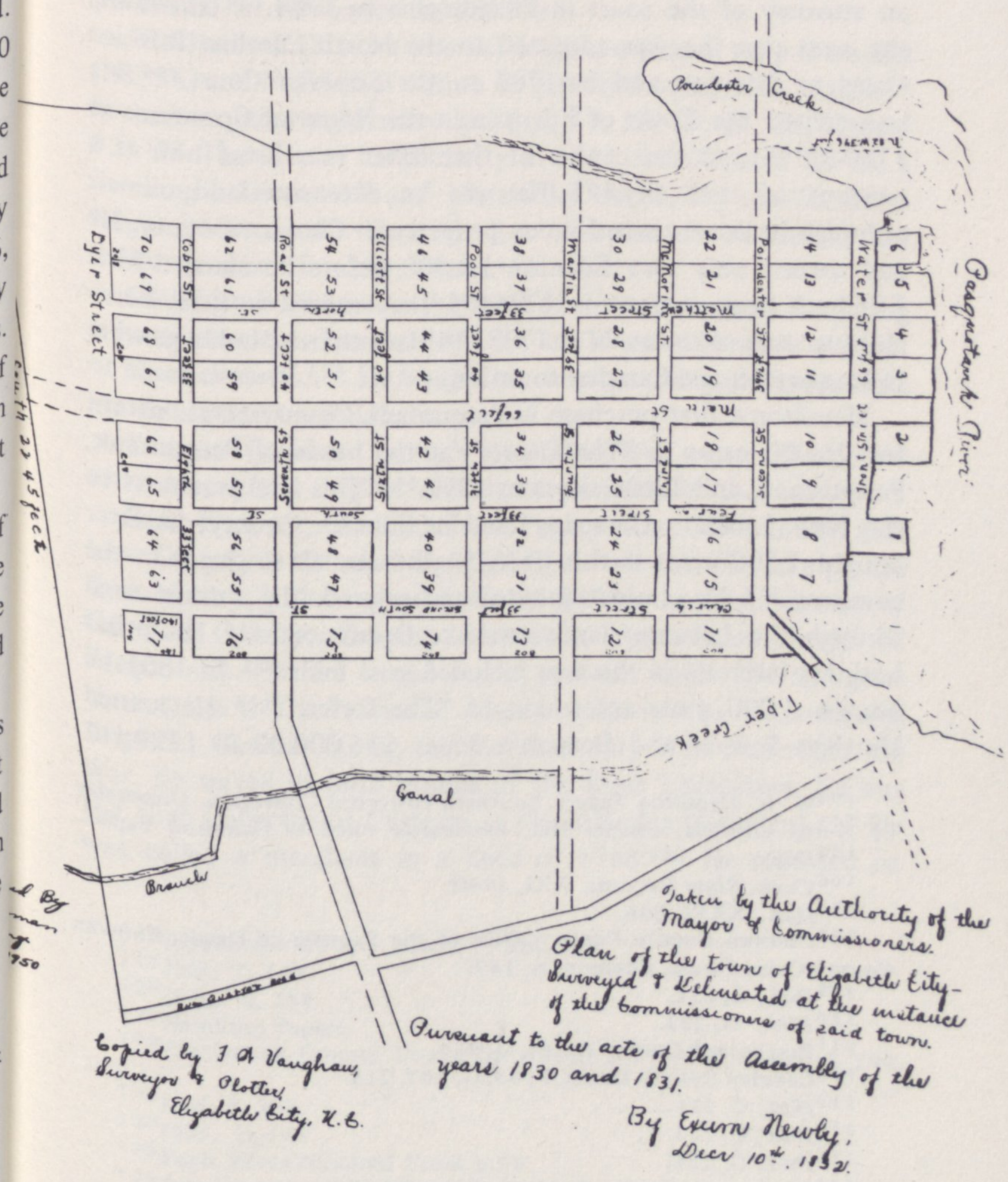
⁹⁹Pasquotank County Deeds, I, 283.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, D, 471; N, 397, 470, 472.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, N, 220.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, N, 213.

¹⁰³Quarter Sessions, June, 1799.



John Hamilton, also from Philadelphia, is well known. He had been trained at the University of Edinburgh and was admitted as an attorney of the court in Philadelphia in 1784.¹⁰⁴ However, the next year he was admitted to the North Carolina Inferior Court at Edenton and in 1787 to the Superior Court.¹⁰⁵ He represented the Town of Edenton in the House of Commons in 1789-90¹⁰⁶ and the census of that latter year listed him as a resident of that city.¹⁰⁷ He was an extensive land owner; although he never owned much property in Chowan County. He had owned only two Edenton lots¹⁰⁸ before he married Mrs. Elizabeth Engs, widow, in 1796;¹⁰⁹ they moved to Strawberry Hill just east of the town in 1797.¹¹⁰ His extensive holdings were in Pasquotank and Camden counties.

Hamilton's first purchase in Pasquotank County was a patent for 26,000 acres in "The Desert" at the heads of Pasquotank, Perquimans, and Little rivers in 1792.¹¹¹ This land was next to the New Lebanon Company land in Camden County; he later bought 1,500 acres in this tract,¹¹² and also three shares in the company.¹¹³ He also was granted an option to dig a ditch canal through the Lebanon lands to Lake Drummond.¹¹⁴ His other business interests in the area included grist mills.¹¹⁵ In 1801 he bought 3,000 more acres next to "The Desert."¹¹⁶ He loaned Matthias Sawyer and Benjamin Jones \$16,000.00 in 1799;¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁴W. H. Hamilton Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, hereinafter cited as Hamilton Papers.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶Clark, *State Records*, XXI, 194ff.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, XXVI, 396.

¹⁰⁸Chowan County Deeds, Office of the Register of Deeds, Chowan County Court House, Edenton, A, 147.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, G, 221.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, G, 223.

¹¹¹Pasquotank County Deeds, M, 354.

¹¹²Camden County Deeds, F, 93; G, 207, 218.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, G, 221.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, G, 223.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, G, 224.

¹¹⁶Pasquotank County Deeds, P, 322, 323, 326.

¹¹⁷Camden County Deeds, H, 448.

and, as mentioned earlier, he purchased the turnpike Jones had built.¹¹⁸ Pasquotank Deed Books also record 3,000 acres he purchased in Kentucky in 1811.¹¹⁹

In Elizabeth City, he was the original owner of only three lots (48, 55, and 56)¹²⁰ but before he left for Louisiana in 1811,¹²¹ he had acquired eight more lots (15, 17, 18, 19, 25, 26, 31, and 32).¹²² The sale of his property in 1811 revealed that he had a dwelling house on 17 and 18, stables on 19, 25, and 26, and a Negro house on 15. He sold all of this plus lots 31 and 32 and thirty-six slaves for \$10,000.00.¹²³

Of Silvanus Dickinson, the third of these "foreigners," nothing is known except that the deed for lot 75 states he was a resident of Massachusetts.¹²⁴ He bought no other property in Pasquotank, nor did he leave a will there.

Some of Camden County's most illustrious sons of the period were among the original owners of property in the new town.

Isaac Gregory, of whom Jesse Pugh writes, "To Camden folk Isaac Gregory is the most dignified figure who has played a part in their history,"¹²⁵ bought lot 40.¹²⁶ Before the establishment of Camden County, Gregory had been eight times sheriff of Pasquotank. He had served in the precinct court and had gone three times to the Provincial Assembly. He rose to the ranks of a Brigadier General during the Revolutionary War. Following the War, he served in both houses of the State Legislature. He was the first Collector of Customs at Plank Bridge (Camden).¹²⁷ He was called a merchant in a deed of 1768.¹²⁸ He reported no

¹¹⁸Pasquotank County Deeds, P, 324, 325.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, T, 161.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, S, 238.

¹²¹Hamilton Papers.

¹²²Pasquotank County Deeds, Q, 395; R, 90, 244, 313, 315; S, 194, 309.

¹²³*Ibid.*, S, 299.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, O, 185.

¹²⁵Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 93.

¹²⁶Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 134.

¹²⁷Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 93.

¹²⁸Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 134.

slaves in 1790,¹²⁹ even though he was the purchaser of 1,000 acres of land.¹³⁰

Enoch Sawyer, who would later entertain President Monroe at the Sawyer Manor "Fairfield," while his brother Lemuel was in Congress,¹³¹ purchased lots 20 and 60.¹³² He later added 41 with improvements,¹³³ 11 and 12 with warehouses,¹³⁴ and 10, 31, and 32.¹³⁵ In Camden County he owned over 3,500 acres¹³⁶ plus extensive interests in the New Lebanon Company.¹³⁷ In Pasquotank County he owned 100 acres in the Body,¹³⁸ 1,000 acres of Cowper's Tract,¹³⁹ and one-fourth interest of a tract of 19,520 acres in the Desert Swamp.¹⁴⁰ Although he sold his one-fourth interest in Jones' Turnpike to Hamilton,¹⁴¹ he later received one-third interest in a road and canal from Trueblood's Mill to Samuel Nixon's.¹⁴² He served Camden in the House, and succeeded Gregory as Collector of Customs at Plank Bridge.¹⁴³

Another Sawyer, Malachi, was less illustrious. He was Clerk of Court in Camden County from 1795 to 1820.¹⁴⁴ He had

¹²⁹Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 345.

¹³⁰Pasquotank County Deeds, D and E, 113, 415; Camden County Deeds, A, 90, 115; C, 154; D, 301, 308; E, 35, 197; F, 16; G, 361; H, 427; K, 332, 439, 500.

¹³¹Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, pp. 129-131.

¹³²Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 401.

¹³³*Ibid.*, T, 41.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, T, 129, 127.

¹³⁶Camden County Deeds, F, 91, 208, 275, 336; G, 147, 359, 386, 387; H, 137, 279, 348; I, 29, 172; K, 393, 404, 465; L, 124, 237; M, 49, 392; N, 266; O, 271, 337; P, 229, 308; Q, 29, 51, 167, 210, 221, 236, 243, 301, 433, 538.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, G, 231, 233, 235, 236, 238.

¹³⁸Pasquotank County Deeds, Q, 287.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, O, 57.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, T, 156.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, P, 325.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, T, 315.

¹⁴³Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 131.

¹⁴⁴Camden County Deeds, G, 1; Q, 331.

scattered holdings in Camden County.¹⁴⁵ He eventually sold his two lots, 49 and 50, to Charles Grice.¹⁴⁶

Peter Dauge, who purchased lots 6 and 34,¹⁴⁷ had been so outstanding in the Revolutionary War that he was granted 2,057 acres south of the Ohio River "in consideration of his signal bravery and personal zeal as a lieutenant colonel in the Continental line. . . ." ¹⁴⁸ In addition, he owned over 1,500 acres in Camden, most of which were in the Indiantown area.¹⁴⁹ He served in the House and Senate for Camden County,¹⁵⁰ was one of Camden's representatives at the Constitutional Convention in 1788,¹⁵¹ and was later sheriff of Camden County.¹⁵²

Caleb Grandy, the first owner of lots 27 and 59,¹⁵³ was a Camden merchant.¹⁵⁴ He was appointed by the legislative act which authorized the forming of Camden County as one of the five commissioners to set up the government; he was one of the first representatives from the new county; he also served Camden as sheriff.¹⁵⁵ He owned approximately 2,000 acres of land in his home county,¹⁵⁶ and listed nine slaves in the 1790 census.¹⁵⁷

Little has been recorded concerning the remaining three Camden owners. Nathaniel Downes, the operator of a shipyard north of Camden,¹⁵⁸ was the original owner of lots 31 and

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, I, 89, 251, 252; K, 102, 226; M, 534; O, 217, 298, 354, 356, 378; Q, 283, 302, 304.

¹⁴⁶Pasquotank County Deeds, O, 152.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, O, 41.

¹⁴⁸Camden County Deeds, F, 253.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, A, 28, 84; C, 1, 16, 49, 160, 191, 192; D, 183; E, 105, 122; I, 50, 51, 178, 179, 180, 194.

¹⁵⁰Clark, *State Records*, XVIII, 226ff.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, XXII, 2ff.

¹⁵²Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 108.

¹⁵³Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 221.

¹⁵⁴Camden County Deeds, D, 453.

¹⁵⁵Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 80.

¹⁵⁶Camden County Deeds, B, 61; C, 57, 122, 130, 131; D, 453; F, 35, 41, 37, 227, 233, 234, 271.

¹⁵⁷Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 348.

¹⁵⁸Author's interview with W. W. Forehand, Shiloh, N. C., November 8, 1967 (notes on interview in possession of author).

35.¹⁵⁹ Thomas Harney, original owner of 32,¹⁶⁰ was the son of Revolutionary War Colonel Selby Harney.¹⁶¹ Jacob Mercer was the original owner of lot 46.¹⁶²

The remaining lots were purchased by Pasquotank residents. One of the most famous family names in early Pasquotank history is Relfe. A Relfe was among those receiving grants from Berkeley in 1663.¹⁶³ One is also reminded that the court house was located on Relfe property at Windfield, or Relfe's Point. Thomas Relfe continued the family tradition of important land ownership when he purchased lots 29 and 62.¹⁶⁴

Another of the area's prominent families was represented by John Trueblood, who was the original owner of lots 33 and 45.¹⁶⁵ But the name John Trueblood was so common in the period that it cannot be established which John purchased these lots.

A family name that would later become prominent in the town was also represented in the original purchasers. William Smith Hinton was the original owner of lots 13 and 14.¹⁶⁶ A Camden County deed for property to William S. Hinton revealed that he was a partner in the firm of Hinton and Whitley of Pasquotank County.¹⁶⁷ Hinton bought several tracts totaling

¹⁵⁹Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 233.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, P, 340.

¹⁶¹Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, pp. 91, 209.

¹⁶²Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 174. Mercer's name is spelled Messer in this deed. However, in Camden County Deeds, G, 189, 199; M, 8, and Camden County Wills, Office of the Clerk of Court, Camden County Court House, Camden, C, 60, as well as the sale of this lot, Pasquotank County Deeds, Q, 187, it is spelled Mercer.

¹⁶³Nell Marion Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers; Abstracts of Virginia Land Patents and Grants* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1963), p. 427.

¹⁶⁴Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 290.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, N, 185; T, 58.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, O, 279.

¹⁶⁷Camden County Deeds, M, 492.

over 2,000 acres in Pasquotank,¹⁶⁸ as well as one large tract of 3,210 acres.¹⁶⁹

William T. Muse, original owner of 36 and 41,¹⁷⁰ was Clerk of Pasquotank County Court from 1797 to 1822.¹⁷¹ His land holdings were among the greatest of any individual in the county. He acquired over 6,000 acres¹⁷² during his lifetime, in addition to five-ninths interest in 19,520 acres of the New Lebanon Company Land.¹⁷³ He also bought almost 2,000 acres in Camden County.¹⁷⁴ The two lots already mentioned were only the beginning for Muse; he later also owned 10, 46, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 65, 66,¹⁷⁵ and another, the number of which is not stated.¹⁷⁶ He owned one-fifth interest in the Little River Grist Mills of Pasquotank and Perquimans counties.¹⁷⁷ In the 1800 census, he was listed as unmarried, under forty-five years old, and the owner of seven slaves.¹⁷⁸ His will, probated in 1823, bequeathed his

¹⁶⁸Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 259; O, 277, 279; P, 289, 301; Q, 383, 384; R, 330; S, 15, 17, 19, 90; V, 198, 420, 440, 442; Y, 134; Z, 53, 54, 73, 91, 105, 362, 429; AA, 11, 12, 13, 197, 329; BB, 128; CC, 142, 235, 421; DD, 458; EE, 458, 468; GG, 176; MM, 212, 225; OO, 331; RR, 25; SS, 718.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, BB, 128.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, N, 134.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, O, 43; W, 380.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, N, 133; O, 29, 36, 348, 482; P, 104, 125, 127, 129, 155, 234, 286, 330, 331, 332, 333, 379, 449, 450; Q, 125, 172, 174, 300, 315; R, 26, 144, 158, 186, 187, 188, 189, 268, 270, 296, 337; S, 27, 28, 29, 69, 72, 106, 159, 202, 228, 253, 255, 316, 318, 321, 322, 359, 388, 443, 444; T, 7, 47, 88, 91, 217, 221, 222, 301a, 301b, 308, 354, 355, 357, 434, 436, 458, 460, 477, 479, 480; U, 21, 37, 42, 75, 79, 103, 132, 149, 184, 187, 188, 242, 248, 275, 277, 278, 307, 368, 409; V, 56, 58, 81, 82, 185, 251, 257, 258, 306, 361; W, 69, 78, 85, 176, 237, 244, 285, 322, 364.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, S, 310.

¹⁷⁴Camden County Deeds, K, 6; P, 373.

¹⁷⁵Pasquotank County Deeds, R, 186; S, 443; T, 221, 436, 477; U, 102; V, 57, 257; W, 69.

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, S, 228.

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*, S, 27.

¹⁷⁸Population Schedule of the Second Census of the United States, Reel 34 of microfilm copy, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as 1800 Census.

property to his two sons and instructed his executor to send them North for a good education.¹⁷⁹

Marmaduke Scott (lot 54)¹⁸⁰ was called a Pasquotank planter.¹⁸¹ His will, probated in 1813, listed two plantations plus an additional 300 acres.¹⁸² He also owned interest in a mill.¹⁸³ He listed six slaves in 1790,¹⁸⁴ and seventeen in 1800.¹⁸⁵

Little has been preserved concerning a number of the original purchasers. Josiah Cook, owner of 69 and 70, purchased no other land in Pasquotank County nor was he mentioned in any recorded will of Pasquotank; although the deed for these two lots stated that he was a resident of Pasquotank County.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, the 1790 census listed him in Pasquotank with six dependents other than himself.¹⁸⁷

Thomas Dameron, owner of 41 and 42,¹⁸⁸ shares the same story: No records reveal any more land owned in the area nor can his will be found. He had no dependents in the 1790 census.¹⁸⁹ A land sale in Camden County in 1794 of 150 acres to a Thomas Damon¹⁹⁰ may be a misspelling of Dameron's surname. This name was not found again.

The only property William King ever purchased in Pasquotank, other than lot 74,¹⁹¹ was three acres which he bought from Timothy Cotter adjacent to this lot.¹⁹² This latter deed listed

¹⁷⁹ Pasquotank County Wills, M, 375.

¹⁸⁰ Pasquotank County Deeds, O, 32.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, N, 137.

¹⁸² Pasquotank County Wills, M, 253.

¹⁸³ Pasquotank County Deeds, T, 55.

¹⁸⁴ Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 885.

¹⁸⁵ 1800 Census.

¹⁸⁶ Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 440.

¹⁸⁷ Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 876.

¹⁸⁸ Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 264.

¹⁸⁹ Clark, *State Records*, XXVI, 875.

¹⁹⁰ Camden County Deeds, G, 388.

¹⁹¹ Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 297.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, O, 459.

his occupation as mariner. He left no will, nor was he listed in either the 1790 or 1800 census of Pasquotank County; although the deed for the lot stated that he was from Pasquotank.

Robert Simpson, the original owner of 17,¹⁹³ lived at the Body.¹⁹⁴ Malachi Norris, lots 53 and 61,¹⁹⁵ was the grandson of Thomas Taylor.¹⁹⁶ James Carmot, original owner of 67, 68, and 72,¹⁹⁷ was a mariner.¹⁹⁸ He purchased four additional acres adjoining Elizabeth City.¹⁹⁹ Ahaz Cartwright owned lots 21 and 22.²⁰⁰ Benjamin Shores' only distinction seems to be that he was the first owner of lot 1.²⁰¹ William Casse, original owner of 15, was a bricklayer.²⁰² Samuel Cobb's only purchases in Pasquotank were lots in Elizabeth City: He was the original owner of 65 and 66²⁰³ and later bought 58.²⁰⁴ Cobb had been given permission to run an ordinary in 1797.²⁰⁵

Joseph Edney is the greatest mystery. He seems to have been the original owner of 58.²⁰⁶ Yet, the Pasquotank County Deed Index does not list his name either as a grantee or grantor, even though it is known that he owned additional properties.²⁰⁷ It will

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, N, 172.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Z, 283.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, N, 270.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, D and E, 223.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, N, 546.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, R, 72.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, N, 404.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, N, 244.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, C, 392.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, O, 356.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, O, 480.

²⁰⁵ Quarter Sessions, June, 1797.

²⁰⁶ Samuel Cobb bought 58 from Joseph Edney's estate (Pasquotank County Deeds, O, 480). There is no record of the sale of 58 from the commissioners in the Pasquotank County Deed Index.

²⁰⁷ Quarter Sessions, March 1793, records sale of land from Joseph Richardson to Joseph Edney.

be remembered that he was given permission to run an ordinary at the Narrows in 1793.²⁰⁸

The original owners of six lots have not been included in this listing. As yet these are unknown. The Pasquotank County Deed Index does not include these among the lots sold by the commissioners. But neither did it include the owner of 58, Joseph Edney,²⁰⁹ or the owner of 10, Thomas Redding.²¹⁰ Thus, there may be others that were omitted from the index. Another possible explanation is found in the deed to Thomas Dameron. The deed is for "Three Lotts of Land in the aforesaid Town, known and distinguished by the Lotts of numbers 41 and 42."²¹¹ Subsequent records reveal he sold only two,²¹² so he must have bought only two. However, this raises the possibility of other mistakes of the same nature in which a lot may have been left out of a deed. Additionally, the 1795 tax assessment of Elizabethtown included in the list of taxables Emperor Moseley, Adam Tooley, and James Taylor.²¹³ Yet, no records can be found in which these men ever bought or sold town lots.²¹⁴

Which of these original owners built homes and moved to the new "city"? The subsequent selling of lots will show that some had dwellings on them, yet these may have been rental properties. None of the original owners who left wills state their homes were in Elizabeth City; on the contrary, the wills of William T.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*, June, 1792.

²⁰⁹See above, footnote 206.

²¹⁰Pasquotank County Deeds, S, 325.

²¹¹*Ibid.*, N, 264.

²¹²*Ibid.*, N, 530.

²¹³Mary Weeks Lambeth, *Memories and Records of Eastern North Carolina* (Nashville, Tenn.: privately published, 1957), p. 136.

²¹⁴The 1797 assessment listed Emperor Moseley's estate with one lot; Adam Tooley, five; and James Taylor's estate, one (Quarter Sessions, June, 1797).

Muse,²¹⁵ Timothy Cotter,²¹⁶ and Joseph Edney²¹⁷ reveal that they lived in the county. None of the Camden County owners seem to have lived in Elizabeth City.²¹⁸

Another question that arises is what business concerns flourished early in the town? The earliest evidence of an important business is found in a "Going Out of Business" advertisement in Edenton's *North Carolina State Gazette*, April 30, 1795, by John Micheau, John Henry, and Co. The advertisement stated that the store was located at Pasquotank Narrows "with a general assortment of wet and dry goods." The only other records which have been found concerning this firm were two cases before the County Court of Quarter Sessions and Pleas in which the company was suing debtors.²¹⁹ This was three years following the above-quoted advertisement. Neither Micheau nor Henry ever owned any Pasquotank County property; although Micheau later owned property in Camden, mainly in the Areneuse Creek area.²²⁰

The advertisement stated that Micheau and Henry were selling out to Charles Grice. Although Grice was not an original owner of lots in Elizabeth City, he became one of the most important owners. Although more fiction than fact remains concerning his early years,²²¹ by 1795 he had bought sixty acres adjoining

²¹⁵Pasquotank County Wills, M, 375.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, M, 255.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, M, 1.

²¹⁸Camden County Deeds and Pugh, *Three Hundred Years*, lead to this conclusion.

²¹⁹Quarter Sessions, March, 1798.

²²⁰Camden County Deeds, I, 6, 8, 9; K, 389; L, 85.

²²¹Causten-Picket Papers in the Spoliation Claims of the War of 1812 in Library of Congress contain a short biography of Grice written by his daughter, Mrs. Elliott, just before her death (author used a copy in the possession of Dr. Elizabeth G. McPherson, Shiloh, N. C.). Mrs. Elliott stated that her father came from Philadelphia to Ocracoke in 1785. Along with Lemuel and Enoch Sawyer, he tried to purchase "from an old lady on a farm" land on which to set up a town. The lady refused to sell. He

Elizabeth City from Adam and Elizabeth Tooley.²²²

Grice eventually owned considerable property in Pasquotank County²²³ and over 1,500 acres in Camden County,²²⁴ where one of the homes he owned still stands.²²⁵ In Elizabeth City, he bought lots 4, 13, 14, 42, 49, 50, and 75.²²⁶ He operated a shipyard on 4.²²⁷ The exact location of his mercantile business is not known.²²⁸ The arrival of this enterprising businessman was one of the important developments in the earliest years of the town's history.

