

Randolph County, NC Genealogical Journal—Fall, 2009

County cemeteries. The idea is to produce an eleventh volume with updates and a complete index for all the other volumes. Once created, the general index will be published and posted on the website. It will allow a researcher to look for the individual they are seeking in one place, rather than searching the indexes of ten volumes. This will be an especially helpful tool for those uncertain of the township in which their ancestor might be buried. We are hoping to get enough volunteers in place so that each individual will have a very limited amount of work to do and the project can be completed quickly. The more, the merrier! If you are interested, please contact us at kharmides@yahoo.com, as soon as possible. Your contact information will be forwarded to the coordinator.

- **THE JOURNAL WELCOMES MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS**

You may have noticed that we frequently publish contributions from our members within these pages. Memorialize your name in print by researching, copying, abstracting, or composing materials relevant to the family history of Randolph County (also neighboring Chatham and Montgomery Counties, where there are currently no active genealogical societies). Copies, transcriptions and abstracts of original, primary source records are especially needed including court materials, church records, private accounts, deeds, military records (particularly Revolutionary [unabbreviated versions preferred], Confederate, or War of 1812 pensions), personal letters, Bible records, journals, reminiscences, and photographs. Everyone loves to read nostalgic and informative history-related articles from the local newspapers and they are also prime candidates for inclusion within these pages. Finally, we accept carefully-crafted family history articles or general articles concerning methods and sources. In this category, there are special requirements. We expect that each fact referenced (other than those arising from common knowledge) will be sourced with a primary source document. Footnotes or endnotes are the preferred method for citing these sources. Printouts of gedcom descendancies or pedigree charts are generally not acceptable for inclusion within these pages. If you have intentions of contributing a research based article, it behoves you to contact the editor in advance. He may be willing to advise you on your draft version or give you some guidance as to the general interest of a particular topic before you invest the time to write it. Send all contributions to Journal Editor, Randolph County Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 4394, Asheboro, NC 27204 or write to the editor at civilisation75@yahoo.com. this has changed to rcgseditor@gmail.com

- **NCGS SPEAKERS' ROUNDTABLE SCHEDULED NOV. 7th.**

Raleigh – 7 November 2009. The North Carolina Genealogical Society (NCGS) and the Olivia Raney Local & Family History Library will cosponsor a workshop of ten talks on subjects ranging from deeds, wills, and census research to children and orphan records, DNA, and immigration. The topics range from beginner to advanced levels. The NCGS Annual Meeting will also occur midday with awards for publications significant to NC genealogy research.

Mark the date: Saturday, 7 November 2009. More information on the workshop topics and speakers can be found online at <http://www.ncgenealogy.org>

LOCAL BOYS WHO MADE GOOD:

Two Builders of High Point with

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Randolph County Roots

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These brief family histories were prepared for the family files of the Heritage Research Center of the High Point Public Library. The last decades of the 19th century and the earliest of the 20th witnessed one of the largest population shifts in North Carolina history from agricultural to industrial labor and from the rural areas to new urban centers. One of these new centers was the city of High Point, founded in the early 1850's (incorporated 1859) at the junction between the Old Plank Road from Fayetteville to Salem and the railway. Furniture and textiles were the leading industries of the day. This year marks High Point's 150th year as an incorporated municipality, so we use this issue to celebrate three Randolph County descendants who moved to High Point and made names for themselves.

WRENN FAMILY

Biographical Note: The WRENN brothers were the powerhouse team behind much of the early growth of the furniture industry in High Point. Not a bad legacy for the orphaned sons of a Civil War fatality. But their connection through their mother to the PERRY and JARRELL families (see PERRY and JARRELL Family entries) certainly did not retard their rise to power and influence. **Thomas Franklin PERRY** worked variously on his uncle Seaborn PERRY's farm, at the Jarrell Hotel, and also for J. B. BEST as a brick maker while he attended Major LYNCH's School and Rutherford College. He began his career as an entrepreneur in a dry goods partnership with his brother **Manliff Jarrell "Bud" WRENN** (Wrenn Brothers). But in 1889, in combination with John H. TATE and Ernest Ansel SNOW, Tom made a \$1,000 investment that helped initiate the first full-fledged furniture factory in the city—High Point Furniture Company. His brother M. J. later joined the company when Tom bought Ernest SNOW's portion of the business for him.

Progress with the High Point factory was swift and T. F. WRENN began to expand into other investments. Not only did he profit by loaning money, but he became very interested in the real estate market and bought, improved and sold many properties head to head with the PENNY brothers. At one time he owned the timber rights to much of McDowell County, which he used to supply lumber for his furniture factories to the point that the county was almost clearcut. He was also noted for his propensity to take advantage of downturns in the economy and parlay them to his long-term advantage. Even the Great Depression of the 1930's did not diminish the WRENN fortune.

