

# **Searcy's Ford and Ferry, Waddell's Ferry and Waddell Cemetery**



## ***A Local Cultural Heritage Site Nomination By Warren Dixon with supplementary material by Ross A. Holt***

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***March 28, 2017  
Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission***

# **Searcy's Ford and Ferry, Waddell's Ferry and Waddell Memorial Cemetery**

*By Warren Dixon*

In May, 1756, two tracts of 640 acres each were surveyed for William Searcy on both sides of Deep River in what was then Orange County. The land, which was deeded to Searcy in 1761, included the familiar oxbow of Deep River in the lower southeast corner of present-day Randolph County. What has been termed a "canoe landing" became known as Searcy's Ford, the lowest crossing point of Deep River in Randolph County and a vital colonial connection between Chatham Courthouse and points east to South Carolina. Searcy later operated a ferry there which was afterward purchased by Edmund Waddell.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the crossing is illustrated in the fact that General Nathanael Greene's Continental Army crossed there on its way to South Carolina after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. The year before part of the North Carolina Whig Militia had crossed at Searcy's Ford in an attempt to join General Horatio Gates before the disastrous Battle of Camden.<sup>2</sup>

Notorious Tory Colonel David Fanning often used the ford as an ambush point, as Continental Colonel Guilford Dudley found in 1781. Dudley, returning from service under General Greene in South Carolina, determined "...to take the road leading from Pedee to Searcy's Ford on Deep River, where we crossed before, and thence to Chatham Courthouse, being my nearest route home." Dudley soon realized that the entire countryside was "in a state of insurrection and parties of armed Tories spread themselves in every direction..." He was able to cross the ford but was immediately attacked by Fanning. Forced to abandon his wagon "with many valuable effects", he retreated back across Searcy's Ford, chased for six miles by Fanning and his men "in a direction quite contrary to that I wished to go". When Dudley was able to elude Fanning, he had to travel to Bell's Mill and on through the New Garden settlement to finally reach

Hillsborough, “having been turned out of my proper course...about a hundred miles.”<sup>3</sup>

Later, Colonel Elijah Isaacs’ Wilke’s County colonial militia regiment was sent to the area to quell the Tory uprising and rendezvoused at Searcy’s Ford, but was unable to capture the elusive Fanning.<sup>4</sup>

On March 11, 1786, William Argo and his wife Kerrenhappuck sold 200 acres on Deep River to Edmond Waddle (sic), “being part of the survey taken up by William Searcy deceased.” It’s uncertain when William Searcy started his ferry, but in 1802, the Randolph Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions ordered that “Edmond Waddle keep a Ferry at the same place where William Searcy did heretofore.” The court allowed Waddell to charge the following rates for ferriage: “For a man and horse, sixpence, for carriages sixpence per wheel, for a footman, sixpence.” Three months later, the court authorized Waddle “to erect a gate or gates across the road at or next to his ferry on Deep River...”<sup>5</sup>

Waddell was a prominent Randolph County citizen. He was a delegate to the N.C. State House of Commons in 1787 and a State Senator from 1793-98. He was a delegate from Randolph to the 1788 Constitutional Convention and along with Zebedee Wood, voted against ratification.<sup>6</sup>

There was a post office at Waddell’s Ferry from 1821-33 and the name carried well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The ferry itself provided river crossings until 1889. Mary Waddell was the last ferry operator and is buried at the Waddell Cemetery.<sup>7</sup>

Waddell’s Ferry was almost part of an ambitious waterway project to transport coal and iron from the mines of southern Chatham County to Wilmington. The N.C. State Legislature chartered the Cape Fear and Deep River Navigation Company in 1849 to make possible the navigation of the Cape Fear and Deep Rivers by steam boat from Fayetteville to Waddell’s Ferry in Randolph County. Poor management and the Civil War caused the dissolution of the company in 1873.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of the river crossing at Waddell’s Ferry is made evident by the escape of three convicts “from the camp at Moffitt’s” in 1906. The convicts

crossed the river in a boat at Waddell's Ferry. Guards tracked them there but the river was "past fording" and they had to travel 25 miles before they could find a suitable crossing point.<sup>9</sup>

The Waddell Memorial Chapel and Waddell Family Cemetery is located near the ferry site. Buried there, in addition to Mary Waddell, the last ferry operator, are Edmund Waddell, who was a lieutenant in Captain John Birdsong's 1772 Militia Company, and Windsor Pearce, a footsoldier in Captain Charles Polks Company of N.C. Militia in 1776.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NC Grant Book 12 p. 41 Grant #4 & Grant # 92; NC Grant Plat # 203 & 205 surveyed May 1756 for William Searcy. Seagrove Area, p. 96, Dot and Walter Auman, 1976; Architectural History of Randolph County, p. 12, Mac Whatley, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Revolutionary War Pension Application of Matthew Myrick, S2894, 1832; Pension Application supporting affidavit from Colonel Guilford Dudley, S2894, "...marched...into South Carolina, crossing Deep River at Searcy's Ford..." Revolutionary War Pension of William Marsh, S7186, 1832.

<sup>3</sup> Revolutionary Pension Application of Guilford Dudley, W8681, 1832.

<sup>4</sup> Revolutionary Pension Application of Richard Nall, W8681, 1832.

<sup>5</sup> Randolph County Deed Book 1, page 107; February and May terms of Randolph County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1802.