Very little has been found concerning activity in Elizabeth

then returned to Philadelphia. Upon his return to Carolina, he offered "old Mrs. Elizabeth Tooley" an even larger price, plus the added inducement of a silk and calico dress and the promise that he would name the town for her. Upon this, she agreed to sell. Grice laid out the town like his native Philadelphia and opened a shipyard there. Either Mrs. Elliott's memory had failed or she had been misinformed concerning the settling of the city. Although it is true that Grice came from Philadelphia and set up a shipyard, Mrs. Tooley was not yet thirty by 1800, nor did Grice lay off the town. Mrs. Elliott's attributing the town's name to Elizabeth Tooley is also of interest.

²²²Pasquotank County Deeds, N, 256.

²²³*Ibid.*, O, 181, 185; Q, 295; S, 2.

²²⁴Camden County Deeds, H, 94, 253; I, 168, 193; K, 32, 69; L, 13, 270; M, 418; N, 22; P, 396.

²²⁵Home presently owned by Dr. William K. Wassink, according to research by Dr. Elizabeth McPherson (author's interview with Dr. McPherson, Shiloh, N. C., May 10, 1967).

²²⁶Pasquotank County Deeds, O, 152, 377; P, 10; Q, 259; U, 439.

²²⁷*Ibid.*, V, 385.

²²⁸Account Books of Charles Grice and Co., 1800-1828, State Archives and History, Raleigh, reveal that Francis Grice was also a partner. Since an article appeared in *The Elizabeth City Independent* (July 12, 1929), Francis Grice has enjoyed the distinction of being the original owner of the oldest house still standing in the town. The article suggested that the home was the oldest since an architect had stated that it was built in the architectural style of 1740. The house, which stands at the corner of Road and Fearing streets, may be the oldest in the city although it was built long after 1740. Francis Grice bought lot 48 in 1798 (Pasquotank County Deeds, I, 284); his will gave the lot and house to his wife in 1808 (Pasquotank County Wills, M, 190). Thus the house was built between 1798 and 1808. However, until someone arises with an earlier claim, the Grice-Fearing Home will still claim the distinction of the oldest in the town.

City before the turn of the century, but in 1800 the North Carolina Legislature passed an act that was destined to change this dearth. The law reads:

Whereas it is found that the situation of the court house in Pasquotank is inconvenient to the greatest part of the inhabitants; which renders it necessary to alter the place of holding the Court to the City of Elizabeth at the Narrows of the Pasquotank River: Be it therefore enacted . . . that Bailey Jackson, Charles Grice, Ebenezer Sawyer, John Lane, and Timothy Cotter are hereby appointed Commissioners to erect and build a court house, pillory and stocks . . . [and] are empowered to purchase a sufficient quantity of land in the said city of Elizabeth for the purpose of erecting the buildings thereon . . .²²⁹

To this end, John Lane sold the commissioners the western half of lots 43 and 44 on March 26, 1800.²³⁰ This site, on Main Street, five and a half blocks from the river, which would become the permanent location of the court house, would provide a center for activity that would bring Elizabeth City into prominence.

²²⁹Laws, 1800, c. LXXII.

²³⁰Pasquotank County Deeds, P, 161.

III

County and City Government

So great were the advantages accruing to the town that was chosen to be the county seat, outright rivalry often developed over the selection of a court house location.¹ Hence, the moving of the county seat to Elizabeth City pre-saged a period of steady growth for the new town. As the town grew in importance, its government became more complex, its boundaries were extended, its commissioners were entrusted with greater responsibilities. Elizabeth City's commissioners consumed their energies on the same problems that bothered their colleagues in other towns, including the freedom of hogs.² By the outbreak of hostilities between the North and South, the town government had assumed most of the legislative functions performed by the county court before the Revolution.

Elizabeth City became the county seat of Pasquotank County on Tuesday, June 3, 1800. The court had sat at Nixonton on Monday where they received a message from the committee which had been appointed to build the new public buildings "that the said Court House, Prison, Pillory, and Stocks are conveniently finished for the reception of the Court." They adjourned that evening to convene the following day in the new building.³

¹Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), p. 116, hereinafter cited as Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 126-140.

³Minutes of the Pasquotank County Court of Quarter Sessions and Pleas, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, June, 1800, hereinafter cited as Quarter Sessions.

The court house that was "conveniently finished" in 1800 was not completely finished six years later.⁴ No description or record that it was ever completed remain for this building. However, the brevity of its use makes one conclude that it must surely have been ill-planned or poorly constructed.

In 1824 the North Carolina General Assembly empowered the county court to appoint commissioners to purchase one or more acres of land to erect a court house, jail, and other public buildings within or near Elizabeth City and to sell the lot of land on which the public buildings were then standing.⁵ The court moved slowly in using its power. As late as 1831 the grand jury recommended that the court offices "be united." The recommendation further stated that the whole building should be made fireproof and be built of brick or stone as before suggested.⁶ Lack of funds may have been the reason for the county court's slowness in acting, for two years later, in 1833, the court requested the Pasquotank County delegation in the General Assembly to petition for permission to borrow sufficient money to build a new court house. The public building tax was to be used as security for payment of the debt and interest.⁷

In October, 1835, the Committee of Public Buildings finally let the contract "for erection of a Court House in Elizabeth City."⁸ Within a year the new building had been constructed.⁹ The court minutes are silent concerning any details of construction, the date of moving, and the disposal of the old building. No additional land was purchased. Thus, either the first building was demolished to provide space for the second or, more likely, the

⁴*Laws of North Carolina, 1805*, c. LIV, levies a tax for completing the court house, hereinafter cited as *Laws*, with appropriate date. Quarter Sessions, June, 1806, records appointment of three men to finish the court house.

⁵*Laws, 1824*, c. LXXXIV.

⁶Quarter Sessions, Grand Jury Report, Spring, 1831.

⁷*Ibid.*, September, 1833. No later record mentioned whether the money was borrowed or if the tax was used as a security.

⁸*Herald of the Times* (Elizabeth City), October 27, 1835, hereinafter cited as *Herald of the Times*.

⁹Quarter Sessions, September, 1836.

second was built adjacent to the first. The only contemporary description of the new building is a mention that there were four blinds on the west side.¹⁰ A year later the court house lot was enclosed in a white wooden fence "similar to that in front of the Methodist Church."¹¹

The moving of the court house to Elizabeth City had an immediate effect on the new town. The weeks of quarterly sessions in March, June, September, and December were marked contrasts to the other weeks in the year. Large numbers of the county's population had to be present for these court sessions as this was the time for recording deeds, probating wills, filing guardian accounts, selecting guardians, approving or assigning apprenticeships, and transacting almost every type of official and semi-official business of the county.

With such an influx of potential customers, a few enterprising residents decided that the court house square was the ideal place for marketing goods during court weeks. As early as 1802 William Florah was granted permission to sell spiritous liquors on the public ground.¹² But too much distraction must have resulted from Mr. Florah's stand, or others may have joined him. A year and a half later, the court decreed that no stand or booth could be erected on the court house square at the time of court or at any other public time.¹³ In December, 1805, the thirstier citizens of the county regained some ground when James Chamberlain was granted permission to retail spirits on the court house grounds provided the table was twenty-five yards away from the building.¹⁴ Eight years later, the court decreed

¹⁰*Ibid.* John E. Wood, "Brief Sketch of Pasquotank County," *Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook*, 2 volumes (Elizabeth City: Pasquotank Historical Society, 1955), I, 22, hereinafter cited as *Yearbook*, stated that "A building of wood was built with broad stairs on the front exterior leading to the court room on the second." Undoubtedly, this information had been passed down by those who remembered the building before it burned in the Civil War.

¹¹*Ibid.*, September, 1837.

¹²*Ibid.*, December, 1802.

¹³*Ibid.*, June, 1804.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, December, 1805.

that "no person of color be permitted to sell spirits, cakes, or any other articles on the court ground during the setting of court."¹⁵

The court house building in Elizabeth City, however, was much more than the seat of the quarterly meetings of the county court. The building became the town's much-needed "community" or "all-purpose" center for political meetings, concerts, religious meetings, lectures, and traveling troupes. At the same time it served as a "city hall" in which the town commissioners might meet. Thus, the building became the cultural center of the town. Restrictions on its use during the early years—the time when no other buildings were available to serve the town—were few. Before 1814 the building was not even locked. However, in that year the sheriff was ordered to lock the court house between sessions of court. Yet, this placed no severe restriction on its use, for he was authorized to open it "for ministers of the Gospel or other public occasions."¹⁶

The jail that was occupied at the same time as the court house had an even shorter period of usefulness. Within five years after moving to Elizabeth City, the county court was given permission by the General Assembly to "sell at auction the old jail at Elizabeth City" and to levy a tax for building a new prison and stocks.¹⁷ On December 7, 1810, the new jail which had been in use "for some time previous thereto" was turned over to the commissioners.¹⁸ Yet the old jail was kept by the county and a year later the court ordered "that half of the public lot in Elizabeth City be fenced in so as to include the old and new gaol."¹⁹

This second jail was also soon considered insufficient. As early as the middle of 1822, the commissioners were authorized to let contract for a third jail.²⁰ This new brick jail was finished in 1826. The old jail was offered for sale at the same time.²¹ Even

¹⁵*Ibid.*, September, 1813.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, June, 1814.

¹⁷*Laws, 1805, c. LIV.*

¹⁸Quarter Sessions, March, 1811.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, December, 1811.

²⁰*Ibid.*, December, 1822.

²¹*Ibid.*, June, 1826.

this third building failed to provide the county with a suitable place of detention for the criminal. Condemnation for this jail was included in the same grand jury report that condemned the first court house. The strong report, returned only five years after the building of this jail, contained these words: "We view with regret the defects in the location and construction of the goal . . . [it is] calculated to defeat in many instances the object of confinement." They suggested better ventilation for the criminal room and a well-enclosed yard "to prevent ready access to the criminal windows from without and for other conveniences of the prisoners we recommend such an enclosure to be erected as far as the location of the prison will now admit."²² No immediate action on the recommendations of the grand jury was recorded.

Since Elizabeth City was the county seat, it was the logical place for the erection of a third public building—the poor house. The 1805 General Assembly authorized the collection of a tax for the poor in the county.²³ This money was to be used to build a poor house "at Elizabeth City."²⁴ However, the tax collected was diverted to other public buildings immediately after the passage of the bill.²⁵ No records of any further action exist until 1831 when the county bought property on which to build a poor house one mile south of Elizabeth City on the road to New Begun Creek.²⁶ Here matters were permitted to stand for sixteen years. Not until 1847 did the court order the building of a poor house thirty-five feet by sixteen feet on this property.²⁷ Shortly thereafter, a house for the insane was also authorized to be built on the same property adjacent to the poor house.²⁸

At the same time that Elizabeth City was becoming the governmental and political hub of Pasquotank County, important

²²*Ibid.*, Grand Jury Report, Spring, 1831.

²³*Laws, 1805, c. LIV.*

²⁴Quarter Sessions, December, 1810.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Pasquotank County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Pasquotank County Court House, Elizabeth City, AA, 76, hereinafter cited as Pasquotank County Deeds.

²⁷Quarter Sessions, September, 1847.

²⁸*Ibid.*, December, 1847.

changes were being made in the town's corporate limits and government. The first alteration in the town's government was provided by the General Assembly of 1805. No longer would the town be ruled by a self-perpetuating board of three to five commissioners. Now an intendent of police and two commissioners were to be elected on the first Monday in March annually. The candidates for the offices were required to own a lot and be residents of the town. The voters could either be a resident for at least three months or own a parcel of land within the town. Additionally, the commissioners were given full power to make such rules, regulations, and ordinances that they deemed expedient. Special provisions were made for the seaport town. The commissioners were given the right to prevent anyone with a contagious or infectious disease from coming into the town and to quarantine such vessels as would throw sick seamen on the mercy of the town's citizens. The commissioners were further enabled to call upon the Collector of the Port of Camden for funds to help seamen who were in need within the Elizabeth City port.²⁹

Two years later, the first extension of the town's boundary lines was passed in the General Assembly. This was a result, to a large extent, of plans to construct the town's first church building. In 1805 Charles Grice had sold the Baptist Church, which had been organized at Knobb's Creek, a piece of property just west of the original town boundary.³⁰ Plans for building a meeting house outside of the corporate limits brought immediate action for annexation of the property. Thus the 1807 Legislature extended the western boundary so as to include "the improvements that are at present within said limits, together with the lot laid off for the Baptist Meeting House. . . ." The northern and southern boundaries were moved to the creeks just beyond the original lines.³¹ The next moving of the boundary came in 1816

²⁹Laws, 1805, c. XXXI.

³⁰Pasquotank County Deeds, Q, 374.

³¹Laws, 1807, c. XLVII. The part of the law dealing with the northern and southern boundaries states, "through the midst of the two branches lying on each side of the town." See map following p. 34.

when the southern limits were extended "to the line of lands the property of Thomas Norris."³²

The same 1807 law that changed the boundaries also brought another change in the manner of the selection of the town's commissioners. The new law reappointed three of the original five commissioners, Bailey Jackson, Timothy Cotter, and John Lane, to serve along with Isaac Overman and William T. Muse. In case of the death or resignation of any of these the county court was authorized to appoint others to replace them.³³ Three of these newly appointed commissioners resigned in January, 1808: Jackson, Cotter, and Muse. However, the county court immediately reappointed Cotter. William Carter and James Carney were appointed to replace the other two.³⁴

The General Assembly in 1816 again changed the procedure by which the commissioners were selected by authorizing the county court to appoint three commissioners annually. To be qualified for a commissioner's post, a man must own real estate valued at \$800.00 within the town and be a resident of the town. If any of these commissioners so appointed were to become unable to serve, the remaining commissioner(s) were to select the successor(s).³⁵ In March, 1817, and March, 1818, the county court named three commissioners.³⁶

Again in 1818 the Legislature changed the procedure. This new act returned to the 1805 procedure of an annual March election. The sheriff was to hold the election at the court house after giving ten days' prior notice. The three candidates who received the greatest number of votes would be declared the winners. In case of death or resignation of any one of these, a new election

³²*Ibid.*, 1816, c. XLIII. Neither deed nor will records of Pasquotank County reveal where these lands were; yet, since there were no more boundary extensions before 1832 when the city map following p. 34, was drawn, one may conclude that the southern boundary was Rum Quarter Road.

³³*Ibid.*, 1807, c. XXXVII. The only records of the services of the original board are found in the deeds by which the town lots were sold.

³⁴Quarter Sessions, January, 1808.

³⁵Laws, 1816, c. XLIII.

³⁶Quarter Sessions, March, 1817; March, 1818.

was to be held. A citizen was required to be a resident for twelve months in the town and to have paid his town tax before he was qualified to vote.³⁷

The Legislature of 1819 added a new officer to the town: a police magistrate was to be elected at the same time as the commissioners.³⁸ Three years later, the qualifications for election to the office of commissioner were changed so that any free white man who owned an improved lot within the chartered limits of Elizabeth City was eligible to serve.³⁹

None of the ordinances passed by the commissioners through the years prior to 1827 have been preserved. The earliest extant ordinance, which set up a system for licensing and regulating fees charged by "every dray, cart, or wagon," was passed April 20, 1827. The ordinance stated that the vehicle was to be numbered with a figure not less than three inches high and that the owner must obtain a certificate (at a cost of two dollars) annually from the commissioners. Anyone who failed to obtain the certificate and paint the number on his vehicle would be fined one dollar every time he was caught. The ordinance further stipulated that twelve and a half cents, "and no more," was the rate for every load hauled "not to exceed the weight of five barrels of flour." In addition, the owner of the vehicle was responsible for all damage to the cargo.⁴⁰

An ordinance, passed two months later, put into effect an ordinance of 1824 respecting the running at large of horses in the streets. The commissioners assumed that the citizens would recall the earlier ordinance and did not restate it. Another ordinance passed the same day set a fine for those who failed to attend when summoned as witnesses before the police magistrate.⁴¹

By this time, the General Assembly had again changed the method of governing the town of Elizabeth City. The act,

³⁷*Laws, 1818, c. XXXIII.*

³⁸*Ibid., 1819, c. LV.*

³⁹*Ibid., 1822, c. CXLVI.*

⁴⁰*Elizabeth City Star, April 28, 1827.*

⁴¹*Ibid., June 23, 1827.*

passed by the session of 1830-1831, specified that three commissioners and a magistrate were to be elected annually by free white males above twenty-one, who had been residents for a year and paid their taxes. The candidate must have been a resident for one year, and his property value must exceed \$500.00. The commissioners were given the right to appoint a harbor master and a health officer for the port. Before a person could receive a license from the county court for permission to sell spiritous liquor in the town, he must first obtain a permit from the town commissioners. No Negro or mulatto slave was allowed to keep house within the city except on property owned by his master. The boundaries remained the same as set in 1816.⁴²

The newly elected commissioners in 1832 passed six ordinances at their January 27 meeting. The first prohibition was against the running or straining of horses, mares, or geldings through the streets of the town. The fine was ten dollars for each offense. The second measure prohibited the shooting or firing of any gun, pistol, cracker, or squib in town except on days of public rejoicing or in case of emergency. Another ordinance instructed the constable to disperse all assemblies in the streets on Sunday if these assemblies were behaving in a "disorderly, noisy, or riotous manner." Also, another ordinance prohibited wooden or clay chimneys, and a deadline was set for the removal of those then standing. The fifth ordinance decreed that anyone creating a nuisance in the town must leave and anyone that permitted the person to stay was fined five dollars per day. The last ordinance set up a legal means for the collection of the fines imposed by the ordinances.⁴³

A week later, the commissioners passed three more ordinances. The first was a restatement of the 1827 ordinance for the licensing of vehicles in the town. The second set fees of wharfage in the port of Elizabeth City. The final ordinance passed that day

⁴²*The Old North State (Elizabeth City), February 24, 1849, hereinafter cited as The Old North State.*

⁴³*Elizabeth City Star, February 18, 1832.*

required a monthly sweeping of chimneys during those months that they were in use.⁴⁴

On May 11, 1833, an ordinance was passed imposing a fine of two dollars for any person who permitted wood to remain in the street before his premises for a period longer than twenty-four hours.⁴⁵

The smallpox epidemic that was so fatal in Piedmont North Carolina in 1836⁴⁶ had been felt in Elizabeth City. In December, 1835, when it was reported that "there are from 8 to 10 cases in our town, none of which had terminated fatally,"⁴⁷ the commissioners acted to prevent any more spread of the disease. Their ordinance fined slave owners ten dollars for every slave not vaccinated by January 5, 1856, while each white resident who had not been vaccinated by the time would be subject to a fine of twenty dollars. Parents and guardians were made responsible for their children's and wards' fines. Additionally, the commissioners employed Dr. Samuel Matthews to vaccinate every individual in the town so that there would be no excuse for neglecting the duty.⁴⁸

The ordinances of the town for the next fifteen years have been lost. Not until 1851 is the curtain lifted once more. By this time a controversy was raging over an existing ordinance which prohibited the keeping of hogs within the town. The first mention of the problem was a brief statement in an editorial in April, 1850, in the local newspaper: "We should like to know if the ordinance making it an offence for having hog pens in the town has been repealed."⁴⁹ A letter to the editor from "X" two months later made several suggestions for cleaning up the town. The mysterious writer began by pointing out that swamps on either side of the town afforded perfect draining facilities if only the present cross ditches were to be cut twice their size and

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, May 18, 1833.

⁴⁶Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, p. 737.

⁴⁷*Herald of the Times*, December 12, 1835.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*The Old North State*, April 13, 1850.

depth. Then water would no longer lie in the streets and yards, and "by having greater velocity as it ran off, the filth which now settles in the drains would be swept away by every rain." After suggestions that the commissioners should see that stables and the kitchens and back lots of hotels were kept neat and clean, he stated quite sharply, "people at a distance will refuse to believe that the commissioners suffer our town to be crowded with hogpens and slaughter houses. . . ."⁵⁰

The commissioners seem to have taken no immediate action on either the editorial or the letter's suggestions. They did add another ordinance a year later in which the owner of geese must keep the geese within his own premises. If he refused, the town constable was to impound the geese, and the owner could reclaim them by paying ten cents per goose within two days. If he had not claimed them within that time, the constable was to sell the geese to any buyer.⁵¹

Yet, the hogpen issue was not forgotten. It was the constant subject of editorials and letters written to the editors. It was the primary factor in the heated municipal election of 1851: "Hogs or not hogs that was the question."⁵² "The Hogmen were triumphant," wrote *The Old North State* editor following the election of Joseph H. Pool as mayor, and Spencer Sawyer, William Shannon, George A. Williams, Caleb Sykes, and William E. Mann as commissioners.⁵³ Within two weeks after the election, they had repealed the controversial ordinance.⁵⁴

But *The Old North State* did not give up the fight. The editor wrote in September, 1853, "Those years in which the police regulations of the town prohibited the keeping of hog pens were the most healthful of which we have any recollection."⁵⁵ However, the issue was not strong enough to captivate the commissioner's race in 1853. Another issue had arisen.

⁵⁰*The Old North State*, June 18, 1850.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, June 28, 1851.

⁵²*Ibid.*, January 3, 1852.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, January 17, 1852.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, September 24, 1853.

Thus the year 1853 ended with a strongly contested race over the issuance of licenses for spiritous liquors. The temperance ticket won, but William W. Griffin refused to serve as mayor.⁵⁶ At the first commissioners' meeting in 1854, they elected Joshua A. Pool,⁵⁷ but he also declined.⁵⁸ Finally John Pool accepted the position.⁵⁹ At the March meeting, four applications for permits for spiritous liquors were refused, as the commissioners held to their election promise.⁶⁰

However, by the time of the election in December, 1854, the temperance forces had lost their majority. The "liberal slate," favoring the licensing of vendors of spiritous liquors, was elected as the town's commissioners.⁶¹ Yet their first legislation dealt with a much older issue. They clearly ordered: "No hog or hogs in pens or otherwise shall be kept within the town."⁶² But, the issue did not stop with the commissioners. The General Assembly in February passed "An act concerning hogs running at large in the streets of Elizabeth City . . ." Twenty-five cents was to be fined for every hog taken up on the streets of the town. If the owner did not claim the hog which had been confined by the police and pay the fine and additional charges for keeping the hog within three days, the animal was to be auctioned. "Any town

⁵⁶*The Old North State*, January 7, 1854. See also, Minutes of the Town of Elizabeth City, 1853-1863, 1865-1867, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Minutes of Elizabeth City. There is a conflict involved here. *The Old North State* presented W. W. Griffin with its ticket for mayor and commissioners, December 24, 1853. The paper stated on January 7, 1854, that the temperance ticket for mayor and commissioners won. Yet the Minutes of Elizabeth City show that none of the candidates for commissioner as presented by the paper won although Griffin did. Judging from Griffin's subsequent resignation, he probably was not the temperance mayoral candidate.

⁵⁷Minutes of Elizabeth City, January 3, 1854.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, January 17, 1854.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, March 6, 1854.

⁶¹*Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), January 9, 1855, hereinafter cited as *Democratic Pioneer*.

⁶²Minutes of Elizabeth City, January 16, 1855.

officer violating any portion of this act shall be fined not less than ten dollars nor more than twenty dollars . . ." ⁶³

The second ordinance passed by this new slate of commissioners displayed the fear that gripped Southerners in the period preceding the Civil War. It stated that Negroes would not be permitted to "assemble in groups nor smoke in the streets at anytime, day or night." The penalty for disobedience by a slave was five to fifteen stripes, and for a free Negro, one dollar. In addition, no colored person was allowed to walk the streets at night "after the bell has rung 15 minutes unless on orders or employer's business." This latter part of the ordinance was made even more severe at the same meeting by the changing of the time of the ringing of the bell from 9 p.m. to 8 p.m.⁶⁴

The third ordinance prohibited the building within the corporate limits of the town of a vault for the reception of bodies.⁶⁵ The next four ordinances, although not recorded, seem to have prohibited anyone coming from Norfolk and Portsmouth, where yellow fever was raging, from entering the town.⁶⁶ As a further precaution, the commissioners hired four men to guard the roads: two to guard the road into town from Knobb's Creek and two to guard the road from Jones Mill. These men were to be on duty from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. to prevent anyone from entering from the two Virginia towns.⁶⁷ Also at the same commissioners' meeting, the commissioners authorized the construction of a town hospital on the "lot rendered by John Black."⁶⁸

In the midst of all these ordinances, the town boundaries had been extended again—for the last time in the ante-bellum period. The legislative act of January 21, 1851, restated the eastern boundary as the Pasquotank River. The northern and western extensions were minor; on the north, the boundary followed Poindexter Creek "to the public road leading from Elizabeth City

⁶³*Laws, 1854-55*, c. CCLIV.

