



The History of Education in North Carolina

by Charles Lee Smith

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is an excerpt from the above named book published in 1888 by the Government Printing Office in Washington, DC. The author was a Fellow in History and Politics at Johns Hopkins University. This book is volume 3 of a series of books entitled *Contributions to American Educational History* which were edited by Herbert B. Adams.

EDUCATIONAL BEGINNINGS -- THE FIRST SCHOOLS

In 1692 Dr. Compton, Bishop of London, determined to know more of the church in the colonies, and appointed Dr. Bray to be his commissary in Maryland. Dr. Bray gave North Carolina her first public library, established at Bath. On receiving the report of Dr. Bray, Bishop Compton went to the King and obtained from him a bounty of twenty pounds to every minister who would go over to America; but Carolina profited but little from this.

The earliest account that we have of teachers in North Carolina is the report of Dr. John Blair, who came as a missionary to the colony in 1704. He states that the settlers had built small churches in three precincts, and had appointed a lay reader in each, who were supplied by him with sermons. We know that these lay readers were schoolmasters, from the evidence of Dr. John Brickell, a naturalist of note who had traveled through the settlements in North Carolina in the early part of the eighteenth century, and published in Dublin, in 1737, the *Natural History of North Carolina, with an Account of the Trade, Manners and Customs of the Christian and Indian Inhabitants*. He says: "The law established is the Protestant, as it is professed in England, and though they seldom have orthodox clergymen (he means those of the Church of England) among them, yet there are not only glebe lands laid out for that use commodious to each town, but likewise for building churches. The want of these Protestant clergy is generally supplied by some school-masters who read the Liturgy, and then a sermon out of Dr. Tillotson of some good practical divine every Sunday. These are the most numerous and are dispersed through the whole province."

About 1705 Mr. Charles Griffin came from some part of the West Indies to Pasquotank and opened a school which was patronized by all classes. Rev. William Gordon, who came from England as a missionary of the Gospel, written in 1700, alludes to the fact that the Quakers in Pasquotank were sending their children to the school of a lay reader of the church, named Griffin.

Rev. Gordon established a church in Chowan Precinct, at the head of the Albemarle Sound, in the settlement which afterwards became Edenton. Rev. James Adams having settled in Pasquotank, the school in that settlement was transferred to him and Mr. Griffin, at the instance of Mr. Gordon, was elected lay-reader of the church and clerk of the Chowan vestry, and opened a school in that parish, textbooks for the pupils being furnished by the rector, Mr. Gordon.

In a letter to John Chamberlaine, Esq., of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, dated "Chowan, in North Carolina, July 25, 1712" the Rev. G. Rainsford, a missionary to the colony, says: "I had

several conferences with one Thomas Hoyle, king of the Chowan Indians, who seems very inclinable to embrace Christianity and proposes to send his son to school to Sarum to have him taught to read and write by way of foundation in order to a farther proficiency for the reception of Christianity. I readily offered my service to instruct him myself, and having the opportunity of sending him to Mr. Garratt's, where I lodge, being but three miles distance from his town. But he modestly declined it for the present till a general peace was concluded between the Indians and Christians. I found he had some notion of Noah's flood, which he came to the knowledge of and expressed himself after this manner, 'my father told me, I tell my son.' But I hope in a little time to give the society a better account of him as well as of those peaceable Indians under his command. There's one Mr. Washburn who keeps a school, at Sarum, on the frontiers of Virginia, between the two governments, and neighboring upon two Indian towns who, I find by him, highly deserve encouragement, and could heartily wish the society would take it into consideration and be pleased to allow him a salary for the good services he has done and may do for the future. What children he has under his care can both write and read very distinctly and gave before me such an account of the grounds and principles of the Christian religion that strangely surprised me to hear it. The man upon a small income would teach the Indian children gratis (whose parents are willing to send them could they but pay for their schooling) as he would those of our English families had he but a fixed dependency for so doing, and what advantage would this be to private families in particular and the whole colony in general is easy to determine."