<sup>6</sup> [www.carolana.com](http://www.carolana.com)

<sup>7</sup> Post Offices and Postmasters of N.C., Volume II and III, N.C. Postal History Society; [ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com)

<sup>8</sup> Dictionary of N.C. Biography, William S. Powell.

<sup>9</sup> The Courier (Asheboro, N.C.) April 5, 1906

<sup>10</sup> Chatham County 1771-1971, Hadley, Horton and Stroud; [revwarapps.org](http://revwarapps.org)

# **The William Searcy Family**

## ***by Ross A. Holt***

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## **I. William Searcy and His Family**

William Searcy received two 640-acre land grants straddling the Deep River in Orange (later Randolph) County in 1761. Sufficient evidence exists to conclude that Searcy was the same person as William Hargrave Searcy, born in Nottingham, England, about 1723 to John and Phoebe Hargrave Searcy.<sup>1</sup> By 1728, John Searcy and his family were established in eastern North Carolina, in the area that would become Granville County. The family became prominent; William's younger brothers Reuben and Bartlett both would serve terms as constable, and Reuben would serve as county clerk.<sup>2</sup>

William married Keziah (in the Old Testament, the name of Job's second daughter), whose maiden name may have been Williams and who was born about 1725 in Virginia.<sup>3</sup> They had three children: Mary, Keron or Kerenhappuch (for Job's third daughter), and William Jr., who was born on 27 May 1754.<sup>4</sup> Among his other business activities, Searcy established a ford and

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<sup>1</sup> Morgan Jackson, "William Searcy, 1723-1776," *The Wallace Family of Moore County, NC*, undated (updated as of 2017), <http://moorecountywallaces.com/getperson.php?personID=I03256&tree=Wallace>, 3 March 2017. See "A Note on the Origin of William Searcy," following. Throughout I refer to William Searcy Sr. and William Jr. to differentiate father and son, but their names do not generally appear in contemporary records as Sr. and Jr.

<sup>2</sup> Wallace, Evelyn N., "Some SEARCY Gatherings," *Granville Co., North Carolina*, 2012, [http://www.ncgenweb.us/ncgranville/families/bios\\_spec/searcy.htm](http://www.ncgenweb.us/ncgranville/families/bios_spec/searcy.htm), 6 March 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Jackson, "William Searcy 1723-1776." Unsourced entries on various other genealogy websites identify Keziah's maiden name as Williams, but no documentary evidence appears to be available.

<sup>4</sup> Jackson, "William Searcy."

later a ferry on his Deep River property that became key crossing point on a road from Chatham Courthouse to South Carolina. Searcy passed away between February and May of 1776 in Guilford (later Randolph) County, survived by both his father and his mother, who died in Granville County in 1783 and 1790 respectively. William Searcy willed most of his property to his wife and after her death to William Jr. Kerrenhappuch received a tract of land known as Morgan's Neck, "which she is safely to and peaceably to enjoy," and Mary received "one shilling lawful money of Great Britain."<sup>5</sup> The land bequeathed to Kerenhappuch – the only tract she received – likely was the ford/ferry property, later deeded to Edmund Waddell.

Searcy's children prospered. By 1775, Mary had become the wife of Windsor Pearce, a business associate of William Sr. and an early Randolph County leader who is memorialized in the Waddell Memorial Cemetery near the ford/ferry. Keron and her husband William Argo deeded the ford/ferry property to Edmund Waddell in 1786.<sup>6</sup> William Jr. served the revolutionary cause with distinction, and lived most of his life in Chatham County a few miles from Searcy's ford/ferry.

It is William Jr. about whom most information is available, thanks to his Revolutionary

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<sup>5</sup> "1776 Will, Guilford County, NC – Will of William Searcy," Jackson, "William Searcy", <http://moorecountycastle.com/showmedia.php?mediaID=1571&medialinkID=4968>, 4 March 2017. The one shilling left to Mary seems a coldhearted indictment, but it was common practice when an heir had already received his or her birthright to make an acknowledgment of that person in one's will by bequeathing one shilling. [Marsden, John, "Family History For Beginners: Probate," *Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society*, 3 Jan 2011, <http://www.mlfhs.org.uk/Infobase/Begin-Wills.php>, 4 March 2017.] Mary and her husband Windsor Pearce deeded land from Searcy's original grant to a third party in 1775, prior to Searcy's death; presumably Mary already had received her inheritance, perhaps as part of her marriage to Pearce. [Morgan Jackson, "Windsor Pearce," *The Wallace Family of Moore County, NC*, undated (updated as of 2017), <http://moorecountycastle.com/getperson.php?personID=I03250&tree=Wallace>, 4 March 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Jackson, "Windsor Pearce."



War pension application, dated 13 August 1832 and filed in Chatham County.<sup>7</sup> In February 1777, he enlisted as a volunteer in Capt. John Williams's Granville County Light Horse, which was bivouacked at the Chatham County courthouse. The company was part of a larger force under the command of Col. James Thackston, a Continental Army officer. With a contingent of Chatham County militia, the unit marched east to harry Loyalists forces disrupted after the battle at Moore's Creek Bridge.

Returning to Deep River, Searcy was assigned to raise and command a company of rangers "for the purpose of suppressing the operations of the Tory party who were continuously plundering and pillaging through this section of the country and often butchering the then peaceful inhabitants." After several months, he received a captain's commission from Gen. Richard Caswell, who sent the unit westward to join General Griffith Rutherford's fight against the British-allied Cherokees. But as soon as Searcy and his troops arrived, Rutherford ordered him to return home and resume his efforts against the Tories.