⁶⁴Minutes of Elizabeth City, January 16, 1855.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, March 5, 1855.

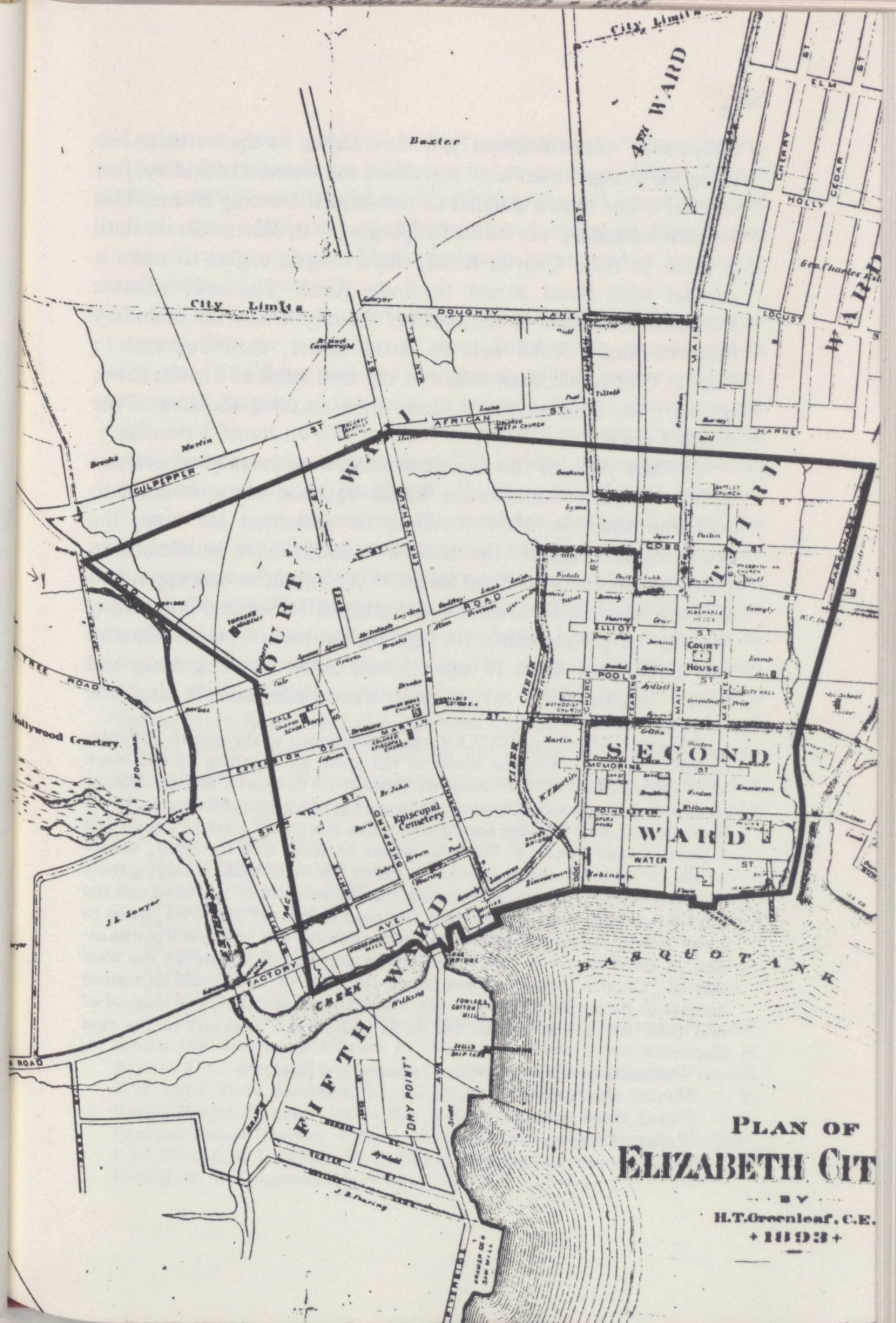
⁶⁶*Ibid.*, July 31, 1855; October 1, 1855.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, August 30, 1855.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

Town Boundaries, 1851

The bold line on the map opposite is as near as the boundary can be plotted from the Law as recorded in footnote 69. This line was plotted by Elmo Williams, North Carolina Registered Land Surveyor, of Elizabeth City.



to Norfolk" (Martin Street?), it then angled to the north to run along Parsonage Street until it reached the western boundary, just west of a line drawn parallel to the Baptist Meeting House. This western boundary ran basically parallel with Martin Street until it came to Rum Quarter Road, when it again angled to make it parallel with Road Street to Body Road. The only sizeable extension was made to the south of the city, where the boundary followed Body Road east to Road Street, then due east to Charles Creek, and then followed the west bank of Charles Creek to the river. This extension more than doubled the area of the original town.⁶⁹

The last years of the decade of 1850 were years of progressive action by the commissioners. Frank Vaughan was contracted to plot the town in 1851.⁷⁰ When he presented his map, the commissioners named the streets.⁷¹ Bricks were purchased to pave the sidewalks on Road Street.⁷² A committee was appointed to correspond with Steubbin & Pullen of Richmond concerning the cost of gas apparatus for lighting the town.⁷³ G. W. Charles was given permission to open a new street between Main and Cotter streets. One water tank was constructed,⁷⁴ and the

⁶⁹*Laws, 1850-51, c. CCCXXV*, reads: Beginning at the mouth of "Poin-dexter's Creek," and in the center of the same, and running up said creek in a westwardly direction along its channel to its North Branch; thence along its various courses to the public road leading from Elizabeth City to Norfolk, Va., near a bridge and cypress; then North 67° West 21 chains and 5 links; thence South 8° West 46 chains to Rum Quarter Road; thence South 12° East 28 chains to what is called the "Old Road," leading from Elizabeth City to Edenton, including the whole width of said road and the ditches on either side; thence along said road North 40° East 19½ chains to a sign post at the intersection of this road with the one which is a continuation of Road Street in said town; thence due East to a pine on the West side of "Charles Creek;" thence along the edge of said creek its various courses to its mouth at Pasquotank River; and thence along the channel of said river its various courses (so as to include the wharves) to the first station.

⁷⁰Minutes of Elizabeth City, January 9, 1858.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, March 15, 1858.

⁷²*Ibid.*, July 6, 1857.

⁷³*Ibid.*, February 14, 1860.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, April 2, 1860.

Legislature was petitioned for permission to issue up to \$6,000.00 in bonds to build two more on Road Street "above the canal" for extinguishing fire.⁷⁵ Yet, the old issues were not dead. The ordinances prohibiting the keeping of hogs⁷⁶ and cows⁷⁷ were repealed. Three applicants were granted licenses to sell spiritous liquors.⁷⁸

But as the new decade arrived, the attention of the commissioners, like the attentions of most Southerners, was turned to the issue of slavery and war. In January, 1861, a new ordinance restricted Negroes in the town to having religious meeting at the African Church on Sunday and Wednesday evenings "until 8:30 p.m. and no longer each evening."⁷⁹ In May, the commissioners adopted a resolution praising T. D. Mann of Edenton who had "generously and patriotically" placed his steamer *Stag* at the disposal of the officers in charge of an expedition to Hatteras for the purpose of erecting fortifications for defending northeastern North Carolina.⁸⁰ The next meeting appointed R. F. Overman to replace Mayor Rufus Speed as the latter had been elected to represent Pasquotank County in the state convention which would decide whether North Carolina would secede from the Union.⁸¹ In September the "persons erecting the fortification at Cobb's Point" were permitted to use timber which belonged to the town.⁸² The following meeting exempted from the poll tax all those who had volunteered their service in the war.⁸³ Yet, the

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, July 5, 1860.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, January 2, 1860.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, February 6, 1860.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, June 3, 1861.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, January 14, 1861.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, May 5, 1861.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, May 15, 1861.

⁸²*Ibid.*, September 3, 1861.

⁸³*Ibid.*, October 7, 1861. The following men are listed as soldiers following the meeting of January 4, 1862: A. L. Butt, Frank Brown, W. H. Bagley, J. C. Black, F. M. Brooks, A. Fearing, M. Fartherly, Sam Harrell, J. B. Lyon, L. K. Saunders, Ed. Waugh, B. F. White, H. B. Coleman, G. R. Davis, Charles G. Elliott, John Hay, Peter Fullerton, Isaiah Fearing, W. W. Greaves, Joseph Hyman, John L. Palmer, William Simmons, A. P. White, J. W. Hinton, A. I. Carson, W. C. Dawson, James Green, C. B. Keeling, I. W. Pollard, W. E. Vaughan, S. D. White, J. W. P. C. Cohoon.

very last meeting, held less than a week before the town fell to an invading Federal force, was a routine meeting. The commissioners dealt with three items of business: the awarding of a contract for upkeep of the streets, the paying of day watchmen, and the approval of the mayor's salary.⁸⁴

The county court was not so calm and routine during that last week. The Federal forces under General Ambrose E. Burnside were gathering for a major offensive against Roanoke Island and the Albemarle region beyond, and tensions and fear were mounting among the citizens of Pasquotank. The court had been making preparations for defense of the county ever since the fall of Fort Sumpter. In fact, the April, 1861, session was principally spent in laying groundwork for such a defense. A ten-man committee of safety was appointed to lead the county in time of crisis. The next move was to appropriate \$500.00 from county funds for uniforms and equipment for volunteers who were unable to afford these necessities. The court additionally promised to support the volunteers and pledged any needed help to the families of these men.⁸⁵ To carry out their pledge, the court called a special session and set up a commissary to receive and dispense supplies. At this special session, Captain Timothy Hunter was permitted to raise a cavalry.⁸⁶

By the end of August, fears were so great that the court was called into an extraordinary session on Sunday. The impelling item of business was the authorization for building a battery at Cobb's Point. Colonel L. D. Starke was appointed to be in charge of construction.⁸⁷ At the regular session, later in September, the colonel of the county was ordered to call out the militia "as soon as practicable" to muster volunteers to man the newly built battery.⁸⁸ At another special session, held in October, the court underwrote the freight on guns brought from Roanoke Island to

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, February 3, 1862.

⁸⁵Quarter Sessions, April, 1861.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, no date given. The action is recorded between the regular sessions of April and June, 1861.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, September 1, 1861.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, September, 1861.

be mounted at Cobb's Point, and also employed two men to guard the battery. This same session authorized the commanding officer of the county to muster volunteers and part of the militia "at such time as in his judgment the emergency requires it, for the purpose of repelling invasion."⁸⁹

Four days later another session was called. Colonel Starke was instructed to confer with military authorities on Roanoke Island to ascertain their views and wishes concerning the fortification of Elizabeth City.⁹⁰

Five special court sessions met between January 1, 1862, and the fall of Elizabeth City on February 9, 1862. At two of these sessions, the sheriff was ordered to provide free Negroes to aid the officers who were building defenses at Roanoke Island.⁹¹ As word was received of Burnside's approach to Roanoke Island, the court permitted Colonel Starke at his discretion to muster the militia "to be used for the defense of the county only and not to be carried out of the county."⁹² Two days later, they decided their judgment was superior to Starke's and ordered him to muster the militia and "hold them in readiness for any emergency which may arise."⁹³

While the town was shaken by gunfire from Roanoke Island on February 8, 1862, the court met to insure the safety of the county's records by ordering their removal from the court house and their dispatch into the county.⁹⁴ The court met again the next day after learning of the fall of Roanoke Island. The minutes record the last action before Elizabeth City's fall: "Deeming the present emergency to demand it, it is ordered that the commanding officer of the county muster all the militia immediately into actual service."⁹⁵

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, October 22, 1861.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, October 26, 1861.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, January 13, 1862; January 29, 1862.

⁹²*Ibid.*, January 27, 1862.

⁹³*Ibid.*, January 13, 1862.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, February 8, 1862.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, February 9, 1862.

The next evening, there was no court house in which to meet. As hope for successfully defending the town against the Union forces vanished with the defeat of Rebel forces off Cobb's Point, the "torch was applied by the patriotic citizens themselves" to their property so that the Yankees would not be able to enjoy the spoils.⁹⁶ These flames, apparently set as a result of a quickly-reached decision by the citizens, destroyed the court house and brought to a close an era in the history of the county and city governments.⁹⁷

⁹⁶*Richmond Dispatch*, February 13, 1862.
⁹⁷Minutes of Elizabeth City, May 11, 1863.

IV

The Eastern Emporium of North Carolina

The growth of Elizabeth City's business district from a few ordinaries and a general merchandise store at the beginning of the nineteenth century to the "Eastern Emporium of North Carolina, where . . . [purchasers] can be suited from a cambric needle to a sheet anchor"¹ was closely tied with progress of the Dismal Swamp Canal. The town's period of prosperity and growth followed the cutting of a deeper channel for the canal in 1828. As commerce increased before the opening of a rival canal, Elizabeth City's economy soared. Of course, the town was also affected by national panics and local disasters. And, a large amount of her trade was channeled through Ocracoke Inlet. Yet, the canal remained the important and unique factor in the economic index.

During the first quarter of the century, only the most limited traffic was possible through the canal. Despite the exciting news that the canal was opened from the Pasquotank River to the Elizabeth River in 1805, neither the end locks nor a feeder ditch to Lake Drummond had been constructed. Transportation on the newly opened canal was limited to shingle flats.² The international situation that led to the War of 1812 helped provide a stimulus for the end of such limited use. President Jefferson's Embargo revealed the need for a "back door" route such as a properly and fully developed canal could provide.³ The canal's

¹*Elizabeth City Star*, October 31, 1831.

²Alexander Crosby Brown, *The Dismal Swamp Canal* (Chesapeake: Norfolk County Historical Society, 1967), p. 39, hereinafter cited as Brown, *The Dismal Swamp Canal*.

³*Ibid.*, p. 41.

possibilities were further seen when the British blockaded the coast during the war. The canal's service during this period was limited, however, to transportation of produce over the road which had been constructed adjacent to it.⁴

The failure of the canal to aid the war effort caused the United States Government to send competent engineers to investigate the situation. Major James Kearney, one of the engineers, showed the canal's potential in his report when he revealed that during the few weeks the canal was open for navigation in 1815, that more than a million staves and six and a half million shingles had been sent through it. Kearney's findings came just at the time that the canal-building fever was sweeping the nation. The report and the fever combined to set the stage for future federal help in building the canal.⁵ This help did not come, however, until after the first quarter of the century.

During this first quarter of the century, meager surviving records seem to show that Elizabeth City's business district was making limited but slow progress. Random references to businesses reveal at least two general merchandise stores in the town in 1807. Charles Grice was operating the store he had purchased from Micheau in 1795.⁶ The other store was operated by Wilson Sawyer.⁷ Twelve years later, in 1819, Sawyer was still in business.⁸ By this time he had been joined by Samuel Spooner who operated a gold and silversmith trade⁹ and John Ehringhaus who offered his services as a commission merchant.¹⁰

In the meantime, the county court had, in 1817, licensed Mary Carmott, Thomas R. Cobb, Matthew Cluff, William Albertson, and Anthony Butler to sell spiritous liquors.¹¹ Some of

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 41, 42.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 42, 43.

⁶*Elizabeth City Gazette*, August 20, 1807.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Edenton Gazette*, April 20, 1819.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*American Beacon* (Norfolk), March 28, 1818, hereinafter cited as *American Beacon*.

¹¹Minutes of the Pasquotank County Court of Quarter Sessions and Pleas, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, June, 1817, hereinafter cited as Quarter Sessions.

these probably also offered sleeping accommodations. The town could boast of a hotel by 1819 when President Monroe stayed at the City Hotel.¹² The transportation systems were beginning to link the town to established cities. A steamboat line between Elizabeth City and New Bern existed as early as 1817.¹³ In 1818, some New Bern businessmen purchased the *Norfolk* to ply the distance.¹⁴ Beginning in April, 1818, a stage coach line ran between Norfolk and Edenton via Elizabeth City. Stages arrived in Elizabeth City every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons from both towns.¹⁵ A stage coach line was also instituted in connection with the *Norfolk's* arrival and departure, although the *Norfolk* venture had failed by August, 1818.¹⁶

In the five years after 1820, the business district began to show some increase in activity. In addition to several general stores,¹⁷ the town had a tobacco factory,¹⁸ tannery,¹⁹ and a "Gig-Making Business."²⁰ Near the end of the first quarter of the century, one advertisement boasted of ". . . the gradual growth of Elizabeth City, together with the rapid increase of its commercial and mercantile transactions. . . ."²¹

Impetus was given to the next decade of the town's economic growth by the opening of the Dismal Swamp Canal to vessels of

¹²Lemuel Sawyer, *Autobiography of Lemuel Sawyer* (New York: privately published, 1844), p. 21.

¹³Enoch Sawyer to James Iredell, Sr., December 6, 1817, James Iredell Sr. and Jr. Papers, 1814-1829, Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham.

¹⁴*American Beacon*, May 12, 1818.

¹⁵*Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald*, April 15, 1818.

¹⁶*American Beacon*, July 31, 1818.

¹⁷The following businesses are mentioned in the *Edenton Gazette*: Anthony Butler (March 7, 1820), Neilsons and Neale (May 2, 1820), Matthew Cluff (May 22, 1820), Neilsons and Marron (August 13, 1821). The *Elizabeth City Star* mentioned the following: William and Henry Moore (March 26, 1822), B and D Tisdale (December 13, 1823), Williams and Messenger (January 10, 1824), A. Fobes (January 15, 1824), Clarke Wilde (January 10, 1824), Lemuel C. Moore (May 15, 1824), Thomas R. Cobb (September 16, 1824).

¹⁸*Edenton Gazette*, August 14, 1820 (Butler Maury).

¹⁹*Ibid.*, August 13, 1821 (Sutton, McMorine, & Co.).

²⁰*Elizabeth City Star*, March 26, 1822 (Wyatt & Rogerson).

²¹*American Beacon*, March 18, 1823.

deeper draft. The United States Congress voted to buy 600 shares of the stock of the Dismal Swamp Company in 1826,²² and 200 more shares in 1829.²³ The combination of federal, state, and private cooperation speeded the canal's completion. By the end of 1828, work on the canal had increased the depth of water in the channel to three and a half feet.²⁴ It is not surprising that the first craft to pass through the improved canal was owned by an Elizabeth Citian, Matthew Cluff.²⁵ Cluff's vessel contained staves consigned to Norfolk.²⁶ By 1830, a number of canal boats were plying regularly between Elizabeth City and Norfolk.²⁷

Elizabeth City's growth for the same decade corresponded to the canal's progress. A newspaper established in 1822 began to blossom with advertisements of new businesses. During the decade of 1825-1834, at least nineteen general merchandise stores advertised.²⁸ The town also had two carriage makers²⁹ and the

²²Brown, *The Dismal Swamp Canal*, p. 48.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Cluff's residency alternated between Elizabeth City and Norfolk (*Elizabeth City Star*, May 15, 1824, August 19, 1826, January 20, 1837; *American Beacon*, June 1, 1816). While living in Norfolk in 1826, he invented a new type steam engine which caused the *Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald* to rave: "While it is perfectly safe in its operation, the expense of constructing an engine . . . will be so small as to place it within the reach of the great mass of the community; and it is so simple that a child may comprehend it." (August 18, 1826, also mentioned in the *Elizabeth City Star*, August 19, 1826.) No record survives of any patent for the machine (M.J. Lesch, United States Patent Office, letter, December 2, 1968, to author).

²⁶Brown, *The Dismal Swamp Canal*, p. 53.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 53-57.

²⁸All the following businesses are listed in *Elizabeth City Star*: Hezekiah Lockwood (May 6, 1826), Wright & Williams (February 25, 1826), John A. Shaw & Co. (February 25, 1826), I & O Fearing (November 5, 1831), Malachi Russell (September 2, 1826), James A. Armistead & Co. (December 23, 1826), H. N. Williams (March 18, 1826), Abner Williams (June 16, 1827), Thomas Vaughan (November 21, 1827), Knox & Rogerson (July 1, 1829), Samuel Williams (July 1, 1829), H. N. & T. P. Williams (October 21, 1829), Harrell & Forbes (November 11, 1829), Knox & Williams (October 30, 1820), Elliott & Cobb (September 29, 1831), William T. Bryant (September 29, 1831), John Williams & Co. (February 4, 1832), Charles Harrell (October 10, 1832), and James Albertson (October 10, 1832).

²⁹Charles Harrell (*Elizabeth City Star*, May 29, 1824) and Stafford & Barcliff (*Ibid.*, October 21, 1829).

same number of businesses specialized in harnesses and saddlery.³⁰ Additionally, a number of businesses were dedicated to making Elizabeth Citians well dressed. The town had one specialist in mantuamaking and millinery,³¹ a hat manufactory,³² a boot and shoe store,³³ and several tailors.³⁴ There were also two drugstores,³⁵ two groceries,³⁶ a bake shop,³⁷ and a clock and watch repairman.³⁸ The "exclusive store" of the period was operated by William D. Gordon. Gordon's "Fancy and Stationary Store"³⁹ carried soda water,⁴⁰ included an ice house,⁴¹ and introduced the lottery wheel to Elizabeth City.⁴² The Elizabeth City Insurance Company existed as early as 1829.⁴³

Another incentive to economic growth came through various transportation companies. The Virginia and North Carolina Transportation Company, formed in early 1829, purchased the steamboat *Petersburg* and sent her to Elizabeth City.⁴⁴ The *Petersburg* met barges coming down the Dismal Swamp Canal and ferried them to various North Carolina ports. Another transportation system began in July, 1829, between Norfolk and New Bern. Stages ran from Norfolk to Elizabeth City and a steamboat

³⁰Stephen Relfe (*Ibid.*, July 15, 1826) and Mayer & Hodges (*Ibid.*, May 26, 1827).

³¹Martha Cragin (*Ibid.*, February 11, 1832).

³²John Hodges (*Ibid.*, January 10, 1824).

³³John Hinds (*Ibid.*, September 29, 1821).

³⁴Watkins & Moore (*Ibid.*, February 18, 1826), Hartshorns & Pickett (*Ibid.*, February 24, 1827), William Lyons (*Ibid.*), Peter Clarke (*Ibid.*, March 3, 1827), George Kellinger (*Ibid.*, May 5, 1827), and Caleb Bennett (*Ibid.*, October 21, 1829).

³⁵Drs. Campos and David (*Ibid.*, May 13, 1826), Drs. Gordon and Martin (*Ibid.*, June 2, 1827). Actually, these are one business under different owners.

³⁶W. B. Micks (*Ibid.*, February 11, 1826), and William Albertson (*Ibid.*, October 21, 1829).

³⁷D. Goff (*Ibid.*, January 8, 1821).

³⁸Ebenezer Slocum (*Ibid.*, August 8, 1827).

³⁹*Ibid.*, June 16, 1827.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, May 12, 1827.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, July 14, 1831.

⁴²*Ibid.*, March 27, 1827.

⁴³Quarter Sessions, March, 1829.

⁴⁴*Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald*, March 13, 1829.

finished the distance to New Bern.⁴⁵

In addition to the inland transportation, Elizabeth City was engaged in considerable trade through Ocracoke Inlet. In January, 1828, "Sundry Citizens of Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County" memorialized Congress after that body had shown interest in deepening Ocracoke Inlet through which three-fourths of the commerce of the state passed. The memorialists stated that they were responsible for three-fourths of that commerce and that Roanoke Inlet would be much more advantageous to them.⁴⁶ Although no immediate action was taken, it is interesting to note the claim that over half of the state's commerce passed through Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County.

The growing importance of Elizabeth City as a port is seen in the moving of the Customs House of the Port of Camden to Elizabeth City in 1827 with the appointment of Asa Rogerson as Customs Collector.⁴⁷

The influence of water trade on the town is also reflected in the growing shipyard industry. Anthony Butler and Charles Grice had shipyards in the first decade of the nineteenth century,⁴⁸ but the industry boomed after 1830. James Grice was operating a shipyard in 1829.⁴⁹ Two years later, the town's newspaper reported "a scene of bustle and activity such as we never witnessed before." The keels of two brigs of about 300 tons each had been laid at the yards of John Boushall and Grice. Grice also had a marine railway, "conducted with great efficiency." A horse and a few men were able to raise vessels of 100 to 200 tons in two or three hours. The article concluded, "The great expedition, safety, and absence of strain on the vessel's frame . . . unite in giving a

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, July 31, 1829.

⁴⁶"Memorial of Sundry Citizens of Elizabeth City and County of Pasquotank, in North Carolina, praying that an appropriation be made for the purpose of opening a water communication from Albemarle Sound to the Ocean—January 21, 1828," North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Roanoke Inlet mentioned in the memorial is the same as the one later called Nags Head Inlet.