The above account represents the state of education under the rule of the Lords Proprietors. It is probable that there were other schools, but certainly none of higher grade. We are told by the Rev. Francis L. Hawks, D.D., in his excellent history of this period, that among the higher classes, many were educated in England. Governors, judges counselors, lawyers, and clergy furnished evidence from their letters and other documents that there was no deficiency of education among the higher classes. Libraries at Bath and Edenton possessed many valuable books, showing that those who read them had cultivated minds. Gale, Little, Moseley, and Swann were fit associates for the most intelligent men in any of the English provinces of their day. In determining the boundary between North Carolina and Virginia, Swann and Moseley proved themselves better mathematicians than the members of the commission from Virginia. The only author in the colony during this period, so far as is known, was the Surveyor-General Lawson, who wrote a history of the colony, which was published after his death in 1714.

SCOTCH-IRISH IMMIGRATION -- MARKED EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

There was no marked educational advancement manifested till the arrival of the Scotch-Irish, who began to settle in the State in large numbers about 1736; this immigration continued till 1776, the new comers bringing with them in a great measure the same spirit and the same principles that prompted the establishing of Icolumkill and Lindisfarne.

The history of the introduction of this people in North Carolina is concisely stated by the Rev. J. Rumble, D.D., in the Home Magazine of March 1881, as follows: "In June 1736, Henry McCulloch from the province of Ulster, Ireland, secured a grant from George II of 64,000 acres in the present county of Duplin, and introduced into it between three and four thousand emigrants from his native county. These were the Scotch-Irish descendants of the Scotch settlers who James I had induced to move to Ireland and occupy the immense domains that escheated to the Crown after the conspiracy of the Earls of Tyrconnel and Tyrone in 1604. About the same time (1730-1740) the Scotch began to occupy the lower Cape Fear, and after the fatal battle of Culloden Moor, in 1746, great numbers of Highlanders implicated in the rebellion of "Prince Charlie" emigrated to America, and occupied the counties of Bladen, Cumberland, Robeson, Moore, Richmond, Harnett, and parts of Chatham and Anson. Thus it happened that the Scotch obtained the ascendancy in the region of the upper Cape Fear, and have retained it till this day.

"In the meantime thousands of Scotch-Irish from the province of Ulster, Ireland, laboring under disabilities in consequence of their religion, began to seek homes in America. Most of them landed at Philadelphia and a few at Charleston. The northern stream first flowed westward to Lancaster County, Pa.,

and the Alleghany Mountains and as the French and Indian War, about the time of Braddock's defeat (1755), rendered frontier life dangerous in Pennsylvania, multitudes changed their course and moved down parallel to the Blue Ridge through Virginia and North Carolina, till they met the other stream of their countrymen that was moving upward from Charleston along the banks of the Santee, Wateree, Broad, Pacolet, Ennoree and Saluda Rivers. And this was the way the Scotch-Irish came into this region, beginning to arrive about 1736 and continuing to the opening of the Revolution in 1776, during forty years."

From the arrival of these immigrants dates the impulse for the establishment of schools throughout the State. It is to the Presbyterian Church that North Carolina owes the establishment of her first classical schools, and during the second half of the eighteenth century the history of education in this State is inseparably connected with that of this denomination. Rev. Dr. Rumble, in writing of this period, says: "And so the Presbyterian Church of this age has regarded it as indispensable to her welfare to maintain schools where her sons should learn to read the Latin tongue, the language of western Christianity, and the Greek, in which the New Testament was written, as well as the mathematics and the liberal sciences -- the 'Trivium' and the 'Quadrivium.'"

About 1745 the New York and Pennsylvania Synods of the Presbyterian Church began to send missionaries to North Carolina. Numerous churches were established, and in nearly every instance a school was planted by the church. "Almost invariably," says Foote, "as soon as a neighborhood was settled, preparations were made for the preaching of the Gospel by a regular stated pastor, and wherever a pastor was located, in that congregation there was a classical school -- as in Sugar Creek, Poplar Tent, Centre, Bethany, Buffalo, Thyatira, Grove (Duplin County), Wilmington, and the churches occupied by Patillo in Orange and Granville (counties)."

THE INFLUENCE OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

In North Carolina, as in several other states, the higher education owes its first impulse to the Presbyterian Church and Princeton College.

Presbyterian missionaries, graduates of Princeton, sent to this State in the first half of the eighteenth century by the Pennsylvania and New York Synods, gathered the scattered families of their faith into churches, and by the side of the church was planted a classical school.