Which he did for some months, until his unit received orders in August of 1780 from John Collier, the colonel of newly-formed Randolph County, to join the Continental Army and confront the British in South Carolina. On the march, however, Searcy developed a fever and became too ill to continue. Given the danger from Tories at home in Randolph County, his friends took him to Granville County to recover. Meanwhile, General Horatio Gates led the army to its destruction at Camden.

Once recovered, Searcy resolved to return home to Deep River and raise a force to

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<sup>7</sup> "Pension Application of William Searcy (Searey) R9342," *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters*, 3 Feb 2011, <http://revwarapps.org/r9342.pdf>, 5 March 2017.

protect the area from the Tories. By the time he reached Randolph County he again had fallen ill, this time with smallpox. He also was forced to live away from his home due to the intensity of Tory activity in the area. Recovering again, he linked up with the Chatham County militia, which marched to Granville Courthouse to join the North Carolina militia under General Thomas Eaton. This force joined General Nathanael Greene's reconstituted Continental Army at Guilford Courthouse.

After participating in the battle at Guilford on 15 March 1781, the militia was discharged. Searcy again tried to make his way to Granville County, but he was captured by a "Royalist" unit commanded by a British officer. Paroled, he would see no more military service. During this period, however, his home was plundered by a Tory force under Col. David Fanning. The raid cost him goods amounting to almost £50 – about \$8,577 in today's dollars.<sup>8</sup>

On 4 April 1781, he received a pay voucher from the State of North Carolina for £1,666 – a very substantial sum – which he later redeemed.<sup>9</sup> The reason for this I.O.U. is not documented, but the date coincides with the period in which the Continental Army moved through the lower Deep River area as Greene made the decision to break off pursuit of Lord Cornwallis's Wilmington-bound army and challenge the British in South Carolina.

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<sup>8</sup> "Cornelous Lathem Senr. To plunder taken from Wm. Searcy, February 1871," Chatham County Court Record, 7 March 1783, Searcy Family File, Randolph Room, Randolph County Public Library, Asheboro, NC., xerographic copy made 3 March 1995 of Randolph County Misc. Records, CR081.928.7, North Carolina State Archives. At the time of this filing, Searcy had observed some of his plundered property in Lathem's possession, which Lathem acknowledged. Value calculated at Nye, Eric W. *Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency*, Department of English, University of Wyoming, <https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm>, 6 March 2017.

<sup>9</sup> North Carolina Revolutionary Pay Vouchers, 1779-1782," database with images, *FamilySearch*, 2017, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2WT-GRC3> 21 March 2017, William Searcy, 04 Apr 1781; citing Hillsborough, Orange, North Carolina, United States, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh. It's possible that because Searcy was a militia captain who had kept a company in the field for some months, this sum was necessary to pay out his soldiers at the end of their service. The time of the voucher also coincides with the end of Searcy's service after his capture and parole following the battle of Guilford Courthouse.



William Jr. stated in his pension application that he had always resided within in two-and-one-half miles of the place he was living when he enlisted – Deep River in Guilford (later Randolph) County. In 1779, he was among the 12 richest men in the county.<sup>10</sup> He married his wife Sarah on 30 May 1779.<sup>11</sup> They had six children: Mary, Peter, Elizabeth, Cary, Aaron and Sarah. At some point after the war, Searcy's residence shifted to the Chatham County side of his property. He appears to have been living with his son Cary in Pittsboro at the time of this death on 20 October 1841, at age 87.<sup>12</sup>

## II. A Note on the Origin of William Searcy

Many entries about William Hargrave Searcy on genealogical websites provide limited information, and tend to state that he died “before 1783” or “about 1777” in Granville County. These assertions appear to be the result of conclusions drawn from a bequest in the will of Searcy's father John, who survived him, of 5 shillings, “To the representatives of my son, William Searcy, deceased.”<sup>13</sup> This reference appears to lead many genealogical researchers to conclude that William Hargrave Searcy resided in Granville County, because that's where his father's will was probated. If this were the case, he could not be the William Searcy who received the Deep River land grant.

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<sup>10</sup> Randolph County, 1779-1979, Asheboro, N.C.: Randolph County Historical Society, 1980, p. 39, citing the 1779 Randolph County tax list.

<sup>11</sup> Morgan Jackson, “William Searcy, 1754-1841,” *The Wallace Family of Moore County, NC*, undated (updated as of 2017) <http://moorecountywallaces.com/getperson.php?personID=I21171&tree=Wallace>, 3 March 2017.

<sup>12</sup> “Carey Seasy [Searcy] in the 1840 United States Federal Census,” *HeritageQuest*, 11997-2017, <http://tinyurl.com/h9pkem4>, 9 March 2017. The Census does not list William Searcy as a head of household, but shows one male 80-89 years old years or older living with Cary Searcy, who was a son of William Searcy Jr.

<sup>13</sup> Audrey Pool, “Re: Searchy [sic] wills of Granville County, NC-other names for SC,” 19 April 2004, <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/SC-Genealogy/2004-04/1082443192>, 9 March 2017. Pool's source is Timothy W. Rackley, *Original Wills for Granville District, NC*. As with William Searcy's one shilling bequest to his daughter Mary, the bequest of a small amount of money often was a way to acknowledge someone who was not due an inheritance.