⁴⁷*Elizabeth City Star*, March 31, 1827.

⁴⁸See above, pp. 35, 36, and 46.

⁴⁹*Elizabeth City Star*, March 11, 1829.

preference over that heretofore pursued of heaving vessels out."⁵⁰

An economic center of Elizabeth City's importance demanded a number of hotels. The old City Hotel was being operated by William Albertson in 1826.⁵¹ Probably the town's first hotel, it was located on the northeast corner of Road and North streets.⁵² A hotel opened across Road Street from the City Hotel before 1826.⁵³ This hotel, although often remodeled and renamed by various owners, was still standing in 1856.⁵⁴ But the most famous ante-bellum hotel stood on the northeast corner of Main and Road streets. It opened as the National Hotel in 1829,⁵⁵ and was renamed the Mansion House following its purchase by James Leigh in 1833.⁵⁶ The town claimed at least one more hotel in the decade when William Albertson opened a tavern on southern Road Street.⁵⁷

As Elizabeth City became the area's shopping center, the lack of a local banking facility became an unbearable handicap. Efforts in the House of Commons to establish a bank for the town failed in December, 1835.⁵⁸ Probably in answer to this de-

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, June 3, 1831.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, March 25, 1836.

⁵²Pasquotank County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Pasquotank County Court House, Elizabeth City, DD, 452, hereinafter cited as Pasquotank County Deeds. The property included almost all that square to Poindexter Creek.

⁵³*Elizabeth City Star*, February 1, 1826, advertised the opening of Farmer's Hotel under management of James Relfe in the building which had formerly been Asa Rogerson's Tavern.

⁵⁴Abner Williams named the establishment Indian Queen Hotel (*American Beacon*, March 25, 1829). Maxcy Sanderlin reworked the building in 1849 (*The Old North State*, March 24, 1849). Elihu Williams applied the name City Hotel to the establishment (*The Old North State*, January 14, 1854). In 1856, it was called Mechanic's Hotel (*Democratic Pioneer*, January 29, 1856).

⁵⁵*Elizabeth City Star*, March 11, 1829.

⁵⁶*The Old North State*, April 17, 1852. Leigh, master of Land's End at Durant's Neck, purchased the property in 1822 for the sum of \$2,995.00 (Pasquotank County Deeds, B, 13-18).

⁵⁷*Elizabeth City Star*, December 30, 1831.

⁵⁸*Herald of the Times*, December 29, 1835.

mand, within a year a branch of the Bank of North Carolina had opened in Elizabeth City.⁵⁹ Although the bank was not as successful as had been hoped at the very beginning, its one employee, John C. Ehringhaus, cashier, was soon working until nine o'clock many evenings.⁶⁰ During court week, Ehringhaus was so busy that he had to work on Sunday even though he worked late every evening.⁶¹

In the midst of the town's growing prosperity, serious setbacks were suffered through a series of fires which had begun as early as 1827.⁶² A minor fire was reported in June, 1827, at the property of Abner Williams.⁶³ A second fire at Williams' property, this one in September, was of a much more serious nature. This time, two stores, five dwellings, two warehouses, a bake shop, and two other buildings plus the contents of most were destroyed.⁶⁴ An editorial cried in despair: "Our houses, with a few exceptions, are built of combustible material. Our engine is a very inefficient one—and as to water, we might as well have none." The despair over water resulted from too few wells and the pumps which were in a serious state of decay.⁶⁵

Fire returned in September, 1836. This time the steam mill and warehouse of Horatio N. Williams and the blacksmith and carpenter's shop of Timothy Hunter were destroyed.⁶⁶ On September 20, 1839, the town suffered damage of \$12,000.00 in "one of the most destructive fires with which this town has ever been visited." All buildings in the block between Main and North,

⁵⁹Notes, Elizabeth City Branch of the Bank of North Carolina, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh. The first note was received on November 11, 1836.

⁶⁰John C. Ehringhaus to Duncan Cameron, February 2, 1837, Letterbook of Elizabeth City Branch of the Bank of North Carolina, 1826-1841, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, March 9, 1837.

⁶²No record of any earlier fire has been found. Yet, the presence of a fire company as early as 1825 (*Elizabeth City Star*, February 25, 1826), is ample proof of the problem.

⁶³*Elizabeth City Star*, June 6, 1827.

⁶⁴*American Beacon*, September 3, 1827.

⁶⁵*Elizabeth City Star*, January 14, 1832.

⁶⁶*American Beacon*, September 23, 1836.

on the east side of Road, were destroyed except the National Hotel.⁶⁷

The 1839 fire only added to the economic distress that would soon paralyze the area. The Panic of 1837 that brought the nation to its knees had wreaked havoc in Elizabeth City by August, 1840, when Charles R. Kinney, President of the Elizabeth City Branch of the Bank of North Carolina and a prominent lawyer, wrote, "Great embarrassment prevails in our place. The Fearings have been compelled to stop and must fail unless they can obtain liberal terms. Several other merchants are in the same way."⁶⁸ Conditions grew worse. Kinney wrote the following year that it had rained every day for the past forty, half of the wheat crop was lost, and all farms were covered with water.⁶⁹ In the Spring of 1843, the entire corn and wheat crops of Pasquotank sold for only \$50,000.00 whereas they usually sold for \$300,000.00.⁷⁰ Kinney wrote that it was the "first time in my life that I have had to turn the needy empty away. Destruction of crops is so widespread, no man can help his neighbor."⁷¹ The county court voted to purchase 700 barrels of corn to distribute among the suffering of the county that year.⁷²

Business conditions in the nation had returned to normal by 1844, and there are indications that prosperity had returned to Elizabeth City at least by 1847. Certainly in September, 1847, the county court felt business sufficiently recovered to propose the building of a poor house, a house for the insane, and a bridge across the Pasquotank River.⁷³ By a year and a half later, all signs of depression were gone. An editorial boasted, "Among our citizens who have been conspicuous in adding buildings and also in altering and repairing, we mention Capt. T. Hunter, John S. Bur-

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, January 25, 1839.

⁶⁸Charles R. Kinney to Rev. Harvey Stanley, August 23, 1841, William F. Martin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, July 16, 1842.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, March 5, 1843.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²*Quarter Sessions*, March, 1843.

⁷³*Ibid.*, September, 1847.

gess, John L. Hinton, Rev. W. W. Kennedy, Joseph H. Pool, G. W. Charles, and Oliver Fearing."⁷⁴ A week later the editor wrote, "William W. Griffin has erected the handsomest building in the village. Thomas Allen and Thomas R. Cobb have also been putting up buildings, Allen a large and commodious store on Road Street, Cobb, a warehouse on his lot." He concluded, "William Messenger is raising a very large dwelling, Maxcy Sanderlin is now arranging his house at the corner of Road and North streets for a hotel."⁷⁵

The prosperity was also reflected in activity at the waterfront. One editor wrote in November, 1849: "[in] less than three months, three fine vessels, two of them of large size and intended for the West Indian trade and the other for the canal has [*sic*] been launched from the shipyards of Elizabeth City." The ships spoken of were the *Hunter* from the yard of Timothy Hunter, the *John A. Gambril* by C. M. Laverty, and the *Samuel D. Lamb* from the yard of Burgess & Lamb.⁷⁶

In the midst of this renewed prosperity, the residents of the area could not help from dreaming of even greater prosperity if only federal support for the opening of Nags Head Inlet could be obtained. Thus citizens of Pasquotank County met at the court house in February, 1850, and selected fifty delegates to represent the county at a special Nags Head Convention of all counties of the First Congressional District in Plymouth.⁷⁷ Although all fifty delegates did not attend, the convention enthusiastically endorsed the plan to open the channel and appointed delegates to Congress to present the case.⁷⁸ Yet, there were no immediate results from the convention, for the committee did not go to Washington at the time because it felt there was no hope of having its message heard above the slavery controversy.⁷⁹

But this failure in no way slowed down Elizabeth City's water-

⁷⁴*The Old North State*, March 17, 1849.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, March 24, 1849.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, November 3, 1849.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, February 16, 1850.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, March 23, 1850.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, October 12, 1850.

front activities. Timothy Hunter launched the *A. C. Williams*⁸⁰ and R. G. Newman launched a sixty-five foot ship in 1850.⁸¹ Five years later, the 336-ton *Charles M. Laverty*, "the largest ship ever built in Elizabeth City" up to that time, was launched by Laverty.⁸² A report of May 20, 1856, stated that 119 vessels were then in commerce from the shipyards of Elizabeth City. These included one brig, ninety-three schooners, five sloops, four sloop boats, and sixteen lighter boats, with an aggregate weight of 5,863 tons.⁸³ These figures indicate quite clearly the importance and productivity of the town's shipyards and the important role they played in the ante-bellum economy of Elizabeth City.

Not all waterfront activity was marine oriented. Murray & Clark, Millwrights, Pattern and Machine Makers, operated at the water. The company specialized in the manufacture of farm machinery.⁸⁴ In 1849, they won the premium at the Baltimore Fair for the best and most improved corn sheller.⁸⁵ Two years later, the partnership was dissolved. Murray moved to Baltimore while William H. Clark remained in business in Elizabeth City.⁸⁶ Clark now called his establishment the North Carolina Agriculture Store and Machine Manufactory.⁸⁷

By 1850, Elizabeth City was the scene of a number of manufacturing enterprises. William R. Palmer marketed the Palmer's Improved Rotating Flail Threshing Machine.⁸⁸ No details of Palmer's thresher have survived. L. K. Saunders, one of the town's druggists, had three products to his credit: a liquid soap,⁸⁹ a medicated hair restorative, and a cholera preventative.⁹⁰ Dr. John

⁸⁰*Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), October 8, 1850, hereinafter cited as *Democratic Pioneer*.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, November 19, 1854.

⁸²*Ibid.*, September 25, 1855.

⁸³*Ibid.*, May 20, 1856.

⁸⁴*The Old North State*, February 24, 1849.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, October 20, 1849.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, March 29, 1851.

⁸⁷*North Carolina Native Sentinel* (Elizabeth City), October 25, 1856, hereinafter cited as *North Carolina Native Sentinel*.

⁸⁸*The Old North State*, June 14, 1851.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, December 17, 1850.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, April 5, 1851.

Harrell sold Dr. Harrell's Adhesive Salve for burns, cuts, and carbuncles.⁹¹ The 1850 census listed ten industries which employed 106 workers in the town. The total capital invested by all the businesses was \$43,500.00, and the total value of the annual product was \$80,000.00.⁹²

There is no question but that Elizabeth City was enjoying unrivaled prosperity during the last decade preceding the Civil War. The decade began with one editor boasting that Alexander Anderson had erected a large store on Butler's Wharf. C. M. Laverty had built a store on the corner of Water and Main, and an old adjacent building had been remodeled. William Messenger was reported to have erected a "very large" warehouse on his wharf. In addition to these waterfront projects, James M. Ferebee was building "a large and handsome dwelling" on North Street.⁹³

Although the town was plagued with fires in 1852, these were only temporary reversals for the town's thriving economy. An April fire destroyed one of the city's landmarks, its most famous hostelry, the Mansion House, on the corner of Main and Road, as well as most of the other buildings on the square.⁹⁴ This fire prompted the building of a house to store the fire engine.⁹⁵ In September, the store of Albert White and the warehouse and lumber yard of C. M. Laverty, all on the waterfront, burned.⁹⁶ Two small fires, two days in succession in October, did little damage to William H. Clark's steam mill and a warehouse of Captain Timothy Hunter, the latter across Charles Creek at Dry Point.⁹⁷ The frequent fires led to an investigation of arson.⁹⁸ Yet no

⁹¹*Ibid.*, September 3, 1853.

⁹²Federal Census of 1850, Pasquotank County, original in State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, Schedule Five, Products of Industry in Elizabeth City. The following are listed: Burgess & Lamb, Timothy Hunter, Joseph A. Turner, John C. Ehringhaus, Robert Watkins, W. H. Clark, James H. Shepherd, John Does, Robert Broadfield, Richard Maiman, William Glover.

⁹³*The Old North State*, October 4, 1851.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, April 17, 1852.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, May 1, 1852.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, September 18, 1852.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, October 30, 1852.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

record of any charges against anyone for arson survives.

Proof that these fires had no serious impact on the town's economy is found in an editorial which appeared in early 1854. This editorial, while mentioning that the town's population had reached about 2,000, stated that the improvement of the town for the past two years "has been rapid and astonishing." William W. Griffin had been greatly responsible for the growth. The area south of the town which had formerly been a race track and which was taken into the town by the expansion of 1851, now contained fifteen dwellings whereas it had only two dilapidated houses two or three years previous. Nearly every street could claim a new building. There was a new bridge across Charles Creek, and Griffin & Gaskins planned soon to erect a steam mill in its vicinity. There were two banks, and three newspapers: "Whig," "Anti-Whig," and "Temperance." As for industry, it was announced that "William H. Clark annually manufactures \$10,000 worth of machinery. Watkins and McCoy [are engaged in] the carriage business, and [there are] four shipyards."⁹⁹

By November, Griffin & Gaskins were reported to have completed their steam grist mill while J. W. Hinton had nearly completed "an elegant private residence" on the street leading to Norfolk Road. James Leigh was rebuilding the Mansion House Hotel. William W. Griffin was building new quarters for the Farmers' Bank, just east of the Hotel.¹⁰⁰

The Farmer's Bank had been organized in 1853 with its main office in Elizabeth City and a branch in Greensboro.¹⁰¹ The first year was most successful—the annual stockholders' meeting declared a dividend of six percent and doubled the cashier's salary while raising the teller's salary fifty percent.¹⁰² In the Fall of 1855, the bank moved into the building constructed by Griffin on Main Street. The interior was "finished off in beautiful style

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, February 4, 1854, quoting an editorial from the *Beaufort Mirror*, edited by W. V. Geffroy, a native of Elizabeth City. The Race Track can be seen on map, following p. 62.

¹⁰⁰*Democratic Pioneer*, November 14, 1854.

¹⁰¹*The Old North State*, January 29, 1853.

¹⁰²*Democratic Pioneer*, April 4, 1854.

carved ornamental work," and the exterior "under the cunning hand of Benjamin Richardson, exhibits an admirable counterfeit presentment of beautiful marble."¹⁰³

The Panic of 1857, which ended the western boom following the gold rush and brought a depression to the North and West, revealed a long struggle the bank had been fighting against failure. In the Fall of 1857, Farmer's Bank announced the temporary suspension of specie payments as "so many banks up North failed and there is bound to be a run on the bank."¹⁰⁴ The following week, the editor of the *Democratic Pioneer* wrote, "From the time this institution went into operation, it seems to have excited the cupidity of the brokers who have made it a particular object of their care and consideration." He further explained that once or twice during the bank's career crises arose in which it seemed that the bank might fail. These periods were made "the plea for circulating the most extravagant and silly reports, resulting in a depreciation of their paper, ruinous to the holder and beneficial to the broker . . ."¹⁰⁵

The *Pioneer* reported in July, 1858, that Plymouth merchants were refusing notes of the bank, yet the editor assured his readers of the bank's soundness.¹⁰⁶ But even the paper began to waver in September as Editor Starke observed that so many people were refusing to take its notes that it had caused depreciation to the extent that it was almost ruinous to take them. He concluded, "We sincerely wish the Bank would use some means to relieve the people and save its own credit. It is bad business at present."¹⁰⁷ Two weeks later the *Pioneer* editor again defended the bank; this time against an attack of the *Edenton Express*.¹⁰⁸ In December, 1858, the stockholders voted to move the home office to Greensboro, and make the Elizabeth City office the branch.¹⁰⁹ In April,

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, October 16, 1855.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, September 29, 1859.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, November 6, 1857.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, July 6, 1858.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, September 7, 1858.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, September 21, 1858.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, December 12, 1858.

1859, Starke advised letting Greensboro have the bank while Elizabeth City sought a branch of the Bank of the Cape Fear.¹¹⁰ Yet Starke's advice went unheeded and Farmer's Bank was still operating in the town two years later.¹¹¹

As if conditions were not dark enough, Elizabeth City's worse fire prior to the Civil War came in mid-March, 1858. Hampered by darkness and strong wind, the one-engine, volunteer department and many citizens struggled six hours before containing the fire. During this time, \$80,000.00 worth of property had been destroyed. The fire started on the west side of Water Street between Main and North streets, in the store of N. A. Cohen. All the buildings in that block were destroyed. The fire crossed North Street and destroyed the buildings on the west side of Water Street in that block. It also progressed eastward on Main, as far as the corner of Poindexter and Main where the Marine Hospital was destroyed. In the meantime, the wind shifted, and the flames were carried across Water Street where the entire waterfront burned.¹¹²

This fire was believed to be the work of an incendiary. N. A. Cohen and his family were arrested on suspicion and lodged in jail to wait examination.¹¹³ Many rumors were circulated about this family of Dutch Jews.¹¹⁴ It was told that they had been run from New Bern, their former residence, because they had set a fire there. Prominent New Bern citizens published a statement to the contrary. It was also alleged that they had placed their goods on a boat before the fire; but this charge was also quickly proved false.¹¹⁵ In April they were released, and Cohen offered \$250.00

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, April 9, 1859.

¹¹¹Quarter Sessions, April, 1861.

¹¹²*Democratic Pioneer*, March 28, 1858.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴As early as January 31, 1852, *The Old North State* had complained of Anti-Semitism, indicative of the Native American movement and anti-foreign feeling of the day. The editor wrote of Elizabeth City: "Many disreputable attempts have been made by a parcel of ill-disposed persons, to the community unknown, to irritate and annoy the Jews now residing in the town."

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, April 6, 1858.

reward for sufficient evidence to convict the incendiary.¹¹⁶ If an arsonist set the fire, his identity remained unknown.

The fire gave momentum to a move, long only in the planning stage, to buy new fire engines. The city subscribed \$500.00 toward two new engines.¹¹⁷ Within a year, the citizens had subscribed an additional \$1,100.00.¹¹⁸ William Clark purchased the two machines in Baltimore.¹¹⁹ They were named *Fashion* and *United*.¹²⁰

Within a month after their arrival, the new engines were needed. They soon proved their capability, as this fire was confined to one block. Yet, before it was extinguished, it had destroyed six stores and two dwellings.¹²¹

The work of rebuilding after the two fires began almost immediately. By January, 1859, at least ten buildings were being constructed on the waterfront. In addition to these, there were at least eight other projects in other sections of the town, including a two-story brick office building being erected by J. W. Hinton between the recently finished Leigh House and the Farmer's Bank.¹²²

The fires were no long-term threat to the town's economy, but genuine alarm was occasioned by the opening of a canal parallel to the Dismal Swamp Canal—the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal. This new canal, opened January 6, 1859,¹²³ caused the editor of the *Democratic Pioneer* to write, "The large trade that now centers in Elizabeth City from the hundreds of vessels that yearly pass through the Dismal Swamp Canal, will be, in

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸Minutes of the Town of Elizabeth City, 1853-1863, 1865-1867, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, May 14, 1859, hereinafter cited as Minutes of Elizabeth City.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, July 14, 1859.

¹²⁰*Democratic Pioneer*, June 7, 1859.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, July 5, 1859.

¹²²*Ibid.*, January 4, 1859. The Leigh House was the name given to the new hotel which replaced the burned Mansion House. This new building had thirty-five to forty bedrooms, a barbershop, a bar room, and four stores facing Road Street (*Ibid.*, August 14, 1855).

¹²³Brown, *The Dismal Swamp Canal*, p. 77.

a large measure, carried to other places. . . ." He proposed the establishment of a new trade with Hyde County through Fairfield. If a steamboat line should connect Elizabeth City with "the rich and fertile section of country lying between the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds," the town could regain the trade lost by the opening of the new canal.¹²⁴ But clouds of the Civil War overshadowed the work of Starke's dream.

The war also prevented a consideration of the validity of Starke's fears over the ruin of the town's economy by the new canal. A report published in mid-1860 revealed that traffic flow through the old canal was still heavy.¹²⁵ But before the new canal had an opportunity to become established as a new route, the nation was at war, and all attempts to compare post-war figures with pre-war figures would be futile as so many factors would have to enter the consideration.

The town's chief claim to being the emporium of northeastern North Carolina lay in this canal which had funnelled commerce through the town for fifty-five years. Nixonton, Edenton, or Hertford—all older towns—had failed to become the economic hub of the area although each had the advantage of being established before Elizabeth City was even planned. But these towns did not have the canal!

The Dismal Swamp Canal connected Elizabeth City to one of the world's greatest seaports and made the town a depot of imports into and exports from the Albemarle area. So dependent was Norfolk on northeastern North Carolina that her citizens and newspapers called for her annexation to the Old North State.¹²⁶ Consider that this area was connected with Norfolk by two major lines of transportation: the Dismal Swamp Canal and the Seaboard and Roanoke Railway. There is no question why Elizabeth City became the commercial hub for the section.

It is extremely difficult to establish a picture of the business

¹²⁴*Democratic Pioneer*, October 18, 1859.

¹²⁵*Albemarle Southron and Union Advocate*, (Elizabeth City), October 19, 1860.

¹²⁶*Argus* (Norfolk), April, 1849; February 11, 1852; March 13, 1856; March 18, 1856.

community at any one time as business locations and ownership so often changed and no effort was made to publish a directory. The first glimpse of the economic center as a whole appeared in 1854 in a business directory published for the South. Thirty businesses were listed for Elizabeth City, yet no further information was included.¹²⁷

One picture does emerge from the earliest years: there were two distinct business districts. The town's two types of transportation were responsible for the business district on Road Street, which was part of the principal road of the area, and another on Water Street, where the stores were built at or on the wharves. As early as 1825, stores on both streets were advertising. An editorial at Thanksgiving, 1853, in *The Old North State* noted that the businesses on Road Street closed for the observance of the day, while those on Water Street did not.¹²⁸ The town's Market House, with its stalls rented to citizens interested in selling their products at a common market, was located on the corner of Water and Main.¹²⁹ Although there were a few businesses at either end of Main Street, contiguous to the business area of Road and Water, the primary function of Main was to connect the two business districts. The court house and residences occupied most of Main.

As the Civil War neared, at least one index indicated that Elizabeth City's economic picture was not as bright as it had been. Although the 1860 census reported two more industries than had been reported a decade earlier, the number of employees, even with a larger number of businesses, was only fifty-two percent of

¹²⁷*The Southern Business Directory and General Commercial Advertiser*, 2 volumes (Charleston: Walker and James, 1854), I, 390. The following businesses are listed: C. M. Laverty, J. Fearing, B. Tisdale, T. R. Cobb, W. B. Burgess, J. E. Deford, G. W. F. Dashiel, W. L. Shannon, Shannon & Temple, J. M. Whidbee & Bro., S. Williams & Son, A. Anderson, J. S. Long and Luttle [Tuttle], W. G. Cook, W. Halsey, R. White, J. D. Bailey, Richardson & Morgan, J. W. Hinton, C. Sikes, John S. Burgess, Wm. E. Mann, Albert White, A. E. Jacobs, R. H. Broadfield, R. Watkins, N. A. Cohn, J. Nicholas, W. O. Davis, L. H. Saunders. This compares with sixteen for Greenville.

¹²⁸*The Old North State*, November 26, 1853.

¹²⁹Minutes of Elizabeth City, March 5, 1855; June 2, 1856.

the previous report. Even if some new machinery may have accounted for this drop in employment, the more alarming condition was that the gross value of the products manufactured in 1860 was only sixty-five percent of the value of the 1850 products.¹³⁰

Thus, even before the Civil War wreaked havoc upon Elizabeth City's economy, she was experiencing another recession. But the town had successfully weathered worse conditions and probably would have overcome the new one had not the war changed everything. Nevertheless, she entered the war still unquestionably the emporium of northeastern North Carolina.

¹³⁰Federal Census of 1860, Pasquotank County, original in State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, Schedule Five, Products of Industry in Elizabeth City.

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The Role of Newspapers in the Town's Growth

Newspapers played a major role in bringing Elizabeth City into prominence. Although some of the town's earliest newspapers may have been insignificant and short-lived, by 1840 one of Elizabeth City's papers was the political organ for the entire congressional district. Three years later, both party organs for the district were being published in the town. This made Elizabeth City the hub of a thirteen county district of northeastern North Carolina.¹ Even though the town was the burial ground of several newspapers during the period, as were most North Carolina towns in the first half of the nineteenth century,² all her newspapers played a role in Elizabeth City's rise to prominence.