In 1896, Tom inaugurated the Catawba Furniture Company in Marion in combination with W.H. FRASER. In order to get full control of this venture, he sold his last shares in the High Point Furniture Company to FRASER in exchange for FRASER's interest in the Catawba enterprise. Meanwhile, Tom's brother M. J. WRENN strengthened his control over High Point Furniture. Later Tom acquired a lackadaisical Columbia Furniture Company and turned it into a successful enterprise, Wrenn-Columbia. His half brother J. L. KIRKMAN became his plant manager and later, he also brought his wife's nephew George CAMPBELL and his stepson Seborn PERRY into the business. There he trained them to be good custodians of the fortune he had accumulated. He also entered the textile industry with the inauguration of the Wrenn Hosiery Mill in Thomasville.

Meanwhile, Bud WRENN served as mayor of the City in the first decade of the twentieth century. After his brother divested himself of his interest, Bud continued as president and owner of the High Point Furniture Company. He owned half of Wrenn-Columbia and was president of North State Telephone Company at his death.

Tom WRENN was noted for his interest in assisting orphaned young men and he helped

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many with contributions toward their education. His estate provided \$100,000 in part for the construction of the Wrenn Memorial Building at the Methodist Children's Home in Winston-Salem. The remainder served as an endowment for the benefit of orphaned children, particularly those from High Point, who later took up residence there. He provided wood for WPA workers during the Depression to cut for the benefit of poor families—but he, also, grew quite angry when he saw how slowly they went about their labors. Bud WRENN was active in the prohibition movement and exercised his influence to keep North Carolina a dry state well after the rest of the country had moved beyond the issue. He was also interested in the improvement of High Point College. Some have given the WRENNs mixed reviews on their treatment of workers because of the low wages and poor working conditions offered by the early furniture industry.¹

Genealogy:

FIRST GENERATION.

1. **Kilbee WRENN** of Kingston Parish, Gloucester Co., VA, m. 21 Jun 1764, **Elizabeth DEGGE**.² Unfortunately, due to a lack of surviving records from what is now Gloucester and Matthews County, VA, it may be difficult to pursue this family further toward its origins. However, it is relatively clear that it was a large family group. A Kilby WRENN, son of John WRENN, and probably not the same as this one, was apprenticed in King George Co., VA, in 1758 to learn the occupation of joiner from James WRENN of Fairfax Co., VA.³ The Degge family had been resident in Kingston Parish, Gloucester County, Virginia, since before 1678, when its patriarch, John DEGGE took up a land grant from the colony for 1800 acres. John DEGGE was the son of Isaac and Rose (MARSHALL) DEGGE of Namptwich, Co. Chester.⁴

- +2. i. **John WRENN** (16 Jul 1765, Gloucester Co., VA—10 Jun 1833, Randolph Co., NC) m. 1787, Patience Carroll.

SECOND GENERATION.

2. **John WRENN** (bapt. 16 Jul 1765, Gloucester Co., VA—10 Jun 1833, Randolph Co., NC) m. 13 Apr 1787, Isle of Wight Co., VA, **Patience CARROLL** (c. 1770, Isle of Wight Co., VA—11 Nov 1827, Randolph Co., NC), daughter of **William** (d. c. 1785, Isle of Wight Co., VA) and **Mary (-----) CARROLL**. John WRENN was baptized, 16 Jul 1765 in Kingston Parish, Gloucester Co., VA. He later moved to Isle of Wight County, VA, where he was the executor for his future father-in-law, William CARROLL'S will and where he married Patience. He subsequently moved to Halifax Co., NC, and then on to New Hope Creek in Chatham Co., NC,

¹ "Good Afternoon" [Holt McPherson column on T. F. Wrenn and 1105 North Main Street,] *High Point Enterprise*, (undated) clipping from Wrenn File, NCC, High Point Public Library; "Wrenn Estate Gives \$100,000 In Real Estate To Orphanage," *High Point Public Enterprise* (28 Mar 1941); "Pioneers In Furniture In High Point Are Memorialized In City's Museum," *High Point Enterprise* (18 Jun 1972), A3.

² The marriage of Kilbe Wren to Elizabeth Degge and the christening of their son John Wrenn is recorded in Kingston Parish Register. Many of the original records of Matthews and Gloucester Counties have been destroyed by fire. See Emma R. Matheny and Helen K. Yates, *Kingston Parish Register: Gloucester and Mathews Counties, Virginia (1749—1827)*. (Richmond, VA, 1963).

³ See Harold B. Gill, Jr., *Apprentices of Virginia, 1623—1800*. (Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry, 1989) 281.

⁴ See Genealogies of *Virginia Families From the William and Mary College Quarterly*. (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, Inc., 1982) Vol. II, 193—200. Apparently, the descent is substantiated by the will of a Mary Degge of Namptwich dated 1716, which mentions children of her brother in Virginia.