Stronger evidence, however, indicates that William Hargrave Searcy and the Deep River Searcy are one and the same. Some of the same sites previously mentioned give the name of William Hargrave Searcy's wife as Keziah, which was the name of the Deep River Searcy's wife. Searcy family researcher William Terry Searcy discusses the Granville Searcys and notes, "...one 2nd generation Searcy who relocated to Orange/Randolph Co's, NC."<sup>14</sup> This could only have been William, as records show his brothers Reuben and Bartlett remaining in Granville and becoming active in business and civic affairs, and his brother John II migrating to Rutherford County.<sup>15</sup> Researcher Searcy also records a contemporaneous Cumberland/Johnston County branch of Searcys, including a William Sr. and William Jr., but their activities and timelines do not match those of the Orange/Guilford/Randolph/Chatham Searcys. Further afield, one of Mary Searcy Pearce's grandsons was named Reuben, the name of one of William Searcy Sr.'s brothers.<sup>16</sup>

Further direct connections with the Granville Searcys emerge when examining the Revolutionary War activities of Searcy's son. In his pension application dated August 13, 1832 in Chatham County, William Jr. states that he was born in 1754 in Granville County.<sup>17</sup> It therefore appears that Searcy Sr. did not leave Granville County until closer to the time he received the land grant, or more likely as a result of receiving the grant. William Jr.'s application also indicates strong ties to Granville County: he joined the Granville Light Horse when that unit was stationed at Chatham Courthouse; having fallen ill at a time when Tories were a threat in

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<sup>14</sup> William Terry Searcy, "Searcy Family of Virginia (1695-1785)," *Searcy Family of Early America*, 23 January 2015, <http://www.searcyfea.com/5722/6801.html>, 4 March 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Wallace, "Some SEARCY Gatherings."

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, "Windsor Pearce."

<sup>17</sup> Searcy Pension Application.

southeastern Randolph County, he was taken to Granville County to recover and for his safety; and he was trying to reach Granville after the battle of Guilford Courthouse when he was captured and paroled.

To complicate matters, a William Hargrove Searcy, described as a citizen of Granville County, corroborated the Revolutionary War Service of at least two fellow veterans in 1832 pension applications, Fowler Jones and William Taburn (Tabour), dated August 10 and 11 in Granville.<sup>18</sup> In Jones's application, this Searcy stated that he was a captain in Jones's company of Granville militia and that the applicant had been present in a certain expedition in August 1781. This could not have been the Randolph County William Searcy Jr., however, because William Jr.'s military service ended with his capture shortly after the battle of Guilford Courthouse in March 1781. William Jr. also was under the command of the Randolph County militia at that time. Moreover, William Hargrove Searcy's testimony took place in Granville County just two days before William Jr.'s own pension statement in Chatham County – and the signatures of the two men on the court documents do not match. More likely, this William Hargrove Searcy was the illegitimate son of Elizabeth Searcy – a daughter of John Searcy – and Richard Hargrove. This William was born in 1749, and indentured to Elizabeth's brother Reuben to learn the trade of shoemaking.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Pension application of Fowler Jones R5701," *Southern Campaign Statements*, 5 March 2016, <http://revwarapps.org/r5701.pdf>, 5 March 2017; and "Pension application of William Taburn (Tabour)," *Southern Campaign Statements*, 5 March 2016, <http://revwarapps.org/w18115.pdf>, 8 March 2017.

<sup>19</sup> ["Granville County Bastardy," *Granville Co., North Carolina*, 2004, <http://www.ncgenweb.us/ncgranville/other/bas-bond-searcy.htm>, 6 March 2017]

A preponderance of the evidence suggests that William Searcy Sr. of Deep River was indeed William Hargrave Searcy, son of John and Phoebe Searcy, of Granville County.

*Prepared for the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, 28 March 2017.*

# Edmund Waddell and John Birdsong

*by Ross A. Holt*

Edmund Waddell, who relocated from Chatham County and purchased the Searcy Ford/Ferry property in 1786, operating it as Waddell's ferry beginning in 1802, became a notable landowner and political figure in southeastern Randolph County.

Multiple, but unsourced, accounts suggest that Waddell was born in New Kent County, Va., in 1748; a few others suggest Bladen County, N.C.<sup>1</sup> In 1768, he appears in Northampton County, N.C., where he purchased land along the North Carolina-Virginia border.<sup>2</sup> There, he developed a close association with a nearby property owner, John Birdsong. By 1771, Waddell had sold his Northampton County land and moved with Birdsong to Chatham County. He also had married Birdsong's daughter Lucy. In 1774, Waddell purchased 200 acres from Birdsong on Harland's Creek near what is now Pittsboro.<sup>3</sup> Birdsong served as a captain in the Chatham County militia in 1772, and Waddell served as a "leften't" in his company.<sup>4</sup> Waddell often is credited with Revolutionary War service – a commemorative headstone was placed in the Waddell Memorial Cemetery – but this does not appear to be the case.<sup>5</sup> Military account books, however, show that he provided supplies to the Continental

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Christy McGuire, "One Man's Journey!: Information About Edmund Waddell," *Genealogy.com*, [undated], <http://www.genealogy.com/ftm/m/c/g/Christy-Mcguire-WA/WEBSITE-0001/UHP-1736.htm>, 7 March 2017]. The Daughters of the American Revolution, however, have him as born in Bladen County. "Waddell, Edmund," *DAR Genealogical Research Database*, Nov 2013, [http://services.dar.org/Public/DAR\\_Research/search\\_adb/default.cfm](http://services.dar.org/Public/DAR_Research/search_adb/default.cfm), 7 March 2017.