The *Elizabeth City Gazette and Public Advertiser*, the town's earliest newspaper, was first issued on July 31, 1807. Joseph Beasley, editor, had formerly printed the *Post Angel* of Edenton³ and published the *Edenton Gazette*.⁴ He promised, for twenty-five shillings annually, to supply the subscriber with a paper dedicated to "the general diffusion of such interesting occurrences, foreign and domestic, as occasionally transpire," plus "the insertion of such original and select pieces as tend to instruct the mind, improve the morals, and delight the fancy."⁵ Most of

¹ *Albemarle Southron and Union Advocate* (Elizabeth City), October 19, 1860.

² Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), p. 764.

³ *Post Angel* (Edenton), September 10, 1800.

⁴ *Edenton Gazette*, November 19, 1800.

⁵ *Elizabeth City Gazette and Public Advertiser*, July 31, 1807.

Beasley's space, however, was given to the latter promise. Very little local news can be gleaned from the six extant copies. The first issue's only local news was the reports of meetings in Pasquotank and Camden counties which drafted resolutions for local action against the British until the local government acted.⁶ A few advertisements scattered throughout the other five issues proved the only insights into local news. How long the paper was published is unknown. Although the last extant issue is dated January 14, 1808, the paper is quoted in the *Edenton Gazette* nine months later.⁷ It was still being published in early 1810.⁸

After a decade of press silence, the town's second newspaper, the *Elizabeth City Star*, appeared in late 1821.⁹ Four years later, the title had been lengthened to the *Elizabeth City Star and North Carolina Eastern Intelligencer*.¹⁰ This rather ambitious title was substantiated with a large number of advertisements to bring the people of the area to Elizabeth City. The paper may have succeeded to some extent in its ambitions for the town, for it claimed for the town the title "Eastern Emporium of North Carolina" six years later.¹¹

A *Star* complaint revealed the hardships of editors before the appearance of news services. Papers of the area copied their national and international news from northern newspapers. Sometimes the mail failed to arrive in time. On other occasions, the paper's arrival was no benefit. It was this latter problem that caused the editor to lament, "We have perused and re-perused the papers of last week, but have not been able to glean anything from them like news." Not to be outdone, however, he "selected

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷October 13, 1808.

⁸*The History of Printing in America with a Biography of Printers, And an Account of Newspapers*, 2 volumes (Albany: Joel Munsell, Printer, 1874), II, 302.

⁹The first extant issue, dated March 26, 1822, is numbered Vol. I, No. 15.

¹⁰[Month and day illegible], 1825.

¹¹*Elizabeth City Star*, October 31, 1831.

and published such articles as we considered would instruct or gratify our readers."¹²

The first editor of the *Star* was William Albertson,¹³ but by 1831 Benjamin Albertson was the editor.¹⁴ There are no extant copies of the paper after May 18, 1833. The earliest extant copy of another paper, *Herald of the Times*, bearing the date January 27, 1835, is numbered Volume 12, Issue 26. The editor and proprietor of this latter paper was Benjamin Albertson. Probably the *Herald of the Times* was a continuation of the *Star* under a new name.¹⁵

Only six issues of *Herald of the Times* have been preserved. The last of these was published on April 30, 1836. As in the case of its predecessor, almost all the local news is found in the advertisements. However, the *Herald* did also contain a section labelled Marine News that listed the arrival and departure of ships, an inventory of their cargoes, and the intended recipient of the cargo.

Between the *Star* and the *Herald*, another paper had appeared in late 1832. The *North Carolina Advocate*, edited by E. A. McNally, was to be governed by the principles of the Jeffersonian or Democratic Republican School. It planned to support the re-election of General Jackson to the presidency, and may have existed only during the period of the campaign. But the paper's name came from a desire to promote internal improvements in North Carolina. The editor felt that North Carolina's "patriotic and intelligent citizens have to lament the apathy that had hitherto prevailed amongst her people on the subject of 'improvements' . . . and the sluggishness with which she has dragged after

¹²*Ibid.*, February 11, 1826.

¹³*Ibid.*, March 22, 1822.

¹⁴*American Beacon* (Norfolk), July 6, 1831, hereinafter cited as *American Beacon*.

¹⁵The exact relationship of the Albertsons has not been established. Benjamin owned land on which William's City Hotel was situated (Pasquotank County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Pasquotank County Court House, Elizabeth City, X, 356). William advertised for a run-away apprentice, speaking of "my son with whom I placed him to serve and learn the trade of a printer" (*Elizabeth City Star*, July 27, 1827).

all her twin sisters, and some of her younger ones." Thus the new paper was to be "the Advocate of the interests of the State of North Carolina."¹⁶

An editorial in the one extant copy purports to explain four political theories which were then current. The editor first explained nullification. This was followed by his interpretation of secession. The third theory held that all power was in the federal government and the only check of this power was between the three branches. The final viewpoint was that some areas of power were in the state government while others were in the federal government. Each must guard its rights by controlled means to keep the other from stepping over. The editor stated he would not give his opinion as to which theory was correct, but would rather give the readers time to consider the alternatives for themselves.¹⁷

Four years following the last extant copy of *Herald of the Times*, the town's next newspaper appeared. This paper was characterized by frequent changes in name, editor, and owner. During its first year, it was edited by F. S. Proctor and labelled *Phoenix*.¹⁸ The paper assumed "an entirely new dress and appearance" with its new name, *The Intelligencer and Nags Head Advocate*, and its new editors, Perkins and Proctor, in late 1840.¹⁹

Only two copies of the paper wearing this lengthy name are extant; the earliest copy is dated December 8, 1840.²⁰ The paper stated clearly its political position. In addition to its avowed purpose of promoting the re-opening of Roanoke Inlet, it also

¹⁶Prospectus in *Elizabeth City Star*, January 14, 1832.

¹⁷January 15, 1833.

¹⁸An editorial in *The Old North State* (Elizabeth City), February 26, 1853, hereinafter cited as *The Old North State*, stated it was called the *Phoenix* the first year. *American Beacon*, December 15, 1840, reported that Proctor had retired from the editorship of the *Phoenix*. Charles Kinney to Rev. Harvey Stanley, August 23, 1840, William F. Martin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, mentions a letter that Kinney had written to the editor of the *Phoenix*.

¹⁹*American Beacon*, December 15, 1840.

²⁰Numbered I, 9.

aimed to favor the candidacy of Harrison and Tyler, for it "could not bring to mind one single act in the political life of Mr. Van Buren that entitles him to the gratitude and support of the American people."²¹ Although nothing else is known of the new editors, Perkins and Proctor, it seems that they must have come to Elizabeth City from the Norfolk-Portsmouth area.²²

Four months later the paper again had a new name and new editor. Jesse Howell edited the only extant issue of the paper named *The Old North State and Nags Head Advocate*, which was printed May 25, 1841.²³ This was followed by seven and a half years of no extant papers until February 24, 1849, when William E. Mann was beginning his fourth year as editor and publisher.²⁴ By this time, the latter part of the name had been dropped. Almost all issues from that date until the last preserved issue, October 23, 1854, have been found. During these years, ownership and editorship changed frequently.

G. M. Wilder was assistant editor in 1849.²⁵ Mann and Griffin were proprietors with Stephen D. Pool as editor in 1850.²⁶ The next year, Mann and Raper were proprietors.²⁷ Mann sold out in 1852, and the paper was owned by R. Raper & Co. with Pool as a partner.²⁸ Pool was both editor and proprietor in 1853;²⁹ but R. Raper held both offices in 1854.³⁰

The most interesting days of the paper's history came following the establishment of the rival *Democractic Pioneer* in 1850. *The Old North State* was a Whig paper,³¹ and the Democrats of northeastern North Carolina felt that they needed a party paper.

²¹*The Intelligencer and Nags Head Advocate* (Elizabeth City), December 8, 1840. The other issue was dated January 26, 1841.

²²The preponderance of advertisements were from Norfolk and Portsmouth.

²³Numbered I, 31.

²⁴Numbered IX, 1.

²⁵*The Old North State*, September 8, 1849.

²⁶*Ibid.*, June 11, 1850.

²⁷*Ibid.*, July 20, 1851.

²⁸*Ibid.*, August 17, 1852.

²⁹*Ibid.*, February 26, 1853.

³⁰*Ibid.*, October 17, 1854.

³¹*Ibid.*, February 21, 1852.

"Aurora" of Elizabeth City wrote the *North Carolina Standard* in May, 1850, decrying the lack of a Democratic paper in the Ninth Congressional District.³² This letter produced fast results as the first issue of the *Pioneer* was issued on August 6, 1850, with Lucian Starke, editor and publisher. *The Old North State* made a friendly notice of the *Pioneer* and of its editor, saying, "We have been most favorably impressed" by Starke.³³

This was the last friendly exchange; from then on they were constantly attacking each other. Editorial space which had once been used to relate local news in *The Old North State* was now given to denouncing the *Pioneer's* editorials. So extreme was the antagonism that the *State* made no mention of a new fire company of which Starke was the president.³⁴ However, a bitterly sarcastic mention was made following a minor fire. *The Old North State* editorial, while never mentioning Starke's name, concluded, "For his [the engine company's president] sake we will pass the absence of the company and its engine by, without any remarks, determined that none shall learn their delinquency through us."³⁵ However, a year and a half later, *The Old North State* press burned,³⁶ and for two months the paper was issued from the *Pioneer* press.³⁷ Even then the papers allowed no let-up on the attacks on each other.³⁸

Less than a month after *The Old North State* had returned to its own press, the rivalry between the newspapers and their editors erupted into physical blows. Pool, who was not only editor of *The Old North State*, but also principal of the Elizabeth City Academy, was called across the street by Starke. Starke asked Pool if he intended to impeach his personal integrity by an article in Pool's paper headed "Mr. Kerr."³⁹ Pool replied

³²*Ibid.*, May 25, 1850.

³³*Ibid.*, August 10, 1850.

³⁴The company is mentioned in *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), October 29, 1850, hereinafter cited as *Democratic Pioneer*.

³⁵*The Old North State*, November 16, 1850.

³⁶*Ibid.*, April 17, 1852.

³⁷*Ibid.*, June 12, 1853.

³⁸See editorials of both papers during period.

³⁹The editorial in *The Old North State*, June 19, 1852, favoring Kerr,

that he did not. Starke then demanded that Pool never make allusion to him again in his paper. Pool declared that no threat would stop him. Starke raised his cane and hit Pool over the left eye; Pool grabbed the cane and struck his opponent in the face. Pool then caught Starke around the waist, but was accosted by William Burgess and Jeremiah Stokely who held him while Starke delivered him "several blows." John Matthews came between them and the fight was over. Pool later offered evidence that witnesses found Starke's pistol on the ground. He used this as the proof that Starke had planned the whole affair.⁴⁰ To defend his name, Starke offered within a week a challenge to a duel. But Pool refused on two grounds: 1) his creditors, and 2) his wife and six children.⁴¹

The stalemate fight only intensified the editorial attacks until *The Old North State* announced its own demise in mid-February, 1855, for "pecuniary considerations."⁴² As far as records survive, this paper has the distinction of being the longest published before the Civil War.

Lucian Starke, editor of the *Democratic Pioneer*, was a native of Richmond, Virginia. He had become an apprentice of *The Richmond Enquirer*, "the Democratic organ of the United States," before he was sixteen. In 1847, he joined the *Norfolk Argus*, of which he became foreman before leaving in July, 1850, for Elizabeth City. He read law under William F. Martin, one of the town's outstanding lawyers, and was licensed to practice in 1858. He held the editorship of the *Pioneer* until just before Lincoln's inauguration.⁴³

the Whig candidate for North Carolina Governor, had made note of a former editorial by Starke against Kerr. Pool said that the remarks against Kerr "are made by as rabid a Loco Foco as the state contains and are printed in a journal which would go as far as any other to encompass the success of the Loco Foco Party."

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, July 3, 1852. This report is taken entirely from Pool's point of view as no copies of the *Democratic Pioneer* for the period are extant.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, July 10, 1852.

⁴²*Democratic Pioneer*, February 20, 1855.

⁴³An Autobiography, written in 1897, in Starke-Marchant-Martin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The *Pioneer* existed approximately ten years. Except for the years of 1852 and 1853, for which only three copies are extant, issues of the paper have been preserved through November, 1859.

During the early years of the *Pioneer*, a temperance paper appeared in the town. The *Star in the East*, under the editorship of William R. Carson, a temperance lecturer, was first published in early October, 1853.⁴⁴ The paper was short-lived, and no issues have been preserved. Yet, it may have played an important role in the election of the temperance ticket in the municipal election of December, 1853.⁴⁵ Following Carson's marriage,⁴⁶ the editorship passed to Dr. J. G. Godfrey and William V. Geffroy.⁴⁷ Five weeks after the announcement of the new editorship, it was reported that the *Star of the East* had been temporarily suspended "by embarrassments in the publication department," and that it would be resumed in a few days by Godfrey alone as editor and publisher.⁴⁸ No further indication of the nature of the embarrassment was given. Nor has any subsequent mention of the temperance paper been found.

Another rival political newspaper for the *Democratic Pioneer* appeared on February 24, 1855. The *North Carolina Native Sentinel*, edited by William H. Bagley, appeared the week following the death of *The Old North State*.⁴⁹ The *Sentinel*, a paper "partial to the avowed principles of the Know-Nothings," had also received *The Old North State's* subscription list.⁵⁰ However, William E. Mann, former editor of *The Old North State*, threatened to introduce the *District American* in mid-April.⁵¹ But before that time he announced a compromise by which he

⁴⁴*The Old North State*, October 8, 1853; August 27, 1853.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, January 7, 1854.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, November 12, 1853.

⁴⁷*Democratic Pioneer*, March 7, 1854. *The Old North State*, October 29, 1853, had announced that Geffroy was going to Beaufort to edit the *Beaufort Mirror*. *The Old North State*, February 4, 1854, contained an editorial from the *Mirror* by Geffroy.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, May 2, 1854.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, February 27, 1855.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, February 20, 1855.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, February 27, 1855.

became publisher of the *Sentinel*.⁵² Only two pages of one issue of the paper have been preserved.⁵³ Yet it is known that the paper changed its name to *American Sentinel* in late 1857.⁵⁴ But a year later the paper had died⁵⁵ with the Know-Nothing Party in North Carolina.⁵⁶

As the Opposition Party arose to replace the Know-Nothings, so *The State* appeared to fill the vacuum left by the disappearance of the *American Sentinel*. *The State*, an Opposition organ, was first published in May, 1859. This new paper was "issued . . . by J. D. Brown, published, for the proprietors, and J. W. Hinton and W. H. Bagley, editors."⁵⁷ Although it was in existence for at least six months,⁵⁸ no copies of the paper are extant.

The last pre-Civil War paper to appear in Elizabeth City was edited by Thomas J. Garner, who had come to the town from Murfreesboro to prosecute boundary land and pension claims.⁵⁹ The only issue of his *Albemarle Southron and Union Advocate*, dated October 19, 1860, urged support for the Bell-Everett ticket. In its bid for advertisers, it boasted that it was the organ of the Whig Party in the First Congressional District—a district containing thirteen counties. The issue was almost entirely advertisements, with very few Elizabeth City businesses included. Rather, the advertisements were from Petersburg, Garysburg, Murfreesboro, Jackson, Weldon, Norfolk, Edenton, and Philadelphia. Probably the paper was as short-lived as Bell and Everett's Constitutional Union Party.⁶⁰

⁵²*Ibid.*, March 27, 1855.

⁵³*Ibid.*, October 25, 1856, pp. 3 and 4.

⁵⁴*Democratic Pioneer*, November 3, 1857.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, May 3, 1859, says "suspended some time back."

⁵⁶W. Darrell Overdyke, *The Know-Nothing Party in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), p. 283, states, "In 1859 the American Party disappeared entirely in North Carolina." In February it was said that the new term Opposition or Whig was being used.

⁵⁷*Democratic Pioneer*, May 3, 1859.

⁵⁸The last extant issue of the *Democratic Pioneer*, November 29, 1859, mentioned *The State*.

⁵⁹Any soldier who had served as much as fourteen days since 1776 was entitled to 160 acres of land.

⁶⁰This one extant issue is numbered I, 40.

Ten papers played a role in Ante-Bellum Elizabeth City history.⁶¹ During the last decade of the period, Elizabeth Citians could boast of two papers which supported the two currently most popular political philosophies of the area. The *Democratic Pioneer* was in existence throughout the ten years, while a number of papers of the opposing parties arose and fell with the parties. During this decade, the town had two presses.⁶²

The papers published no circulation figures. Even when Stephen Pool claimed that he had doubled the subscription list in the first sixteen months of his ownership of *The Old North State*, he gave no numbers.⁶³ The only indications of circulation are found in the national censuses of 1850 and 1860. In the earlier census, both *The Old North State* and the *Democratic Pioneer* had 500 subscribers.⁶⁴ Ten years later, the *Democratic Pioneer's* circulation had doubled to 1,000, and *The State* had 800 subscribers.⁶⁵

The newspapers were carrying only slightly more local news in 1860 than they had in 1807. Advertisements were replaced as the greatest source by the editorial which was usually located on the second page. An occasional editorial would comment on improvements, murders, social and cultural events, and local politics. The appearance of obituary and marriage notices brought additional sources of local news.

Advertisements seldom covered less than half of the newspaper. It was nothing unusual for an advertisement to be carried unchanged in a newspaper for a full year. With so much

⁶¹This assumes that the *Herald of the Times* was a continuation of the *Elizabeth City Star*. It also does not include the religious journal, *Baptist Messenger*.

⁶²The *Baptist Messenger* did not have a press of its own, but was printed on the press of *The Old North State*.

⁶³*The Old North State*, October 22, 1853.

⁶⁴Federal Census of 1850, Pasquotank County, original in State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, Schedule Six, Social Statistics. The *Baptist Messenger* had 800 subscribers.

⁶⁵Federal Census of 1860, Pasquotank County, original in State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, Schedule Six, Social Statistics.

repetition, the editors developed a method of grouping the new advertisements in a designated place each issue that enabled the regular reader to save the bother of perusing all the pages for new businesses or opportunities.

The editors, eager to help their clients—and to gain more advertisements—often carried an editorial on the advertising business simultaneously with the first appearance of an advertisement. *The Old North State* contained the following lines concerning the store of William J. Kellinger when his advertisement first appeared: "It is a perfect 'curiosity shop,' and all who want anything funny in the reading line may there find it, while others who wish to drink deep of the fountain of knowledge can be supplied."⁶⁶

However, the proprietor of the store (or his advertisement writer) was not usually as sober in his advertisements as was the quoted editorial. On the contrary, the extent to which some of the businesses and professional men went in their attempt to secure customers almost defies the modern imagination. William Halsey, the proprietor of one of the general merchandise stores, liked Scriptural quotations. Yet, he always had to qualify them. One of his advertisements began, "O Yes! O Yes!! O Yes!!! All ye that hunger come and buy if you have the money."⁶⁷ Later, he advertised, "Ho! Everyone that wanteth cheap goods! Come unto the water, and buy freely—but not without price."⁶⁸

The claims made for some products were absurd. Hygelian Vegetable Universal Medicine of the British College of Health, London, was the cure for everything—for all diseases were caused by impurity of the blood. Thirty-seven specific diseases were listed, including fever, indigestion, rheumatism, St. Vitus Dance, epilepsy, small pox, scarlet fever, asthma, stones, and itching of the skin.⁶⁹ Bullard's Celebrated Patent Animal and Vegetable Oil Soap was guaranteed for cleansing spots from linen, woolen, and cotton goods. But if the reader had no spots to clean, it would

⁶⁶February 20, 1850.

⁶⁷*The Old North State*, October 22, 1849.

⁶⁸*Democratic Pioneer*, February 13, 1855.

⁶⁹*Herald of the Times*, January 27, 1835.

"cure corns in almost every case" and was good "for man and beast."⁷⁰

It was customary for a businessman to advertise his store as the cheapest. M. Goldsmith claimed that his store was "The most fashionable and decidedly the cheapest Gentlemen's Clothing Depot ever established in this place!"⁷¹

Very little, if any, emphasis was placed on special buying at Christmas time before C. C. Green's advertisement in November, 1849, of a large stock of toys and fancy goods suitable for Christmas presents to please "from the prattling little boy and girl to the blooming young lady."⁷²

There was one business that stood in a class all of its own in the advertising field: Malachi Russell's General Merchandise Store. It was nothing unusual for him to have from eight to ten advertisements in one issue. But one of his advertisements went to an unbelievable extreme of absurdity to sell his medicines: "As it is said that a monstrous Comet will approach so near us in June of next as to give this pretty world of ours a swipe with its long tail, who knows but some of these medicines may so prepare the system as to render us proof against its heat?"⁷³ One can only wonder how much medicine he sold by such an appeal.

Thus the advertisements not only reveal the businesses that flourished in Elizabeth City, but they also add to an understanding of life within the town. In fact, the picture of life in Antebellum Elizabeth City could not be drawn had these papers not been preserved. Their part in providing information of activities for later years was as important as their role in helping make Elizabeth City a town of prominence and the emporium of northeastern North Carolina.

⁷⁰*Herald of the Times*, January 27, 1835.

⁷¹*The Old North State*, February 9, 1850.

⁷²*Ibid.*, November 17, 1849.

⁷³*Elizabeth City Star*, February 11, 1832.

VI

Religion, Education, and Culture

Elizabeth City had been chartered twelve years before an attempt was made to move a church within the town and fourteen years before any attempt was made to establish a school. This hesitancy may have come from the presence of both a school and church near the city limits.¹ However, once the movement had begun, it preceeded rapidly. By the time of the Civil War, the town had three white churches and one Negro church. Although no accurate number of schools established during the period can be given, records of numerous attempts to establish educational institutions survive. Some of these were quite successful; others probably never met classes. The church and school were the axis around which many of the cultural activities of the town revolved. The court house, and later a specially built theatre, accommodated both local and travelling talent. Elizabeth City is rich in religious, educational, and cultural heritage.

The date of the town's first church building has not been definitely established. On October 1, 1805, Charles Grice sold to the "Baptist Church at Knobbs Creek" for the sum of five shillings, a 208-foot square tract (equal to two city lots) adjacent to lots sixty-seven and sixty-eight just west of the town boundary.² The town limits were extended in 1807 to include this lot on which a building apparently had not been built.³

¹See above p.25.

²Pasquotank County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Pasquotank County Court House, Elizabeth City, Q, 374, hereinafter cited as Pasquotank County Deeds.

³*Laws of North Carolina, 1807*, c. XLVII, reads, in part, "so as to in-

Although the property was, thus, acquired early in the history of the town, it was not until 1826, when a note was published informing the people that three ministers would speak at the Baptist Meeting House in the town, that we have any proof of the building having been constructed.⁴ The church was host to a union meeting of Baptists a year later.⁵

"Frequent irregularities committed on the . . . premises" caused the members to post a no-trespassing order for the property in 1835 which stated in clear terms that "all persons trespassing in any manner on the property belonging to the Baptist Church in this place will be prosecuted according to law."⁶ Whether the irregularities were performed on the building, the tombstones, or some other part of the property was not stated. It is very possible that the problem was with the graveyard, located in the northeastern section of the property. Burials in this plot began as early as 1810.⁷

The first building was no longer standing in 1847; the church reported to the Chowan Association that it hoped to be in its new building in three of four months.⁸ No other records reveal what happened to this first building; nor does any record survive that described this building. The 1847 building stood long enough for a brief description to be recorded. Yet this description, from elderly members' memories, only stated that the building was of

clude the improvements that are at present within the said limits, together with the lot laid off for the Baptist meeting house . . .," hereinafter cited as *Laws*, with appropriate date.

⁴*Elizabeth City Star*, May 6, 1826. The church used the name Knobbs Creek in reporting to the Chowan Association until 1811 when it was changed to Elizabeth (Minutes of Chowan Baptist Association, Southeastern Theological Seminary Library, Wake Forest, hereinafter cited as *Chowan Minutes*). This may have been the year of moving to the new property.

⁵*Ibid.*, April 14, 1827.

⁶*Herald of the Times* (Elizabeth City), January 27, 1835, hereinafter cited as *Herald of the Times*.

⁷The oldest tombstone in the cemetery is that of George L. Goodman, dated September 13, 1810.

⁸*Chowan Minutes*, 1847.

wood construction with a steeple and bell in the front center.⁹ One would conclude that this building must have been considerably smaller than the first Methodist building, for the Chowan Association met in the latter building rather than the new Baptist building in 1850.¹⁰

C. R. Hendrickson, pastor from 1848 to 1858, was one of the more outstanding ministers of the congregation.¹¹ Between 1849 and 1851, he edited the *Baptist Messenger*, the Baptist organ for northeastern North Carolina. Although the paper's subscription list was greater than either of the town's two newspapers in 1850,¹² it was discontinued the following year. The subscription list was turned over to the *Biblical Recorder* in Raleigh in 1851.¹³ Hendrickson was also a leader in the town's temperance movement,¹⁴ and had special services for the town's young people.¹⁵ His wife instituted the Young Ladies' Seminary shortly after their arrival in the town.¹⁶

The Baptists were host in 1853 to J. L. Shuck, a former missionary to China, who was then working with the Chinese in California.¹⁷ In 1855, people were using the Baptist Burial Ground as a public cemetery without authorization. To alleviate

⁹A. H. Outlaw, *History of First Baptist Church* (Elizabeth City: privately published, 1961), p. 40.

¹⁰*The Old North State* (Elizabeth City); May 25, 1850, hereinafter cited as *The Old North State*.

¹¹William Cathcart, *Baptist Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1880), pp. 517, 518, reveals that the Elizabeth City pastorate came between pastorates at First Baptist Church, Norfolk, Va., and First Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.

¹²Federal Census of 1850, Pasquotank County, original in State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, Schedule Six, Social Statistics, hereinafter cited as 1850 Census.

¹³Henry Smith Stroupe, *The Religious Press in the South Atlantic States, 1802-1865* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956), p. 46. Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, has copies for September 5, November 5, November 20, and December 20, 1849; February 5, March 20, October 20, and December 20, 1850; and March 5, 1851.

¹⁴*The Old North State*, October 6, 1859.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, January 4, 1851.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, August 31, 1850.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, October 22, 1853.

the problem, the church posted notice that applications for use of the grounds in the future must be made to the deacons.¹⁸

A revival was held in November, 1859, in which twenty people were baptized.¹⁹ This growth was reflected in the membership rolls which expanded from 202 persons in 1847 to 326 in 1860.²⁰

The exact beginning date of the Methodist movement in Elizabeth City is difficult to establish. Bishop Asbury had preached at the Windfield Court House as early as 1783.²¹ On Friday, March 16, 1804, he preached at the new court house in Elizabeth City. His message found "stony soil." His record of his visit was quite curt: "Many heard, but few felt. I dined with Mr. Mitchell, a lone Methodist from Cornwall, Great Britain; Lot in Sodom."²²

Methodism must have continued its slow pace of collecting adherents, for it was not until 1826 that the first minister was appointed for the town by the Virginia Conference. John Kerr was sent to serve Edenton and Elizabeth City that year.²³ His first appointments were met in the court house.²⁴ Another Methodist minister, B. T. Blake, also preached at the court house in 1826.²⁵ Abraham Harrell was appointed to fill the Edenton-Elizabeth City charge in 1827.²⁶ Like his predecessor, he preached at the court house.²⁷

Court house preaching was soon to cease, however. By March, 1827, the Methodists were busy at the task of erecting a wooden

¹⁸*Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), July 24, 1855, hereinafter cited as *Democratic Pioneer*.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, November 22, 1859.

²⁰Chowan Minutes show 182 whites and 20 colored in 1847; 383 whites and 67 colored in 1860.

²¹*The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, 3 volumes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), I, 450.

²²*Ibid.*, II, 428.

²³*Elizabeth City Star*, March 4, 1826.

²⁴*Ibid.*, March 11, 1826.

²⁵*Ibid.*, April 15, 1826.

²⁶*Ibid.*, March 3, 1827.

²⁷*Ibid.*, March 10, 1827.

church building, forty-two by thirty-two feet.²⁸ The property on which this new church was built, located on the southern side of South Second Street, was transferred to the church by John C. Ehringhaus for the sum of \$350.00. The property line ran from the corner of Fifth, 100 feet down South Second, then due south to the canal, and west to Fifth. It contained one-half acre.²⁹ Although the new church building was not completely finished, it was dedicated at the Methodist Quarterly Meeting held in Elizabeth City the last of November, 1827.³⁰ The church bought one-eighth acre on the opposite side of South Second for a parsonage in 1828.³¹

During the last two decades before the Civil War, the church was the scene of at least three controversial and colorful episodes. On a return visit to Elizabeth City in 1841, Dr. Harrell, now also a teacher, stirred up trouble in the church by favoring apostolic succession in a sermon he preached.³² Ten years later, one of the town's newspaper editors was concerned about the behavior of some of the men and boys at a revival being held at the Methodist Church. He advised, "We would suggest if mild words do not have the desired effect in keeping them in their proper places, that the 'official members' lead them out."³³ The third episode is rather amusing; yet, it reflects the feelings of the period. During the Virginia Methodist Conference meeting of 1857, two ministers were tried for indulging in the game of ten pins at Virginia Springs the previous summer. The charges had been brought by a correspondent of the town's *American Sentinel*. After the two promised to refrain from the sport in the future, no further action was taken.³⁴

The Conference scheduled its 1857 annual meeting in Elizabeth City to dedicate another new Methodist Church building.

²⁸*Ibid.*, July 14, 1827.

²⁹Pasquotank County Deeds, Y, 272.

³⁰*Elizabeth City Star*, November 21, 1827.

³¹Pasquotank County Deeds, CC, 345.

³²*The Old North State*, May 24, 1841.

³³*Ibid.*, May 24, 1851.

³⁴*Democratic Pioneer*, November 24, 1857.

Although the old building had undergone extensive repairs and painting in the latter part of 1853,³⁵ these improvements had proved insufficient. Thus a new building, more than twice the size of the first, was erected in 1857.³⁶ This new building was the site of an extended revival in April, 1858. As thirty people had attached themselves to the church on the second Lord's Day of the meeting, it was decided to extend the meeting into a third week.³⁷ It is believed that the membership of the church was about the same as the Baptist Church's membership at the time of the Civil War.³⁸

The beginning of Christ's Episcopal Church in Elizabeth City was the result of the request of a few families of the town to the Edenton Episcopal minister, John Avery, to visit Elizabeth City in 1825. He set up arrangements for a "monthly celebration of Divine Service."³⁹ As with the Methodists, services were first held in the court house.⁴⁰ In February, 1826, the Rev. Philip Bruce Wiley was called to the charge, and the congregation was soon thereafter organized under the title Christ's Church.⁴¹ Bishop John Stark Ravenscroft made his annual visit to Christ's Church in April, 1826.⁴²

In June, 1827, the members were informed that Divine Service would be held in the Masonic Hall "every Sunday until further notice."⁴³ The members did not have to wait long for further notice, for their first building was consecrated in December,

³⁵*The Old North State*, November 26, 1853.

³⁶*Ibid.*, October 20, 1857. The new building was sixty-five by forty-seven feet. A picture of the building before it was converted into the Perry Apartments hangs in the hall of the First Methodist Church.

³⁷*Democratic Pioneer*, April 27, 1858.

³⁸Members of the church whose memories go back to the last decade of the nineteenth century say that the memberships of the two churches were comparable in those days. There are no earlier indications of membership.

³⁹Vestry Book of Christ's Church, Christ's Church, Elizabeth City, hereinafter cited as Vestry Book of Christ's Church. This part was written about 1844.

⁴⁰*The Old North State*, March 11, 1826.

⁴¹Vestry Book of Christ's Church.

⁴²*Elizabeth City Star*, April 15, 1826.

⁴³*Ibid.*, June 2, 1827.

1827.⁴⁴ This building was made of wood; it measured forty-six feet by twenty-six feet⁴⁵ and stood at the corner of Third and South streets on land sold to the church on December 7, 1827, by John McMorine for the sum of \$88.00.⁴⁶

Like the Baptists, the Episcopalians had their own cemetery. In June, 1849, Miles White gave one-fourth acre, adjacent to the "Episcopal burying ground," to the church to be used for additional cemetery space.⁴⁷ Just how much earlier the "burying ground," located on the north side of Sheppard Street, had been in use is unknown.⁴⁸ The Episcopalians, like the Baptists, found their cemetery being used as a public burying ground in 1845. A Sexton of the Grave Yard was appointed to handle all business connected with the cemetery.⁴⁹ A year earlier, the cemetery had come under fire of one of the town's editors for its deplorable condition.⁵⁰

In 1856, the Episcopalians under the leadership of the Reverend Edward McArtney Forbes, rector of the church since 1844, began to plan for the erection of a new church building.⁵¹ One of the methods of raising money for this new building was a sacred concert given by the choir, assisted by J. Birth, on June 18.⁵² No record shows the amount of money raised by the concert; yet if those who gave were as moved as the reviewer for the *Democratic Pioneer*, the offering must have been sizeable.⁵³ Altogether, \$6,000.00 was raised in 1856.⁵⁴ Construction was begun, and the building was used for divine services for the first

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, November 21, 1827.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, July 14, 1827.

⁴⁶Pasquotank County Deeds, Y, 338.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, HH, 414.

⁴⁸No deed can be located for this earlier portion. The tombstone of William Norris states that he died in 1724, but it is unlikely that he was buried that early in this cemetery. Nancy Norris' tombstone lists her death in 1825. By the mid-1830's, there are a number of tombstones.

⁴⁹*Democratic Pioneer*, July 31, 1855.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, November 14, 1854.

⁵¹Vestry Book of Christ's Church.

⁵²*Democratic Pioneer*, June 9, 1857.

⁵³*Ibid.*, June 30, 1857.

⁵⁴Vestry Book of Christ's Church.

time on December 13, 1857.⁵⁵ It was consecrated by Bishop Thomas Atkinson on May 20, 1858.⁵⁶ This new edifice was built to seat 450, although the membership at the time must have been less than 75.⁵⁷

The building of the new edifice was not the only outstanding accomplishment of Rector Forbes. He served the congregation for twenty-one years excepting an interval of eighteen months when he was in Chapel Hill on account of ill health. The chronicler of the church wrote that "never perhaps was a faithful pastor more fervently or more generally loved. . ." The children all called him "father, grandfather, or uncle."⁵⁸ It was Forbes that met the Federal forces at the wharves after the fall of Cobb's Point and who surrendered the town to the victorious forces.⁵⁹

During most of the period prior to the Civil War, the slaves and free Negroes were members of the same churches as the whites.⁶⁰ However, a separate church of the black Methodists was organized during the last decade before the war.

The white Methodist Church first organized the Colored Mission in the basement of their building on South Second Street. This new mission reported 273 members to the Virginia Methodist Conference in 1855.⁶¹ The membership had dropped to

⁵⁵*Democratic Pioneer*, January 15, 1857.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, April 20, 1858. The deed for this property has not been located.

⁵⁷Vestry Book of Christ's Church shows that the membership was 77 in 1865. The building built in 1857 is the one still standing and presently in use.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Richard Benbury Creecy, "The Bombardment," *Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook*, 2 volumes (Elizabeth City: Pasquotank Historical Society, 1955), I, 75, 76.

⁶⁰See the membership list of Baptists above, p. 104. Vestry Book of Christ's Church records gift of one of the Negro members to the church.

⁶¹Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1855-1857, Walter Hines Page Library, Randolph Macon College, Ashland, Virginia, p. 617, hereinafter cited as *Methodist Minutes* with appropriate date. This is the earliest documented proof of the mission's existence although the Mt. Lebanon A. M. E. Zion Church (the

180 in 1856,⁶² but had risen to 284 in 1857.⁶³ By the time of the war, the church was claiming 363 members and 48 probationers.⁶⁴ This Negro church had the largest membership of any of the town's churches at the time. Trustees of the white Methodist Church had purchased land on African Street for the Colored Mission in 1856 for the construction of a separate building for the Negroes.⁶⁵

The movement for private academies that began sweeping North Carolina immediately after the opening of the nineteenth century⁶⁶ bore fruit in Elizabeth City. The Elizabeth City Academy was chartered in the first decade of the new century, before the town was fifteen years old. However, there was no considerable number of schools in the town until the last twenty years before the Civil War. Few records survive to show the number of students enrolled or the calibre of the teachers. Yet there is no question but that the schools succeeded to some degree in their efforts to foster education. Whereas it was said that only twenty-five percent of the native white adults of North Carolina could read or write in 1856,⁶⁷ over eighty-five percent

church that developed from the mission) of Elizabeth City celebrated its One Hundredth Anniversary in 1950.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 690.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 767.

⁶⁴*Methodist Minutes*, 1859-1861, p. 326. This was the same membership numbers reported in 1859 and 1860, pp. 140 and 241, respectively.

⁶⁵Pasquotank County Deeds, 8, 22, records the transfer of property from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to the A. M. E. Zion Church, on August 5, 1886. The original deed was not located. Mrs. S. F. Harvey, "History of Mt. Lebanon Church," *Mt. Lebanon A. M. E. Zion Church: One Hundredth Anniversary* (Elizabeth City: privately published, 1950), states "The white people donated much toward the erection of the church which was of wood construction. . . . Rev. Joe Turner, who had been with them in the basement of the white church, continued to preach to them in the new church. . . . After the War between the States and the Negroes were freed, the following were allowed to preach to their people. . . ."

⁶⁶Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), p. 285, hereinafter cited as Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 22.

of the population of Elizabeth City over twenty was literate in 1860.⁶⁸

The North Carolina General Assembly named ten men as Trustees of the Elizabeth City Academy in 1807.⁶⁹ However, no other records speak of this academy; it may never have held classes. Thirteen years later, in 1820, the Legislature again named ten men as Trustees of the Elizabeth City Academy and permitted them to raise no more than \$4,000.00 by lottery for the erection of a building.⁷⁰ An Edenton newspaper of January 8, 1821, announced that J. J. and Mary K. Bowring were going to re-open the Academy on that day.⁷¹ No definite statements can be made as to when the first classes were taught, the identity of the first teachers, the number of students enrolled, or the school's location.

Five of the trustees who had been authorized to raise money by the lottery were included in the trustees who bought the eastern half of lots thirty-one and thirty-two for the Academy in 1825.⁷² No record of the erection of a building on the property, bounded by Fearing, Pool, and Church streets, survives. Although the property stayed in the hands of the trustees until after the Civil War,⁷³ an August, 1850, notice announced the moving of the Academy to "the large and commodious house formerly occupied by John J. Grandy."⁷⁴

⁶⁸Federal Census of 1860, Pasquotank County, original in State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, Population Schedule, hereinafter cited as Census of 1860.

⁶⁹*Laws, 1807*, c. LXIV. The trustees named were Charles Grice, Bailey Jackson, Timothy Cotter, Abner Whitney, William T. Muse, Isaac Overman, William Hamilton, Dr. William Martin, William Gregory, and Marmaduke Scott.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 1820, c. LV. These trustees were William T. Muse, Ambrose Knox, William Wilson, William Gregory, Frederic B. Sawyer, Wilson Sawyer, William Martin, Samuel Matthews, Lemuel C. Moore, and John C. Ehringhaus.

⁷¹*Edenton Gazette*.

⁷²Pasquotank County Deeds, X, 353.

⁷³The property was not sold until February 26, 1867, Pasquotank County Deeds, 4, 78.

⁷⁴*The Old North State*, August 17, 1850.

Teachers following the Bowrings included two Episcopal rectors. Philip B. Wiley, rector of Christ's Church, was superintendent of the Academy in 1827,⁷⁵ while a Miss Eustis presided over the Female Department.⁷⁶ The next rector, Jarvis B. Buxton, who served 1827-1829, also taught at the Academy.⁷⁷

On September 5, 1835, it was announced that Bradley Burr Meeker, "a gentleman from Yale College, of approved character, abilities, experiences, and success in instruction," had been appointed as the new superintendent of the Academy.⁷⁸ All of those who wanted to prepare their sons for "college, the counting rooms, or ordinary business of life" were informed that Meeker was "aware of the arduous and responsible duty of a preceptor" and he pledged "his unremitting care and attention to the intellectual and moral improvement of those who may be put at his charge." There would be two scholastic terms in the year, each consisting of twenty-four weeks or two quarters. Charges were advertised as follows: for reading, writing, arithmetic, and grammar, \$5.00 per quarter; for the higher branches of an English education, such as history, surveying, navigation, algebra, philosophy, and geometry, \$6.00 per quarter; for instruction in the Greek and Latin languages, \$7.50 per quarter. These charges were for tuition alone, "in addition to which during the winter season there will be an extra charge for fuel."⁷⁹

The next mention of teachers for the Academy came five years after Meeker's arrival. An editorial announced the services of "two excellent teachers," a Mr. Day over the Male Department, and Miss Willard over the Female Department. Day, the editor

⁷⁵*Elizabeth City Star*, March 4, 1826.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, September 23, 1826.

⁷⁷*The Old North State*, June 21, 1851.

⁷⁸*Herald of the Times*, September 5, 1835. However, Yale has no record of Meeker. Judith A. Schiff, Head, Historical Manuscripts & University Archives, Reference Department, Yale University Library, New Haven, January 31, 1969, to author, wrote: "According to the university records, Mr. Meeker did not attend Yale nor was he listed as a faculty or staff member. If Mr. Meeker was connected with Yale University in any way, there was no official recognition of his status."

⁷⁹*Herald of the Times*, September 5, 1835.

wrote, was, “. . . capable to teach . . . , attentive to his duties, watchful of the progress of the students.” As for Miss Willard, of Mrs. Willard’s Seminary, Troy, New York, she was “an entire stranger,” but she “brought with her the most flattering testimonials of her moral and intellectual worth, and has, during her short sojourn here, won the esteem and friendship of those who have enjoyed her acquaintance.”⁸⁰

No further mention of an Academy teacher is found until August, 1849, when George M. Wilder announced his resignation after having been in charge of the school for four years.⁸¹ The following month, Stephen D. Pool was principal.⁸² Mrs. Pool later joined him as head of the Female Department.⁸³

Pool was heading the school when it moved to the Grandy residence. At this new location, Pool opened a night school “for benefit of young men and apprentices of the place, whose business pursuits prevent them from attending a day school.” He offered reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography for eleven weeks at the price of \$5.00.⁸⁴

In 1851, the Academy added a Military School with a uniform to be worn by those so enrolled. It was headed by Thomas A. Harris, a graduate of Virginia Military Institute, who had taken charge of the Male Department.⁸⁵ However, the following year, F. D. Gallanger became head of the Male Department.⁸⁶ In 1850, the Academy reported two teachers and sixty pupils.⁸⁷ Ten years later, there were still two teachers, and either sixty or sixty-five pupils.⁸⁸

At the time of the Civil War, the Academy had been in

⁸⁰*The Intelligencer and Nags Head Advocate* (Elizabeth City), December 8, 1840.

⁸¹*The Old North State*, August 11, 1849.

⁸²*Ibid.*, September 1, 1849.

⁸³*Ibid.*, February 23, 1850.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, October 19, 1850.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, September 13, 1851.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, August 28, 1852.

⁸⁷Census of 1850, Schedule Six, Social Statistics.

⁸⁸Census of 1860, Schedule Six, Social Statistics. The census lists two “academies,” but gives no names. One had sixty students; the other, sixty-five.

existence, at least intermittently, for forty years. And at least after 1835, records show a rather continuous existence. Thus the Elizabeth City Academy seems to be an exception to the general statement that North Carolina’s academies “seldom prospered for many years at a time,” and “only a few schools in the state . . . prospered for several decades.”⁸⁹

The Academy was the lone educational institution of the town for many years. Two schools were announced in December, 1835; but no records prove that they ever were in operation. M. B. Butt announced that he would commence a “teaching school” on January 4, 1836, in which he would teach spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic.⁹⁰ Mrs. Davis informed the public that she intended to open a school on January 1, 1836, for small children. She proposed to offer two programs of study: 1) reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar, dictionary, needle work, and marking (\$4.00 per quarter), and 2) reading, writing, grammar, dictionary, and marking (\$3.00 per quarter).⁹¹

No other school entered the records until August, 1849, when G. M. Wilder announced his resignation from the Academy to open an English and Classical Institute because the Academy permitted too many students in its classes for thorough training.⁹² A year later, Wilder announced the opening of Albemarle Institute in the building which had formerly been Maxcy Sanderlin’s hotel.⁹³ A Female Department would also be opened in 1851.⁹⁴ Two years later, the school was operating under the name of Albemarle English and Classical Institute.⁹⁵ The last mention of Wilder and the Institute was October, 1860, when a new building which would accommodate 200 students was being constructed.⁹⁶

⁸⁹Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, pp. 285, 286.

⁹⁰*Herald of the Times*, December 29, 1835.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁹²*The Old North State*, August 11, 1849. It is interesting to note that the Academy announced limitation of pupils per class three weeks later, *Ibid.*, September 1, 1849.

⁹³*Ibid.*, August 10, 1850.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, August 9, 1851.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, July 30, 1853.

⁹⁶*Albemarle Southron and Union Advocate* (Elizabeth City), October

Brief mention was made of four other schools. Mrs. C. R. Hendrickson's Young Ladies Seminary was beginning its fifth session in August, 1850. The ladies could be accommodated "with good board" at Maxcy Sanderlin's.⁹⁷ Mary A. Kellinger announced in April, 1853, that she was going to open a school to teach reading, writing, grammar, and geography for small children.⁹⁸ Wilson M. Lamb announced in January, 1854, that he would begin a New English School, opposite the Academy.⁹⁹ Mark Gregory announced in September of the same year that he proposed to open a school for boys and girls.¹⁰⁰ Other than the announcement that Mrs. Hendrickson was opening her fifth session, no records have been found to prove the existence of any of these schools. The 1850 census may also contain proof of Mrs. Hendrickson's school. In its listing of schools in the county, it included one female school with one teacher and thirty students.¹⁰¹

Newspapers of 1856 reveal that each of the three white churches had connections with a school. The Parochial School of Christ's Church was offering four courses of study.¹⁰² This school was in existence as early as 1850. In that year, the ladies of Christ's Church had a fair to raise money for the debt incurred by "buying land and building for a school house contiguous to the church."¹⁰³ The 1850 census stated that the school had two teachers and forty-five pupils.¹⁰⁴

The Wesleyan Academy was beginning its fifth session under Larkin Crenshaw, principal, in 1856.¹⁰⁵ The first session of the Elizabeth City Seminary under the superintendence of J. J. 19, 1860. Efforts to locate the site of this building or its later use proved futile.

⁹⁷*The Old North State*, August 31, 1850.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, April 2, 1853.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, January 14, 1854.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, September 23, 1854.

¹⁰¹Census of 1850, Schedule Six, Social Statistics.

¹⁰²*Democratic Pioneer*, September 16, 1856.

¹⁰³*The Old North State*, December 7, 1850. Rector Forbes purchased this land in January, 1850, Pasquotank County Deeds, BB, 303.

¹⁰⁴Census of 1860, Schedule Six, Social Statistics.

¹⁰⁵*North Carolina Native Sentinel* (Elizabeth City), October 25, 1856.

Lansdell, minister of the Baptist Church, was also announced in 1856.¹⁰⁶ After the resignation of Lansdell, his successor as minister of the Baptist Church also succeeded him as principal of the Seminary.¹⁰⁷

The 1860 census is no real help as to which schools survived. It reported that there were two academies, two private schools, and one "C. C. F. School" in the county. There were also twenty-one common schools in the county, but no record has been found of the existence of a common school in Elizabeth City before the Civil War.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the schools devoted to general education, a number of private teachers offered instruction in various arts. Like the majority of the schools, this instruction is not mentioned until the last twenty years before the war. Music instruction was most prevalent. Mrs. Matilda Bamford was the first to announce musical tuition. She had commenced a school for the instruction of young ladies in the "Piano Forte, Guitar, etc." at the Mansion House in 1841.¹⁰⁹ Before the war, at least three other teachers had also offered music lessons. Among these was William B. Thompson who opened a singing school of twenty lessons.¹¹⁰ Thompson also lectured on music at the Methodist Church.¹¹¹ Two of the teachers were residents of the town: Mrs. James M. Pool opened a school for music tuition,¹¹² and Herman W. Sartorius taught piano.¹¹³

During the last years before the war, Elizabeth Citians were also offered classes in dancing and waltzing.¹¹⁴ French and

The exact connection of the school and the Methodist Church is not known. The name is one argument. Also, the chairman of the Trustees, James W. Hinton, was a leader in the Methodist Church, see *Democratic Pioneer*, November 17, 1857.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷*Democratic Pioneer*, December 12, 1856.

¹⁰⁸Census of 1860, Schedule Six, Social Statistics.

¹⁰⁹*The Old North State*, May 25, 1841.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, March 16, 1850.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, October 22, 1853.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, September 11, 1852.

¹¹³*Democratic Pioneer*, April 1, 1856.