<sup>2</sup> William Austin Buce, "Edmund Waddill," *Waddell Family File*, Randolph Room, Randolph County Public Library, Asheboro, NC. Buce sites land transactions from various deed books.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Sue Asheby, *Militia Officers of Chatham County in the Revolutionary War and Other County Officials* [ncgenweb], 1998-2010 <http://www.ncgenweb.us/chatham/militia.htm> 7 March 2017. Asheby notes that presence on pre-Revolutionary War militia rolls does not necessarily signify service during the war.

<sup>5</sup> "Waddell, Edmund," *DAR Genealogical Research Database*. It appears that the assumption was made (and propagated) that because Waddell appears on the Chatham County militia rolls in 1772 as a lieutenant, he also served, and served at that rank, during the Revolution. The Daughters of the American Revolution indicate that he furnished provisions and forage, but document no military service.

Army or to militia forces and received vouchers for doing so.<sup>6</sup>

Birdsong and his family were completely committed to the revolutionary cause. Birdsong was named a captain in the Chatham County militia in 1778, and served on the county's delegation to North Carolina's Fifth Provincial Congress, November-December 1776, which adopted the first state Constitution and Bill of Rights.<sup>7</sup> He represented Chatham County in the first North Carolina General Assembly in 1777, and in 1778 succeeded Ambrose Ramsay, the county's militia colonel, as state senator. He was the fourth sheriff of Chatham County, holding office from May 1779-May 1781.<sup>8</sup> By 1781, he had risen in the militia to the rank of first major.<sup>9</sup> On July 16, 1781, he was among 53 officials and militia members taken prisoner by Col. David Fanning's Tory forces during a surprise raid on the Chatham County courthouse, where the militia was holding a general muster for the purpose of trying (and presumably hanging) a number of Loyalists. Fanning paroled most of the captives, but sent 14 he perceived as "violent against the government" to Wilmington as prisoners of war, among them Birdsong, Ramsay and state representative John Luttrell.<sup>10</sup> Birdsong and the others were imprisoned in Wilmington and later Charleston, some of this time spent on a prison ship.<sup>11</sup>

Two of Birdsong's sons, John and Battle (known as Batt), also served in the militia. John fought in multiple engagements against Fanning, including Lindley's Mill, and also served as a messenger for Batt, who was a captain and deputy quartermaster at Williamsburg in Granville County.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Henrietta Cragon, "Edmund and Lucy Waddell," *Waddell Family File*, Randolph Room, Randolph County Public Library, Asheboro, NC, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> *Chatham County, 1771-1971*, Doris Goerch Horton and Neil Craig Strowd and Wade Hadley, eds., Siler City, N.C.: Collins and Aikman Corporation, 1971[?], p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> "Sheriff John Birdsong," *Chatham County North Carolina* [County government/Sheriff's Office], [undated] <http://www.chathamnc.org/government/departments-programs/sheriff-s-office/history-of-the-chatham-county-sheriff-s-office/sheriff-john-birdsong>, 3/7/2017.

<sup>9</sup> "Pension Application of John Birdsong R855," *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters*, 31 October 2014, <http://revwarapps.org/r855.pdf>, 8 March 2017.

<sup>10</sup> *Chatham County*, referencing Fanning's narrative, pp.27-28.

<sup>11</sup> Birdsong pension application.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Other than the army account books, mention of Waddell during the war is scant. In 1778, the General Assembly passed a bill introduced by Birdsong to establish a town near Chatham Courthouse. Waddell was one of six commissioners designated in the legislation to “lay off and establish” the town on 200 acres owned by Ambrose George, but the land was never purchased and the town, which would become Pittsboro, was not developed until 1787 – after a second failed attempt in 1785.<sup>13</sup>

By the time Pittsboro was chartered, however, both Waddell and Birdsong had moved on – and separated. By August 1786, when he sold his Chatham County property to another son-in-law, Birdsong had joined his sons in Union County, South Carolina.<sup>14</sup> He died there in 1790 at age 57, with a 400 acre estate, which he operated with significant slave labor.<sup>15</sup>

Waddell, meanwhile, had relocated to Randolph County, where he purchased the 200-acre Searcy Ford/Ferry property on 11 March 1786 from William Argo and Kerenhappuch Searcy Argo.<sup>16</sup> He lived there until he passed away in 1815. He became active in politics, representing Randolph County in the N.C. House in 1787 and 1788, and in the N.C. Senate from 1793-1798.<sup>17</sup> In the 1787 session, the legislature began consideration of the U.S. Constitution, and authorized a ratification convention. The debate in North Carolina mirrored the national debate: Federalists supported a strong central government; Anti-Federalists argued for a weaker central government and more power at the state

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<sup>13</sup> *Chatham County* p. 201 Wadell is referred to as Edward in the legislation, but there does not appear to have been an Edward Waddell who was prominent in Chatham County at the time.

<sup>14</sup> Buice. Buice refers to the “opening up of Indian lands” as the reason for the relocation to South Carolina of Birdsong’s sons.

<sup>15</sup> “Pkg. 16 Estate of John Birdsong,” *Full text of “Union County, South Carolina, court records, 1777-1819*, [undated], [https://archive.org/stream/unioncountysouth00sout/unioncountysouth00sout\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/unioncountysouth00sout/unioncountysouth00sout_djvu.txt), 8 March 2017. Multiple unsourced genealogy sites give Birdsong’s birthdate at 1733.

<sup>16</sup> Morgan Jackson, “William Argo,” *The Wallace Family of Moore County, N.C.*, undated (updated as of 2017) <http://moorecountycastle.com/getperson.php?personID=I35434&tree=Wallace>, 4 March 2017. Cites Deed Book 1, Randolph County, NC, p.107.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



level. Anti-Federalists won overwhelming victories in elections for convention delegates.<sup>18</sup> The North Carolina Constitutional Convention took place from July 21-August 4, 1788, with Waddell, Zebedee Wood and William Bowdon representing Randolph County.<sup>19</sup> The convention voted to delay ratification of the Constitution until it could be amended to include a declaration of rights and to resolve other matters; Waddell and Wood voted against ratification (Bowdon appears not to have voted on the question).<sup>20</sup>

Waddell received a license to operate his ferry in 1802.<sup>21</sup> He became very prosperous; in his will, he referred to his property as a plantation, and he owned at least seven slaves.<sup>22</sup> Randolph County genealogist Barbara Newsom Grigg in 1978 described the site of his home: "His Plantation or Manor House was located on the south side of the river, on a beautiful knoll that spread into broad acres of fertile fields, now overgrown with field pines. The house has now fallen in, but enough remains to show that it was a well built two story home, and large for its day. It was possibly used as an Inn, since he would have been about a day's journey from the town of Pittsboro, the County seat of Chatham County, and on the main road from Hillsborough to South Carolina...."<sup>23</sup>

Waddell and his wife Lucy had 10 children: Sarah (Sally), William, Mary, John, Nancy, Lydia, Lucy, Thomas, Matthew and Edmund Jr.<sup>24</sup>

*Prepared for the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, 28 March 2017.*

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<sup>18</sup> Powell, William S., *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989, pp. 225.

<sup>19</sup> "Minutes of the North Carolina Constitutional Convention at Hillsborough," Documenting the American South: Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, 2004, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr22-0001>, 7 March 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Newsome Grigg, "Edmond Waddill," *The Genealogical Journal by the Randolph County Genealogical Society of the Randolph County Historical Society, North Carolina*, Vol. II No. 3, Spring 1978, p.3.

<sup>22</sup> Morgan Jackson, "William Searcy, 1723-1776," *The Wallace Family of Moore County, NC*, undated (updated as of 2017), <http://moorecountycastle.com/getperson.php?personID=106049&tree=Wallace>, 4 March 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Grigg, "Edmond Waddill," p.3.

<sup>24</sup> "Edmond Waddell," *Wallace Family*.

## Windsor Pearce

*by Ross A. Holt*

Although a modern-day commemorative marker in the Waddell cemetery identifies Windsor Pearce as a “foot soldier,” Pearce was far more than that.<sup>1</sup> He was a prominent businessman and civic leader in both Orange and Randolph counties, and a close associate of the William Searcy family, into which he would marry.

Born about (probably before) 1740, Pearce in 1755 received a land grant of a sizable tract south of Little River in Johnston County, selling 200 acres of this in 1757.<sup>2</sup> In 1764, he was among 12 Orange County officials delegated to plot a road from the Rowan County line to Cross Creek (later Fayetteville). The next year, he was appointed constable in Orange County. At that time, Orange County encompassed the area later to become Guilford and Randolph counties. By 1772, Pearce was witnessing deed transactions in the newly-created Guilford County, and as a witness to deeds in 1773 he was noted as neighbor to property owners on Deep River. He had married Mary Searcy by February by 1775, as evidenced by joint ownership of property south of Deep River deeded to a third party from William Searcy's original land grant.<sup>3</sup> William Searcy, who operated a ford on the Deep River in the southeastern part of Randolph County, was Mary's father.<sup>4</sup> In 1784, Pearce received a land grant of 100 acres along Jeries Creek south of

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<sup>1</sup> Morgan Jackson, “Windsor Pearce,” *The Wallace Family of Moore County, NC*, undated (updated as of 2017), <http://moorecountywallaces.com/getperson.php?personID=I03250&tree=Wallace>, 4 March 2017. Enough information, including citations of contemporary public records, exists here to create a fairly complete sketch of Pearce's life.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. The Wallace Family site and others give Pearce's birthdate as “about 1740,” but that would have put him at age 15 when he received the land grant. His actual birthdate is likely earlier.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. A Guilford County deed dated 14 February 1775 shows Windsor and Mary Pearce turning over part of the land granted to William Searcy.

<sup>4</sup> Morgan Jackson, “William Searcy, 1723-1776,” *The Wallace Family of Moore County, NC*, undated (updated as of 2017), <http://moorecountywallaces.com/getperson.php?personID=I03256&tree=Wallace>, 4 March 2017

Deep River.<sup>5</sup>

Pearce indeed served as a foot soldier in Capt. Charles Polk's company of North Carolina militia from March to July 1776; this Mecklenburg County outfit saw service in the eastern part of the state.<sup>6</sup> Pearce also appears to have been enrolled for a six-month stint in the Chatham County Militia as a substitute for Randolph County resident and draftee James Gardner.<sup>7</sup> Gardner attested, "That he [Gardner] was drafted some time after the commencement of the Revolutionary War but in what year he does not remember, for the term of six months.... He employed one Winsor Pearce as his substitute, who entered the service under one Colonel Luttrell or Littrell at a place called Luttrell's barracks in Chatham County, N.C., and served out his time." Luttrell was a prominent Chatham County militia leader, Continental officer and state legislator who was killed at the battle of Lindley's Mill.<sup>8</sup>

The full extent of Pearce's service otherwise is not known, but a 1779 Randolph County court document identified him as "Capt. Windsor Pearce."<sup>9</sup> On 25 November 1776, North Carolina's Provincial Congress read a petition from Pearce "complaining of sundry violence done

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<sup>5</sup> Jackson, "Windsor Pearce."