¹¹⁴Mr. Munden, professor of dancing and waltzing, offered classes,

Spanish,¹¹⁵ as well as landscape drawing and monochromatic painting.¹¹⁶

Interest in these various classes showed Elizabeth City was no cultural desert. In fact, the events taking place in the town were proving it to be a cultural oasis. In February, 1826, the Thespian Society was announcing its sixth performance, a comedy, "Lying Valet."¹¹⁷ A concert of vocal and instrumental music by the Harmonic Society for the benefit of the principal of the Academy was presented in March, 1822.¹¹⁸ The Harmonic Society continued until 1826.¹¹⁹

Twenty-three years later, in 1849, a band was organized.¹²⁰ Its first performance was for an Odd Fellow Celebration in May, 1849.¹²¹ The band gave its first concert, assisted by the Quartette Club, on May 29, 1849.¹²² This Musical Club (as the band was called), under the direction of John M. Matthews, was asked to give a second concert the following week because so many residents had been absent from town at the time of the first one.¹²³ The editorial review raved: "All performed their parts admirably, but the performance upon the flutes by Messrs. Matthews, Wilroy, and Barber, was done in a manner to enlist the applause of all who heard. . . ." It concluded: "the playing upon the Guitar by Mr. Matthews showed that a Master of the instrument had it in hand."¹²⁴

The band presented another concert to a home audience in May, 1850.¹²⁵ By this time, the group had become known

The Old North State, August 20, 1853. Also, J. M. Matthews, *Democratic Pioneer*, October 23, 1855.

¹¹⁵F. LeBarbier taught at the Mansion House, *The Old North State*, February 23, 1850.

¹¹⁶William G. Anderson, *The Old North State*, June 2, 1849.

¹¹⁷*Elizabeth City Star*, February 11, 1826.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, March 6, 1822.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, December 30, 1826.

¹²⁰*The Old North State*, March 31, 1849.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, May 19, 1849.

¹²²*Ibid.*, May 26, 1849.

¹²³*Ibid.*, June 2, 1849.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, June 16, 1849.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, May 11, 1850.

throughout the area. They were invited to perform in Washington, North Carolina, in June, 1850. They left home by boat on Tuesday evening, went out to Roanoke Island, passed Ocracoke, and arrived in Washington Thursday afternoon. They played for an Odd Fellow Celebration Friday evening, but the concert was "thinly attended in consequence of Rain." They returned Sunday evening.¹²⁶ The band was also invited for at least two guest performances the following year. In July, they played for the Commencement of the Hertford Academy.¹²⁷ In September, they went to Nags Head to play for a dinner and ball.¹²⁸

In the meantime, the town's citizens were being enlightened and entertained by a number of traveling groups. The Aeolian Minstrels, a four-member team, gave two vocal and instrumental concerts in mid-January, 1850.¹²⁹ *The Old North State* observed, "All seemed to enjoy the treat very much."¹³⁰ In 1853, there was an outstanding group performing each of the first four months. In January, a varied program was presented by Mr. Harrison, comedian, and Miss Harrison, a ballad vocalist.¹³¹ Mrs. McCarthy's Irish Entertainment was announced for two nights in February at the court house. The nature of the entertainment was not included in the advertisement.¹³² The citizens were offered Professor Pennington, "a renown alchemist and great 'Wizard of the South,' " in March for a series of lectures in Mental Alchemy. "Each lecture will be followed by a series of experiments on Gentlemen taken from the audience demonstrating witchcraft, magic, sorcery, etc."¹³³ The following month, Russell Smith presented his Grand Moving Panorama of the Holy Land and a "most superb collection of Dissolving Views."¹³⁴ In February,

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, July 2, 1851.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, July 12, 1851.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, September 6, 1851.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, January 12, 1850.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, January 19, 1850.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, January 15, 1853.

¹³²*Ibid.*, February 5, 1853.

¹³³*Ibid.*, March 26, 1853.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, April 23, 1853.

1855, both Kemble's Metropolitan Minstrels¹³⁵ and the Swiss Bell Ringers performed.¹³⁶

All the traveling performers had to appear in the court house until November, 1858, when P. H. Dozier opened Avon Hall with "stage, scenery, and all convenience of a well-arranged theatre." The hall would seat 300 on an inclined plane and was lighted with gas.¹³⁷ Avon Hall immediately became the center of Elizabeth City's entertainment series. The opening night performance was Walker and Company's Vaudeville Troupe performing "Chamber of Death."¹³⁸ The Company stayed for three weeks and performed a series of plays.¹³⁹ The theatre was the scene in January, 1859, for the third annual performance of Katie Estelle's Southern Troupe, of which the *Democratic Pioneer* editorialized: "[it's] decidedly the best troupe that has ever honored us with their presence."¹⁴⁰

All the enlightenment and entertainment was not imported. S. D. Pool, editor of *The Old North State* and principal of the Academy, advertised in February, 1852, "Having been repeatedly solicited, I will, on the 15th of March deliver a public lecture." He planned to speak on the Ptolemaic and Copernician theories of the structure of the universe. He envisioned extending the lecture into a series if enough seemed interested. Proceeds from the lectures would be used for purchasing equipment for the Academy.¹⁴¹

Dancing figured prominently in the town's entertainment. One of the young men of the town had written as early as 1822, "Every night we had dancing parties, which were very pleasant, we had the best music and some of the best girls in the country."¹⁴²

¹³⁵*Democratic Pioneer*, February 13, 1855.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, February 20, 1855.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, November 23, 1858.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, December 7, 1858.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, February 1, 1859.

¹⁴¹*The Old North State*, February 28, 1852.

¹⁴²William B. Shepherd to Mary Shepherd, July 25, 1822, John H. Bryan Collection, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Probably the most romantic of the dances were held on moonlight excursions to Nags Head by steamer on which concert and cotillion bands were carried.¹⁴³ At least one Grand Military and Civic Ball was held in the town. The girl's auxiliary of the Sons of Temperance sponsored such a ball on February 21, 1851, at the Mansion House, but few could attend, for there were only fifty tickets.¹⁴⁴ The Mansion House was the location of a number of the town's formal dances. When it reopened in 1856 under the name of Leigh House, the management gave a supper and cotillion.¹⁴⁵ The hotel was also the setting for a reception given on January 20, 1858. The back of the invitation listed twenty-four routines (dances) and provided space for engagements for each.¹⁴⁶

Elizabeth Citians also participated in North Carolina's favorite ante-bellum sport: horse racing.¹⁴⁷ Races were held at the Elizabeth City Course¹⁴⁸ on June 19, 20, and 21, 1823. In the second heat on the 20th, the judge awarded the prize to the second horse, owing to foul riding of the rider of the first. "This occasioned much alteration [*sic*] among the parties, which in a good measure broke up the sports of the day."¹⁴⁹ The track was under the auspices of the Elizabeth City Jockey Club which planned to make the race track free to all horses in the United States. The club announced a three-day series of Fall races in 1823.¹⁵⁰ Nothing else was mentioned of the club nor the race track until the latter had become a residential area in 1854.¹⁵¹

An unusual type of entertainment was the occasional passing pitchman. An 1850 editorial spoke of a Mr. Foster who had

¹⁴³*Democratic Pioneer*, August 4, 1857; July 20, 1858.

¹⁴⁴*The Old North State*, February 1, 1851.

¹⁴⁵*Democratic Pioneer*, January 29, 1856.

¹⁴⁶Bagley Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

¹⁴⁷Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, p. 181.

¹⁴⁸The track was south of the town, see map following p.62.

¹⁴⁹*American Beacon* (Norfolk), June 27, 1828.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁵¹*Democratic Pioneer*, November 14, 1854.

entertained the townspeople "for the last several evenings" as he succeeded in selling books for his employer.¹⁵²

Very little of this entertainment was designed for the children although they may have enjoyed parts of it. But they were not neglected in an area of entertainment designed especially for them—the circus. The Pavillion Circus arrived on Christmas Day, 1826, for three evening performances.¹⁵³ Stone and McCollum's Great Western Circus Co. attracted the attention of young people with the first two-columned advertisement in an Elizabeth City newspaper on March 2, 1850.¹⁵⁴ Robinson and Eldred's Southern Circus advertised fifty ladies and gentlemen performers and one hundred horses and ponies in March, 1852.¹⁵⁵ This circus returned for four shows in 1856.¹⁵⁶ In July, 1853, A. Turner & Company's Menagerie & Circus Combined performed.¹⁵⁷ Van Ambrugh's Grand Zoological and Equestrian Co. with the "best performing elephant in the world" entertained at Elizabeth City in 1859.¹⁵⁸ The young people had opportunity to enjoy the best of circuses.

A visitor to Elizabeth City in 1860 may well have heard the town's citizens boasting of their educational, religious, and cultural institutions.¹⁵⁹ The Academy had a long record of accomplishments. A number of schools were thriving. Elizabeth City was near the top of the scale in literacy. The three white churches, and possibly the Negro church, had new buildings. The smallest congregation had built a beautiful brick edifice; the membership rolls of the other two white congregations were growing rapidly. Few towns could boast of a separate Negro

¹⁵²*The Old North State*, January 17, 1850.

¹⁵³*Elizabeth City Star*, December 23, 1826.

¹⁵⁴*The Old North State*, March 2, 1850.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, March 20, 1852.

¹⁵⁶*Democratic Pioneer*, May 20, 1856.

¹⁵⁷*The Old North State*, June 25, 1853.

¹⁵⁸*Democratic Pioneer*, May 31, 1859.

¹⁵⁹The advertisement for the opening of Albemarle Institute had boasted of "an enlightened and refined community," *The Old North State*, August 10, 1850.

church.¹⁶⁰ Beyond this, the visitor may have been invited to any number of social and cultural events. If his stay were not long enough to attend any of these functions, he would surely be told of the highlights of the recent past as well as be given a preview of the calendar for the next month. If the visitor had not become too cloyed by the boasting, he would probably admit that Elizabeth Citians had reason to be proud of her accomplishments.

¹⁶⁰Emory Stevens Bucke (ed.), *The History of American Methodism*, 3 volumes (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), II, 535, 536.

VII

Excitement in a Small Town

One might expect that life in a small town such as Elizabeth City would be dull, especially during its early years. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Sparse records for the first decade of the town's history prevent knowledge of the excitement of that period. However, starting with the slave insurrection of 1802 and continuing through other slave scares, murders, celebrations, politics, plagues, as well as through the fraternal, service, and military organizations, there was plenty of excitement in the town. Thus, by both planned activities, and by events that no one would want to plan, life in Elizabeth City was not dull.

The location of the public buildings in Elizabeth City made the town the center of a tense episode in May, 1802. Mingo, a slave, reported a planned slave insurrection. Charles Grice, magistrate, gave the following deposition:

Mingo, the property of Jesse Reding, on oath declared, That at Old Will's House (Johnston's Quarter) five weeks past last Sunday, he heard Tom Copper say that he was the General to command this country in a plot to kill the white people, and that he Tom Copper offered a paper to all to sign that would join him; and that he, the deponent, saw Johnston's Lawrence, David, Big Charles, Old Will, Swan's George, Old London, Jack, Palin's Dick, Relfe's Jacob, Widow Reding's Jacob, Little Isaac, John, Pendleton's Aaron, Jesse, and Reding's Drew sign it; that this deponent had been to Tom Copper's camp in company with Johnston's David last Thursday night, when David said they expected to outdo the white folks yet.¹

¹*Norfolk Herald*, May 25, 1802.

As a result of Mingo's report, a Norfolk newspaper reported, "the jail . . . is full of negroes, whose trials come up this week."² But, before the trial, an attempt to liberate them was made by six stout Negroes, mounted on horseback. "Four of the fellows were taken, the other two made their escape."³

The trial was held Saturday and Monday, May 20 and 22. Elizabeth City must have been overrun with the county's inhabitants—passions ran rampant. Six of those charged by Mingo were brought to trial, charged with plotting to rebel and make insurrection and with planning to murder "the good citizens of Pasquotank County." But the six, under the leadership of "Dr. Joe" were acquitted. Rather, Mingo was sentenced to have both ears cut off for perjury before the court.⁴

Passions were again violent in Elizabeth City in 1807. This time, however, it was the result of a foreign nation rather than the slaves. The British capture of the ship *Chesapeake* angered the residents of Pasquotank County. The court house was the scene of a meeting held on July 28, 1807. A committee of John Hamilton, Lemuel Pendleton, Dr. William Martin, Frederick B. Sawyer, William T. Relfe, and William Spencer presented to the group present a series of resolutions that were adopted unanimously. One resolution will give the tenor of the whole. The Pasquotank residents pledged that until the national government instructed action that should any British armed ship or vessel seek aid or intercourse on their shores, they would "withhold, refuse, and to the utmost of our power, prevent such aid and intercourse, and that we will consider as enemies to their country, those who practice or advise a different conduct."⁵

An editorial in the town's paper was in the form of a letter from an old man in which he asked a series of questions, "My blood boils, even at this age, against the haughty Briton.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴Minutes of the Pasquotank County Court of Quarter Sessions and Pleas, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, special session, May 20 and 22, 1802, hereinafter cited as Quarter Sessions.

⁵*Elizabeth City Gazette and Public Advertiser*, July 31, 1807.

The injuries, the insults, the degradations, which he has heaped upon us without cause, must rouse the sentiment of every American. . . ."⁶

Little evidence survived to record how well the men of Pasquotank County converted their words into action in the war that eventually came to redress the *Chesapeake* affair and other problems with Great Britain—the War of 1812. In July, 1813, the inhabitants of Elizabeth City were making preparations for resisting attack as the British landed troops on the Outer Banks.⁷ Charles Grice wrote that he had erected two "Jackson Batteries of Tobacco and Bags of Sand (for want of Cotton)" at Cobb's Point as he was in charge of defending the city and property "which must have amounted to \$2 Million."⁸ At least 157 men from Pasquotank County were detached from the North Carolina Militia to serve with the federal forces.⁹ Yet the record of the number that served from the county in the militia was not preserved.

Five years after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent that ended the War of 1812, excitement again swelled in Elizabeth City. It was learned that the fifth president of the United States, James Monroe, planned to visit the town. Monroe had left Washington March 20, 1819, for Norfolk, with an intention to proceed by the Pasquotank River, the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds, to Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah, "having in view, in reference to public defense, a careful inspection of all the inlets from the ocean."¹⁰ One can imagine the excitement in the young town as everything was readied for the President's visit. He came to Elizabeth City via the Dismal Swamp Canal road, arriving in the

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Norfolk Gazette and Publisher*, July 17, 1813.

⁸Charles Grice to James Iredell, Jr., February 11, 1829, James Iredell, Sr. and Jr., Papers, Manuscripts Department, Duke University Library, Durham, hereinafter cited as Iredell Papers.

⁹*Muster Rolls of the Soldiers of the War of 1812: Detached from the Militia of North Carolina, in 1812 and 1814* (Winston-Salem: Barber Printing Co., 1962), pp. 5, 74. Eighty-four were detached in 1812; seventy-three in 1814.

¹⁰*Edenton Gazette*, April 13, 1819.

evening. He had originally planned to leave the following morning after his stay at the City Hotel. But Representative Lemuel Sawyer, of Camden County, who accompanied him from Norfolk, asked Monroe and his party to stay and be guests at dinner. The President agreed. Sawyer later remembered, "A large number of the citizens united on the occasion, and sat down with them to an excellent repast in which a fine green turtle presented the most inviting dish." The President's party then crossed the river to spend the night with Sawyer's brother, Enoch, at his mansion on the opposite banks of the Pasquotank.¹¹

No record of the President's opinion of Elizabeth City has been found. Nor is there a contemporary account of the impact his visit had on the small town. He may have had one very unpleasant memory—mosquitos were numerous the summer he visited the area.¹² But much more detrimental to the town than an adverse memory of the President were the hazardous living conditions within the town caused by yellow fever which the mosquitos spread.

As early as September, 1810, the dreaded plague had wreaked havoc in the town. An Edenton paper reported that it had been introduced into the town through the *Little Charles* from Havana. Sixteen out of the seventeen or eighteen people who had been afflicted had died. Although a Norfolk paper discounted the diagnosis of yellow fever and charged it to brandy fever instead,¹³ the county court labelled it yellow fever. They excused the "jurors summoned to attend at this time" so that those outside the town would not have to come in.¹⁴

¹¹Lemuel Sawyer, *Autobiography of Lemuel Sawyer* (New York: privately published, 1844), p. 21.

¹²William Shepherd to John H. Bryan, August 22, 1822, John H. Bryan Collection, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Bryan Collection.

¹³Quotations from the *Edenton Gazette*, *Raleigh Register*, and *Norfolk Herald* in Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), p. 729, hereinafter cited as Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*.

¹⁴Quarter Sessions, September, 1810.

Eleven years later, one of the citizens wrote, "This is the sickliest place beyond all doubt that I ever saw, not immediately in Elizabeth, but in the neighboring country, in the healthiest parts, not one man has escaped, white or black, I never saw so much augue and fever in all my live . . ."¹⁵

In addition to yellow fever, Elizabeth City's seaport status was often the cause of contagious plagues being spread in the town by sick seamen who were thrown to the mercy of the town.¹⁶ To alleviate this problem, a Marine Hospital was established in the town sometime previous to 1829. By this year, Elizabeth City could boast of a number of doctors. Drs. William Martin and Samuel Matthews held the contract for 1829 for the Marine Hospital.¹⁷ Drs. Martin and Matthews had won the contract with a bid of \$1,000.00. But they offered to take the contract for 1830 for ten dollars less than the lowest bidder as they had heard that "someone is trying to undermine them."¹⁸ The identity of the doctor trying to undermine them was lost with the years. There were at least ten other doctors in the town in the decade of 1826-1835.¹⁹

¹⁵William B. Shepherd to Mary Shepherd, October 23, 1823, Bryan Collection.

¹⁶*Laws of North Carolina, 1805*, c. XXXI, hereinafter cited as *Laws*, with appropriate date.

¹⁷William Martin to James Iredell, Jr., January 26, February 23, and May 8, 1830, Iredell Papers. Dr. Martin is the earliest known Elizabeth City doctor. He was one of the men appointed to the committee which presented the resolutions of action against the British following the *Chesapeake* affair in July, 1807 (see above, p. 124). He bought his first property in the town in December, 1809 (Pasquotank County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Pasquotank County Court House, Elizabeth City, S, 68, hereinafter cited as Pasquotank County Deeds. (This was lots 61 and 62 where the Indian Queen Hotel later stood. He also bought lot 72, where the Martin home was later built, June 5, 1811 (Pasquotank County Deeds, S, 352). Dr. Matthews bought a lot in Nixonton in February, 1811 (Pasquotank County Deeds, S, 347). The two doctors had formed a partnership prior to June, 1814, when they jointly purchased half of lots 29 and 30 (Pasquotank County Deeds, U, 137). Dr. Matthews purchased one-eighth acre next to the court house, April 15, 1815 (Pasquotank County Deeds, U, 53).

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Drs. Freeman and Fowlkes were associated in 1835, advertising that years of experience qualified them (*Herald of the Times* [Elizabeth City],

In spite of all of these doctors, sickness still plagued the town. An Asiatic cholera epidemic of 1832 was fatal to thirteen of the seventy-six victims.²⁰ The small pox epidemic of 1835 was so severe that the commissioners required all residents to be vaccinated.²¹ Dr. William Elliott offered to vaccinate the poor without charge.²² As a consequence of the epidemic, one of the town's merchants advertised in January that he had moved his business from Elizabeth City to Woodville.²³

Charles R. Kinney, a prominent Elizabeth City lawyer of the time, wrote in August, 1836, "I don't believe I've seen any more sickness in any autumn since my residence."²⁴ He wrote the following month, "I think . . . this is the last summer I will ever attempt to spend in North Carolina. I am determined hereafter to leave with all my family every summer."²⁵ He already had sent his wife to Portsmouth, Virginia, that summer for her health.²⁶ How many others may have followed Kinney's practice in these years is unknown. But one of the reasons for Nags Head's prominence in the late 1840's was the sickness of the inland area.

The effects of the abolitionist movement were beginning to reach North Carolina by 1831.²⁷ This was the same year of the January 27, 1835, hereinafter cited as *Herald of the Times*). Other doctors of the period included Dr. Warrock (*Herald of the Times*, September 5, 1835), Dr. Krozier (widow is selling out his equipment, *North Carolina Advocate* [Elizabeth City], January 15, 1833), Drs. Campos and Davis (*Elizabeth City Star*, May 13, 1826), Dr. Gordan (*Elizabeth City Star*, March 21, 1827), Drs. Walker and Smith (*Elizabeth City Star*, May 19, 1827), and Dr. Robin Piedmont (advertised in 1853 that he had been in town twenty years, *The Old North State* [Elizabeth City], October 8, 1853, hereinafter cited as *The Old North State*).

²⁰*Fayetteville Observer*, September 25, 1832.

²¹*Herald of the Times*, December 12, 1835.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, January 30, 1836.

²⁴Charles R. Kinney to Mary Ann Kinney, August 18, 1836, William F. Martin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, hereinafter cited as Martin Papers.

²⁵*Ibid.*, September 10, 1836.

²⁶*Ibid.*, July 10, 1836.

²⁷John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill:

Nat Turner Rebellion of Southampton County, Virginia. The citizens of Elizabeth City were becoming alarmed. J. M. Gregory was commissioned to write the governor concerning an army for the defense of the town and county. Gregory's first letter drew no response. In his second letter, he stated that Elizabeth City was crying for arms as there was not one gun for every ten men. The people were much alarmed and "patrol and mount guns constantly to keep up appearance without means. The females and children are much distressed."²⁸

Even more distress was caused by the capture of Moses, a Negro outlaw, in lower North Carolina, the same year. Moses spoke of an imminent uprising and reported that the Negroes "had runners or messengers to go between Wilmington, New Bern, and Elizabeth City to 'carry word' and report to them." Moses' report was given added credence after arms and ammunition were found in a location he revealed.²⁹

All of the disturbances and alarms of 1831 were far from the first instance of concern in Elizabeth City over the problem of slavery. As early as 1826, the Pasquotank County Auxiliary Society was functioning. This organization hoped to raise money to transport Negroes to Liberia.³⁰ Although some of Elizabeth City's most prominent citizens were officers of the society,³¹ it apparently had little success.³² But the events of 1831 brought action. In December, twenty-two Negroes sailed for Dighton,

University of North Carolina Press [XVII, 1 of the James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science], 1920, 10, hereinafter cited as Franklin, *The Free Negro*.

²⁸J. M. Gregory to Governor Montford Stokes, September 17, 1831, Governor's Papers, State Series, LXII, Montford Stokes, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh.

²⁹Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 289. Aptheker lists the following sources: J. Turgwyn to Governor John Owen, November 15, 1830, Governor's Letter Book, XXVIII, and J. I. Pasteur to Governor Owen, Governor's Papers, no. 60, State Archives, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh.

³⁰*Elizabeth City Star*, April 22, 1826, announced annual meeting.

³¹*Ibid.*, May 13, 1826.

³²*The Old North State*, March 27, 1852.

Massachusetts, under the direction of the Society of Friends.³³

As the project of removing all the county's Negroes seemed impractical, a twelve-man Committee of Vigilance for Elizabeth City was appointed in August, 1835. This committee was to watch over the safety of the citizens, to examine suspicious looking persons, and "to give the earliest notice to the inhabitants of any designs against their peace and security by those fanatics who are endeavoring to incite our slave population to insurrection and rebellion."³⁴ The Northern abolitionists had succeeded in raising the ire of the citizens of this small Southern town.

Exactly how colorful political action may have been and how citizens may have divided themselves politically during the town's early years cannot be documented and must be left to one's imagination. If political activities in later years are indicative of these early years, politics must have been quite a lively diversion. In the four-sided presidential election of 1824, one of the town's newspapers played a leading part. In August, 1824, William Polk, a leader in the Andrew Jackson campaign,³⁵ wrote James Iredell, Jr., of Edenton, decrying the editorial policy of the *Elizabeth City Star*. Polk believed that this policy was dividing the state, and he urged Iredell to use his influence on the editor.³⁶

The election four years later also had repercussions in Elizabeth City. The campaign against Andrew Jackson cost Isaiah Fearing, the town's post master since 1823, his position. Fearing was in Philadelphia at the time that the coffin handbills, showing Jackson lying in state, were being distributed. Fearing sent a copy to his brother in Elizabeth City by mail. His brother showed it to several persons in the town. Following Jackson's election, his supporters in the town called for Fearing's

Elizabeth City Star, December 10, 1831. The paper did not state whether they were former slaves or free Negroes.

³⁴*Herald of the Times*, September 5, 1835.

³⁵Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 325, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*.