<sup>6</sup> *Roster of Soldiers from North Carolina in the American Revolution with an Appendix Containing a Collection of Miscellaneous Records*, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1967 (reprint of North Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution edition, 1932), pp. 489-491 and 494. Charles Polk was the brother of Gen. Thomas Polk, who served in the Continental Army and in the critical role of commissary for the Continental army and the state during Gen. Nathanael Greene's campaign in North Carolina. ["Thomas Polk," Wikipedia, 4 November 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Polk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Polk), 9 March 2017.] Charles Polk also was the uncle of President James K. Polk. ["Pension Application of Charles Polk W5571, *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters*, 12 August 2009, <http://revwarapps.org/w5571.pdf>, 9 March 2017.]

<sup>7</sup> "Pension application of James Gardner R3908," *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters*, 30 October 2013, <http://revwarapps.org/r3908.pdf>, 10 March 2017. A person drafted for service in the North Carolina Militia could avoid service by hiring a substitute or paying a hefty £10 fine. [E. Milton Wheeler, "Development and Organization of the North Carolina Militia," *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 51 no. 3 (July 1964), p. 320.]

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, J.D., "John Luttrell," *The American Revolution in North Carolina*, 2013, [http://www.carolana.com/NC/Revolution/patriot\\_leaders\\_nc\\_john\\_luttrell.html](http://www.carolana.com/NC/Revolution/patriot_leaders_nc_john_luttrell.html), 10 March 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Jackson, "Windsor Pearce." As a Justice of the Peace in newly-formed Randolph County, Pearce likely would have served as a captain responsible for a militia district, perhaps in the southeastern section of the county.

him by David Jackson,” and referred the petition to the Committee of Inquiry.<sup>10</sup> Jackson was a Loyalist captain notorious for raids in Guilford (which then incorporated Randolph) and Chatham counties in 1776.<sup>11</sup> During the December 1781 campaign of Col. Elijah Isaacs in southeastern Randolph County against Col. David Fanning’s Tory forces, Jackson was caught and hanged “without ceremony” for his previous depredations.<sup>12</sup> When Fanning received peace overtures from revolutionary leaders in early 1782, Pearce’s home became neutral ground for exchanges of letters and a visit by Fanning himself, anticipating negotiations.<sup>13</sup> The peace initiative failed, however, when Fanning suspected treachery.

In early 1779, the North Carolina General Assembly chartered Randolph County. On March 8, when the first county government assembled, Pearce took the oath of office as a Justice of the Peace.<sup>14</sup> In 1785, presumably in his capacity as a local official, he signed a petition asking the legislature to authorize construction of a county courthouse in the center of the county – an initiative that eventually would result in relocation of the Randolph County seat from Johnstonville to what would become Asheborough.

Pearce continued to be involved in land transactions for the remainder of his life.<sup>15</sup> On 11 March, 1786, he was witness as William Argo and Kerenhappuch Searcy Argo deeded to

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<sup>10</sup> North Carolina, *State Records of North Carolina*, Vol. 10, p. 936, Nash Brothers Printers, 1890, Google Books, <http://tinyurl.com/heh6y2m>, 9 March 2017. The Committee of Inquiry was established by the Third Provincial Congress to determine how to deal with individual Loyalists. [Robert O. DeMond, *Loyalists in North Carolina During the Revolution*, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979, pp. 84-85.]

<sup>11</sup> DeMond, pp. 102-103.

<sup>12</sup> Fanning, David, *The Narrative of Colonel David Fanning*, Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1973, p. 40. Jackson was captured at Moore’s Creek Bridge on 24 February 1776 and jailed in Halifax, but escaped. [Russell, David Lee, *The American Revolution in the Southern Colonies*, Jefferson, N.C., 2000, p. 83, Google Books, <http://tinyurl.com/zmmryxl>, 9 March 2017.]

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-47.

<sup>14</sup> *Randolph County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions Minutes, March 1779-September 1782 with Index*, [no publication information] Randolph Room, Randolph County Public Library, Asheboro, N.C. [p. 1]. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randolph\\_County,\\_North\\_Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randolph_County,_North_Carolina), 5 March 2017; Jackson, “Windsor Pearce.”

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, “Windsor Pearce.”

Edmund Waddell 200 acres north of Deep River – the Searcy ford/ferry property.

Windsor and Mary Searcy Pearce had five children: daughters Pherabee, Olive, Mary (Molly) and Keziah, and son William. Pearce died in 1823; he bequeathed to daughters Olive and Keziah land totaling 350 acres.<sup>16</sup>

*Prepared for the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, 28 March 2017.*

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<sup>16</sup> "1823 Will, Randolph County, NC – Will of Windsor Pearce," Jackson, Windsor Pearce, <http://moorecountycastle.com/showmedia.php?mediaID=1570&medialinkID=4961>, 11 March 2017.