³⁶William Polk to James Iredell, Jr., August, 1824, Iredell Papers.

removal, for it was known that he had voted for John Adams. The Revolution of 1828 removed Fearing.³⁷

The office of post master had other serious handicaps in addition to the spoils system. First, the addressee rather than the addresser paid the postage. The post master frequently advertised long lists of letters in the post office which had not been collected. But, an even more serious problem was a charge system that the post master permitted. Fearing, early in his career, adopted measures to end this problem. He advertised in 1824, "Notice is hereby given to all persons indiscriminately, that in the future no letters will be delivered unless the postage is promptly paid." A year's experience had taught him a lesson: "The trouble of keeping so many little amounts, together with the uncertainty of collection of them at the end of each quarter . . . has determined me to pursue this course . . ."³⁸

William Mann, editor of *The Old North State*, replaced Timothy Gilbert, a Loco-Foco, as post master in 1849. After Mann, a Whig, received his appointment, an Elizabeth City "Clay Whig" wrote a newspaper in the national capital and stated that the appointment had caused dissatisfaction among a part of the Whigs, thirty of whom had signed a petition for Gilbert.³⁹ But Mann retained his position.

As was often the case with the changing of post masters, the address of the post office was also changed. This time it was moved to Main Street, "two doors below the Mansion House."⁴⁰ Mann later moved the post office to North Road Street.⁴¹ In addition to his editorship while post master, he also sold Valentines at the post office.⁴² On at least one occasion while post master, he had to keep the mail from Norfolk to Edenton an extra day while he drier it "owing to the stage getting upset in the Dismal Swamp Canal."⁴³

³⁷*National Intelligencer* (Washington, D. C.), August 26, 1829.

³⁸*Elizabeth City Star*, May 15, 1824.

³⁹*The Old North State*, March 24, 1849.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*, June 12, 1852.

⁴²*Ibid.*, February 7, 1852.

⁴³*Ibid.*, October 26, 1850.

Yet, Mann had only four years to enjoy his position as post master. The resounding triumph of the Democrats in the national elections of 1852⁴⁴ brought reverberations to Elizabeth City. Although the Democrats had polled fewer votes than the Whigs in the town,⁴⁵ they knew that the national victory meant opportunity for revenge. Eighty-five Democrats signed a petition to have Timothy Gilbert re-instated. But not all the Democrats were satisfied that Gilbert was sufficiently loyal to the party to merit their support.⁴⁶ Accordingly, a candidate whose loyalty was not questioned, George A. Williams, was appointed.⁴⁷ Lucian Starke, editor of the local Democratic organ, was also rewarded. He was appointed Collector of the Port for the District of Camden.⁴⁸

Starke and the new editor of *The Old North State*, Stephen D. Pool, brought the slavery issue back to the forefront of Elizabeth City life in 1850 as a result of an editorial war. Pool stated that he favored the congressional committee report that each state had a right to be slave or free, and that Starke insisted on the extension of the Missouri Compromise line. Starke and the *Pioneer* led in the calling of a Pasquotank Southern Rights Association Meeting. Pool opposed the meeting from the beginning.⁴⁹

The first meeting was held in mid-December. A committee appointed that evening submitted a report stating the position of the Abolitionists and the Northern disregard for the Fugitive Slave Law. A number of resolutions were presented, including one that stated a repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law would be grounds for dissolution of the Union, and another that called for commercial retaliation against the North. John Pool and Dr. R. K. Speed spoke against the resolutions. The hour grew late. The crowd thinned. The meeting adjourned.⁵⁰ After a stalemate of

⁴⁴The Whigs lost 254 to 42 in the electoral vote.

⁴⁵*The Old North State*, November 6, 1852, records 308 for Scott, 240 for Pierce in the local vote.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, July 30, 1853.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, August 7, 1853.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, December 14, 1850.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, January 11, 1851. See also *Democratic Pioneer* (Elizabeth City), December 17, 1850, hereinafter cited as *Democratic Pioneer*.

arguments in the beginning of 1851, no more mention was made of the Pasquotank Southern Rights Association. The town's citizens were united in their approval of slavery, although they were divided as to the method of its extension into the West. Lack of records in the last years before the Civil War prevents full evaluation of the sentiments of the town on the question of secession.

During the last thirty years before the Civil War, Elizabeth City gave the state two outstanding politicians, both of which were Whigs. William Biddle Shepard was elected to the United States Congress in 1829 and served in that capacity until 1837 when he declined re-election.⁵¹ By 1835, he had become recognized as a state leader in the Whig Party.⁵² In 1838 he was elected to the North Carolina Senate and held that position except for two terms until his death in 1852.⁵³ John Pool, another prominent state Whig, was nominated by his party to run for governor in 1860 in the bitter "pots and pans campaign." The Whigs, having revived the popular ad valorem tax issue, were sure of victory. Although Pool came within 6,000 votes of defeating his Democratic opponent (as compared to a 16,000 Whig deficit in 1858), the slavery issue caused many to vote the Democratic ticket as they felt that this party was the only safe custodian of Southern interests.⁵⁴

A number of murders plagued the town during the last years before the Civil War. In 1849, the body of a new-born infant, partly buried in a box on property just south of the town, was discovered. The jury of inquest ruled that the baby was born alive and "came to its death by hands of someone unknown to the jury." Editor Mann was not satisfied with such an ambiguous report. He wrote, "We understand that the skull of the child was broken in and otherwise mangled, showing conclusively that foul

⁵¹John H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1964), p. 339, hereinafter cited as Wheeler, *Historical Sketches*.

⁵²Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, p. 330.

⁵³Wheeler, *Historical Sketches*, pp. 340, 341.

⁵⁴Lefler and Newsome, *North Carolina*, p. 368.

means was used to extinguish life." He also introduced additional evidence: "We understand the box containing the mangled corpse was made at some carpenter's cabinet shop in Elizabeth City and that by an apprentice." He then prodded for further investigation of the matter: "the truth of which could be got at, if necessary steps by those in authority were taken." But Mann failed to chronicle whether these necessary steps were ever taken.⁵⁵

There was no question as to the participants in an affray five years later, for James Long and Edward Pegg met in the middle of the street. An argument and fight ensued which produced a number of witnesses. Pegg outfought Long. So Long returned home, obtained a pistol, and returned to the scene of the fracas. Rather than aiming at Pegg, he fired into the crowd of bystanders. Miles Weymouth was hit in the face and seriously wounded.⁵⁶ Neither the papers nor the court records reveal any action taken against Long.

Yet, a murder mystery and the chain reaction following it that began in November, 1855, overshadowed all other crimes of the period in Pasquotank County. William Charles was returning home from Elizabeth City in his buggy about four in the morning when a full load of buckshot hit him just over his heart. He was thrown from his seat. When he was found, he was already dead.⁵⁷ Within a week, Captain Spencer Sawyer had been arrested on suspicion of murder.⁵⁸ Sawyer was a respectable citizen of the town who had been elected town commissioner for 1852.⁵⁹ At his trial in April, 1856, Sawyer was acquitted.⁶⁰

But, the story did not end there. In late June, William Davis, one of the principal witnesses, along with William C. and Charles Davis, against Sawyer in the trial, was sitting in front of one of the town stores when Sawyer came at him with a knife. Sawyer

⁵⁵*The Old North State*, November 10, 1849.

⁵⁶*Democratic Pioneer*, June 20, 1854.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, November 20, 1855.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, November 27, 1855.

⁵⁹*The Old North State*, January 3, 1852.

⁶⁰*Democratic Pioneer*, April 29, 1856.

failed to wound Davis. No words were spoken, but Davis went home for his gun. Upon his return, he could not find Sawyer. Later in the afternoon, all three Davises entered town with their guns and discovered Sawyer on his porch. William Davis shot, killing Sawyer instantly. Although the Davises were arrested immediately and placed in the county jail,⁶¹ the three of them escaped in late November.⁶²

The trial for the Davises was scheduled for the first Wednesday in April, 1857, in Gates County. The three turned themselves in on Monday before the trial, explaining that they had escaped "not to avoid trial, but to avoid a winter's confinement in a cheerless prison." The trial evidence showed that Captain Sawyer had been living at the Davis home when William Charles was killed. After they testified against him at his trial, Sawyer visited the home nightly in an effort to shoot William Davis. Davis feared to have his lights burning at night. Sawyer had made numerous threats to kill him. On the basis of this evidence, the Davises were acquitted on the grounds of self-defense.⁶³ The Charles Murder remained unsolved.

In the meantime, two more Elizabeth Citians had been murdered as the result of affrays. Robert Childrey and his stepsons, George and Thaddeus Butt, had disagreed for sometime over Childrey's treatment of the boys' mother. The disagreement grew into a street fight in March, 1856, during which Childrey was cut on the leg and bled to death. However, he left his mark on both stepsons: George received a serious knife wound in his arm; Thaddeus, a slight pistol wound in his right side.⁶⁴ A month later, two free Negroes, Zion Turner and John Overton, clashed; Overton was mortally wounded.⁶⁵

The free Negro had definitely become a "thorn in the flesh" to the white citizens of Elizabeth City and Pasquotank County.⁶⁶

⁶¹*Ibid.*, July 1, 1856.

⁶²*Ibid.*, December 2, 1856.

⁶³*Ibid.*, April 7, 1857.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, March 18, 1856.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, April 29, 1856.

⁶⁶Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina*, p. 17, reveals that there

Two were arrested in November, 1857, and charged with declaring their determination to burn the property of J. W. Hinton and to "put him away." This married couple had earlier been convicted of stealing wood, pork, corn and poultry from Hinton.⁶⁷

Five years earlier, one of the town's citizens had written, "A walk in our suburbs or down our back streets and lanes will bring before us, hundreds of these poor, degraded beings, many of them in abject suffering and want." He added, "many of them are found addicted to the worse vices with not one single incentive to industry, or a victorious life set before them." He believed that the free Negroes, although despised and abhorred by the slaves, were their corruptors and leaders in vice. He continued: "Thousands of dollars are . . . filched from the pockets of the farmers and merchants . . . annually. The free negroes live, they eat, they drink, they are clothed, yet how few of them work."⁶⁸ Mr. Hinton's losses were partial proof of the writer's charges.

The hardships, epidemics, murders, and divisions that came to Elizabeth City, however, did not consume all the people's thoughts or time. The citizens worked together in a number of military, fraternal, and service organizations for the betterment of life within the town.

Over the years, Elizabeth City had a number of military companies that served for entertainment, instruction, and protection. The first of the groups was the Elizabeth City Blues. Thomas Cobb, captain of the Blues, was paid thirty dollars by the county court for guarding the jail in 1823.⁶⁹ The Blues were followed by the Elizabeth City Guards, who were commanded to attend a parade in 1825.⁷⁰ There are no records of these two companies being chartered by the Legislature. But in 1832, the North Carolina Assembly commissioned a volunteer cavalry were 1,507 free Negroes in Pasquotank County in the 1860 census, making the county second only to Halifax County. This was probably a reflection of former Quaker strength in Pasquotank County.

⁶⁷*Democratic Pioneer*, November 17, 1857.

⁶⁸*The Old North State*, March 27, 1852.

⁶⁹Quarter Sessions, March, 1823.

⁷⁰*Elizabeth City Star*, September 19, 1826.

company, to be known as the Elizabeth City Rangers, and a volunteer infantry company, to be known as the Elizabeth City Guards.⁷¹ Whether this latter group was an outgrowth of the earlier Elizabeth City Guards, or just the revival of the old name is unknown. The Albemarle Blues, a company of infantry under J. C. B. Ehringhaus was commissioned by the 1842 General Assembly.⁷² At the time of the Mexican War, the Legislature authorized Gilbert Elliott, George W. Brooks, Timothy Hunter (all residents of Elizabeth City), and other free white males of Pasquotank County to form a volunteer corps of artillery and infantry of the line to be known as Pasquotank Artillerists.⁷³

Some activity of the next group commissioned by the Legislature, the Home Guards, has been recorded. Although the Guards were not commissioned until January 28, 1851,⁷⁴ the group had already been organized with J. C. B. Ehringhaus as captain. There were twenty-eight volunteers. The newspaper editor wrote that the new group would "prove an ornament and, in case of need, a defense of our town."⁷⁵ They later participated in an Independence Day parade⁷⁶ and also accompanied the band to Nags Head for a dinner and ball.⁷⁷ Another group, the Rough and Ready Dragoons, were called to parade by James W. Hinton in February, 1850.⁷⁸ But by mid-1850, the editor of *The Old North State* had become disappointed by the appearance of the town's military orders. He wrote, "Recent parades of the Corps have evidenced an almost total want of military energy and enthusiasm."⁷⁹ The military orders were dying out in Elizabeth City. Only one other group, the Ehringhaus Light Artillery, is briefly mentioned before the Civil War.⁸⁰

⁷¹*Laws, 1832*, c. LXIX.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 1842, c. XXI.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 1846, c. CLXXIX.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 1850-1851, c. CCCXLVIII.

⁷⁵*The Old North State*, November 2, 1850.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, July 12, 1851.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, September 6, 1851.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, January 26, 1850.

⁷⁹June 11, 1850.

⁸⁰*Democratic Pioneer*, July 11, 1854.

The town's first fraternal group was the Masonic order. Eastern Lodge was chartered December 8, 1825.⁸¹ The following year it met on alternate Monday nights with Harmony Chapter.⁸² The Masons had a hall as early as June, 1827, although no other mention is made of the hall than the fact that the Episcopal Church was holding divine services there.⁸³ Eastern surrendered its charter in 1838, the same year that Star in the East Lodge was chartered. The latter continued until 1849. The following year, Pasquonaux was chartered. It was rechartered as Pasquotank in 1858.⁸⁴

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows was first represented in Elizabeth City with the establishment of Anchoree Lodge, chartered May 14, 1847.⁸⁵ Two years later, the Talula Encampment was chartered.⁸⁶ Minutes of both societies reveal that some of the town's wealthiest and most influential people were members. Their hall was first mentioned in 1850,⁸⁷ but no other record of the building survives.

Although the Sons and Cadets of Temperance was not organized until 1849,⁸⁸ a Temperance Society had been established in the town in May, 1836.⁸⁹ But, when the Temperance Movement began to come into prominence,⁹⁰ the Sons of Temperance prospered in Elizabeth City. For their first anniversary, sixty members gathered and paraded to the residence of Isaiah Fearing. Here his daughter presented them, with appro-

⁸¹All information on charters was supplied in author's interview with W. M. Smith, a Mason of Elizabeth City, January 6, 1969 (notes on interview in possession of author), hereinafter cited as Smith interview. He had secured the information from the Grand Lodge in Raleigh.

⁸²*Elizabeth City Star*, April 25, 1826. No further information was found on Harmony Chapter.

⁸³*Ibid.*, June 2, 1827.

⁸⁴Smith interview.

⁸⁵Charter of Anchoree Lodge, meeting room of Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Elizabeth City.

⁸⁶Minutes of Talula Encampment, meeting room of Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Elizabeth City.

⁸⁷*The Old North State*, March 9, 1850.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, February 23, 1850.

⁸⁹*Herald of the Times*, April 30, 1836.

⁹⁰Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, p. 170.

priate remarks, a banner on behalf of the ladies of Elizabeth City. Miss Fearing's brother, Isaiah, Jr., received the banner and responded.⁹¹ Later in the year, R. Elliott opened a Temperance Bar, which featured lemonade.⁹² Before the year had ended, the organization had a new hall ready to be dedicated.⁹³ By February, 1851, there was a distaff organization, Good Intent Union (Daughters of Temperance) formed with twenty members.⁹⁴

Although the Sons of Temperance began to decline in the state after the Prohibition Party was endorsed by the organization in 1852,⁹⁵ no immediate decline was felt in Elizabeth City. Conversely, the temperance paper, *Star in the East*, appeared in 1853.⁹⁶ And, the temperance ticket won the race for commissioners the same year.⁹⁷ Much of the success of the society was probably the result of a favorable press and pulpit.⁹⁸ But, by the election for commissioners in December, 1854, the temperance movement was doomed. The paper had faded away,⁹⁹ and the temperance ticket lost.¹⁰⁰ There was no more mention of the Sons of Temperance.

A Mechanic's Association of Elizabeth City for Mutual Improvements was organized in 1851. The only information on the organization was a list of its officers.¹⁰¹ Within three months of its organization an editorial raised the question, "What's happened to the Mechanic's Association?"¹⁰²

The town also had a Philanthropic Society; however, the only mention of it was a resolution of sympathy on the death of one

⁹¹*The Old North State*, March 9, 1850.

⁹²*Ibid.*, May 25, 1850.

⁹³*Ibid.*, October 5, 1850.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, February 1, 1851.

⁹⁵Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, p. 171.

⁹⁶*The Old North State*, October 8, 1853.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, January 7, 1854.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, October 20, 1849; June 28, 1851; October 6, 1849.

⁹⁹See above p. 96.

¹⁰⁰*Democratic Pioneer*, January 9, 1855.

¹⁰¹*The Old North State*, October 18, 1851.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, January 24, 1851.

of its members, John C. B. Ehringhaus.¹⁰³ A Relief Club was organized in December, 1859.¹⁰⁴ But this was by no means the beginning of the town's relief work. Following the Road Street fire of 1852, a meeting had been held to set up a committee to solicit funds and distribute them according to need and loss.¹⁰⁵ Following a severe snow in 1857, thirty-five destitute families were helped by collections which were taken.¹⁰⁶ The Relief Club was but a continuation of Elizabeth City's efforts to help those in need.

Another service organization—a necessary one—was the fire department. The Legislature of 1824 empowered the commissioners to appoint any number of persons residing in the town, up to a total of twenty-five, to constitute a fire company. All those appointed were to be exempt from militia duty except in case of insurrection or rebellion, or while the United States was engaged in war with a foreign country.¹⁰⁷ Five years later, the free white males of Elizabeth City were permitted to form a fire company, not to exceed twenty-five members.¹⁰⁸ Anyone who enrolled himself was obligated for five years, or he must forfeit twenty-five dollars unless he was sick or removed from the county.¹⁰⁹ This company was known as the Union Fire Company.¹¹⁰ In 1844, the Legislature authorized Thomas R. Cobb, Constant C. Green, Barney Tisdale, and other males, up to a total of twenty-five to organize the Phoenix Fire Company.¹¹¹ The Albemarle Engine Company was organized in 1850 under the leadership of Lucian D. Starke, the editor of the *Democratic Pioneer*.¹¹²

One group, which both appeared and disappeared mysteriously, commanded the attention of the whole town while it was

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, March 5, 1853.

¹⁰⁴*Democratic Pioneer*, December 8, 1857.

¹⁰⁵*The Old North State*, April 17, 1852.

¹⁰⁶*Democratic Pioneer*, January 27, 1857.

¹⁰⁷*Laws, 1824*, c. CXVII. This was probably the Phoenix Company, mentioned in *Herald of the Times*, January 27, 1835.

¹⁰⁸This was raised to forty, *Laws, 1832*, c. LXXXVII.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid. 1829*, c. LVI.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 1834, c. CLXII.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 1846, c. CLXXIX.

¹¹²*Democratic Pioneer*, October 29, 1850.

in existence. A newspaper advertisement in June, 1853, featured a large, bold "Z" and only these words: "Meet at the Court House this Evening at 8 O'Clock precisely. Important business to attend to. By order of the Chief, 99."¹¹³ Another similar advertisement appeared the following week.¹¹⁴ The company made its appearance at the Independence Day parade. It was a masquerade—"the Sable Dame, Bloomer, fierce Cossack, turbaned Turk, the Devil and the nondescript" were displayed. "Nor was the Patriot of the Revolution forgotten. In an antiquated chariot drawn by a silent pair of horses, guided by an aged negro, sat a General in uniform." The mysterious advertisements had brought the crowds: "We never recollect to have seen more excitement and interest evinced in our community upon any occasion."¹¹⁵ After an old Christmas parade at the beginning of the next year,¹¹⁶ the group lay dormant until Independence Day, 1859, when 249 characters appeared in their procession.¹¹⁷

Elizabeth City had a long tradition of parades and celebrations. Most of the time, the events were the joint efforts of the churches and organizations of the town.

Independence Day was a favorite day for celebrations. The day was celebrated as early as 1824. That year, the citizens met at the court house at noon. Prayer was offered by the Rev. Jeremiah Etheridge of the Baptist Church. Dr. William Martin read the Declaration of Independence. This was followed by an "animated and truly patriotic" oration by Charles R. Kinney. The meeting was adjourned to the City Hotel for dinner at 1:00 p.m. An hour

¹¹³*The Old North State*, June 4, 1853.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, June 11, 1853.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, July 9, 1853.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, January 7, 1854.

¹¹⁷*Democratic Pioneer*, June 28, 1859. There is some question as to whether or not this "Z" Company may have been connected with the Know-Nothings. Minutes of Anchoree Lodge, meeting room of Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Elizabeth City, December 8, 1854, recorded the following: "The Know-Nothings are to be instructed that the Lodge declines renting this room and that the order of Know-Nothings are requested to secure another place." There was to be no charge for previous use of the room. The Know-Nothings had a paper in the town, the *North Carolina Native Sentinel*, later called the *American Sentinel*.

later, the group reassembled for a series of toasts, presided over by William Gregory. The toasts were accompanied by loud roars of a cannon at regular intervals.¹¹⁸

It is assumed that the day was celebrated in 1825 and 1826; but an editorial of 1827 lamented the failure to observe the day that year.¹¹⁹

Rain and muddy streets failed to hamper the celebration in 1849. William E. Mann, the grand marshal, led the Rough and Ready Light Dragoons from the court house to the Hall of the Sons and Cadets of Temperance, who joined them to proceed to the office of John Pool. Here they were joined by the chaplain, orator, reader, and committee of arrangements for the march to the Methodist Church. The Methodist and Baptist choirs sang. James W. Hinton read the Declaration of Independence, and George M. Wilder gave the oration. Dinner was served on the court house lawn.¹²⁰

The celebration in 1851 was led by about 400 children of the Methodist and Baptist Sunday schools.¹²¹ The 1853 celebration featured the "Z" Company. The already interesting day ended with a display of fireworks.¹²²

Although the 1853 celebration had been outstanding, even greater plans were laid for the following Independence Day. Two distinct celebrations brought "the most people ever in Elizabeth City" to join in the festivities. People came from Currituck, Camden, and Perquimans counties, as well as from Plymouth and Edenton. The Temperance celebration was held at the Baptist Meeting House, and "about 2,000" ate the meal served at lunch time. "Several hundred" ate at the Citizen's celebration under the leadership of the Ehringhaus Light Infantry at the Academy.¹²³

¹¹⁸*Elizabeth City Star*, July 7, 1827.

¹¹⁹*The Old North State*, January 3, 1827.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, July 7, 1849.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, July 12, 1851.

¹²²*Ibid.*, July 9, 1853.

¹²³*Democratic Pioneer*, July 11, 1854.

Celebrations in 1858¹²⁴ and 1859¹²⁵ made no effort to compare with that of 1854.

The town was not given to much observance of other holidays. There were two mentions of Thanksgiving observance. In 1850, it was "almost unnoticed": one church was open.¹²⁶ In 1853, the stores on Road Street closed for the day, but those on Water Street "were not so observant." The Baptists and Episcopalians had services, but the Methodists had no minister at the time and were repairing their building.¹²⁷ Only one Christmas observance was mentioned: the Methodist and Episcopal churches were open, the Baptist Church had no pastor at the time.¹²⁸

The town observed a day of mourning on July 17, 1826, in the commemoration of the deaths of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. A parade, an oration by Charles Kinney, suspension of all business for the day, and display of colors at halfmast by all the vessels in the port were the town's methods of observing the nation's loss.¹²⁹ A parade and meeting of mourning were also held following the death of Zachary Taylor in 1850.¹³⁰

The town staged a celebration on January 9, 1832, to commemorate the victory of the Battle of New Orleans.¹³¹ But the town's victory celebration *par excellence* followed the Democratic victory at the polls in 1856. On November 19, a procession, led by Kayton's Brass Band of Norfolk, marched from downtown to a vacant lot on Edenton Road. Along with the meal served there, five speeches were made. The meeting adjourned, but at 7:00 p.m., the group again gathered downtown. The Democratic houses in town were illuminated. A torch parade marched through the streets as "night was turned into day." A

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, July 6, 1858.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, July 5, 1859.

¹²⁶*The Old North State*, November 16, 1850.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, November 26, 1853.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, January 3, 1852.

¹²⁹*Elizabeth City Star*, July 22, 1826.

¹³⁰*The Old North State*, July 30, 1850.

¹³¹*Elizabeth City Star*, January 14, 1832.

floating battery of barrels was set on fire on the river. Finally, the group marched back to the vacant lot for supper.¹³²

A person in search of excitement could have found it in Antebellum Elizabeth City. Each year brought its own. Although much of this excitement brought distress to the town, the organizations and celebrations added to the town's stature. All combined, they made life in the town colorful and exciting.

¹³²*Democratic Pioneer*, November 1, 1856.

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