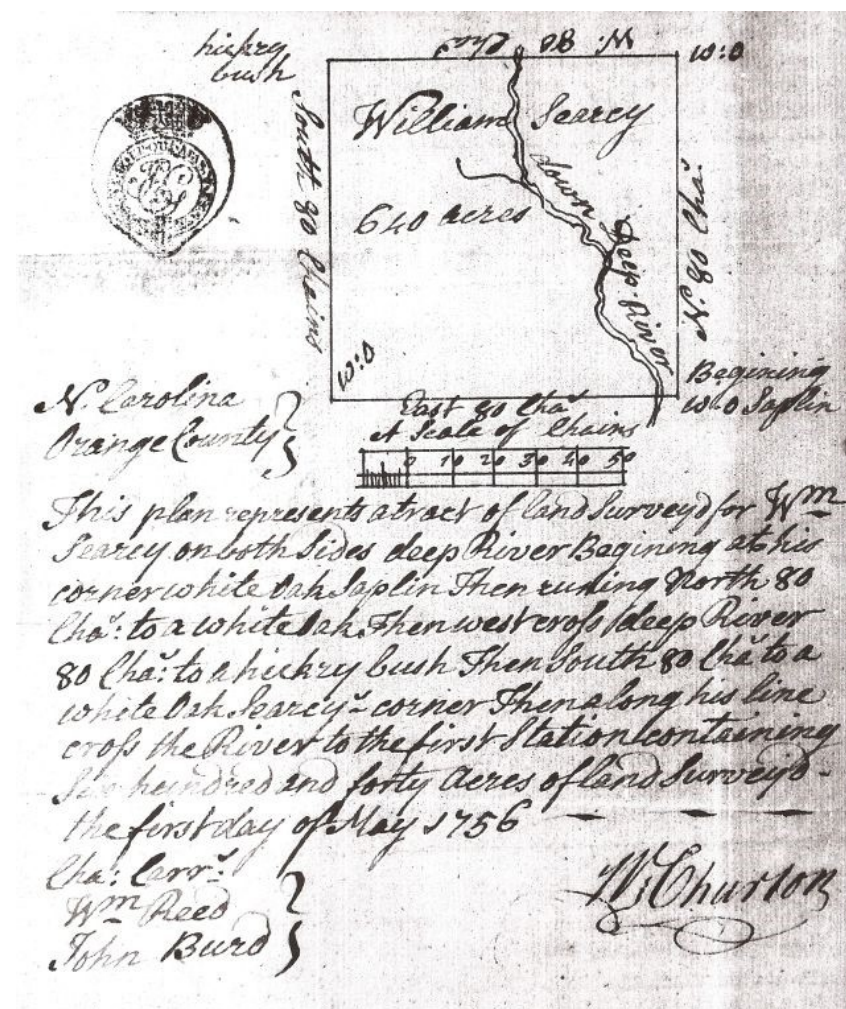
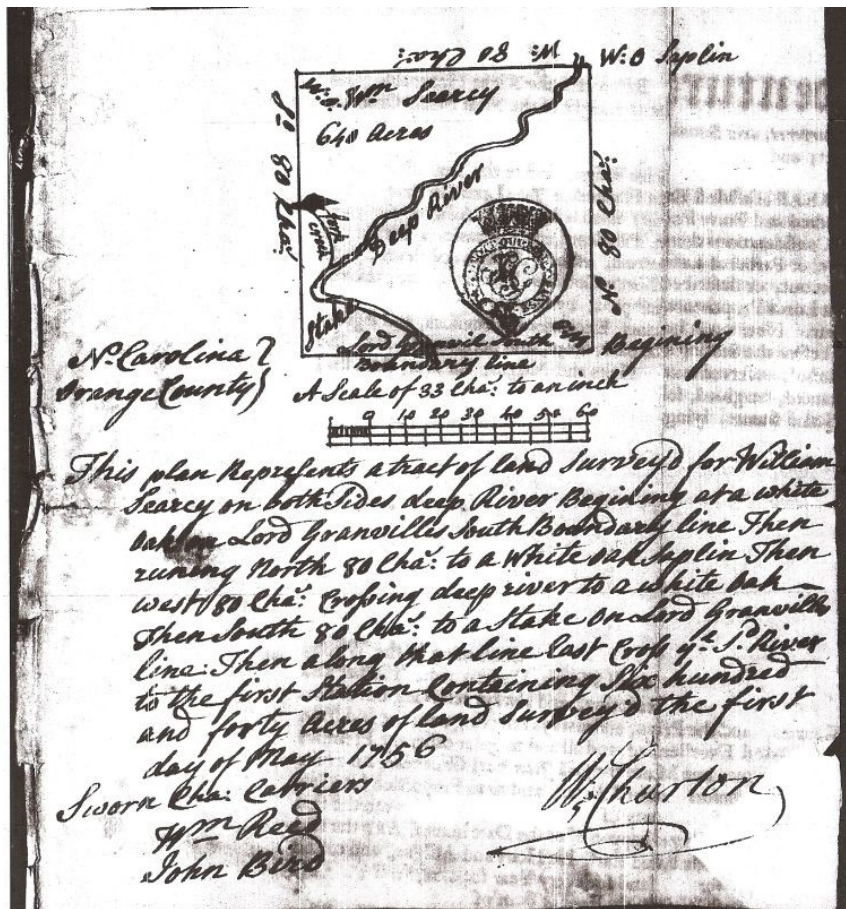


***View of road to Waddell Memorial Chapel and cemetery, and to ford/ferry site (indicated in red). The chapel is in the cleared area immediately east of the ford/ferry.***



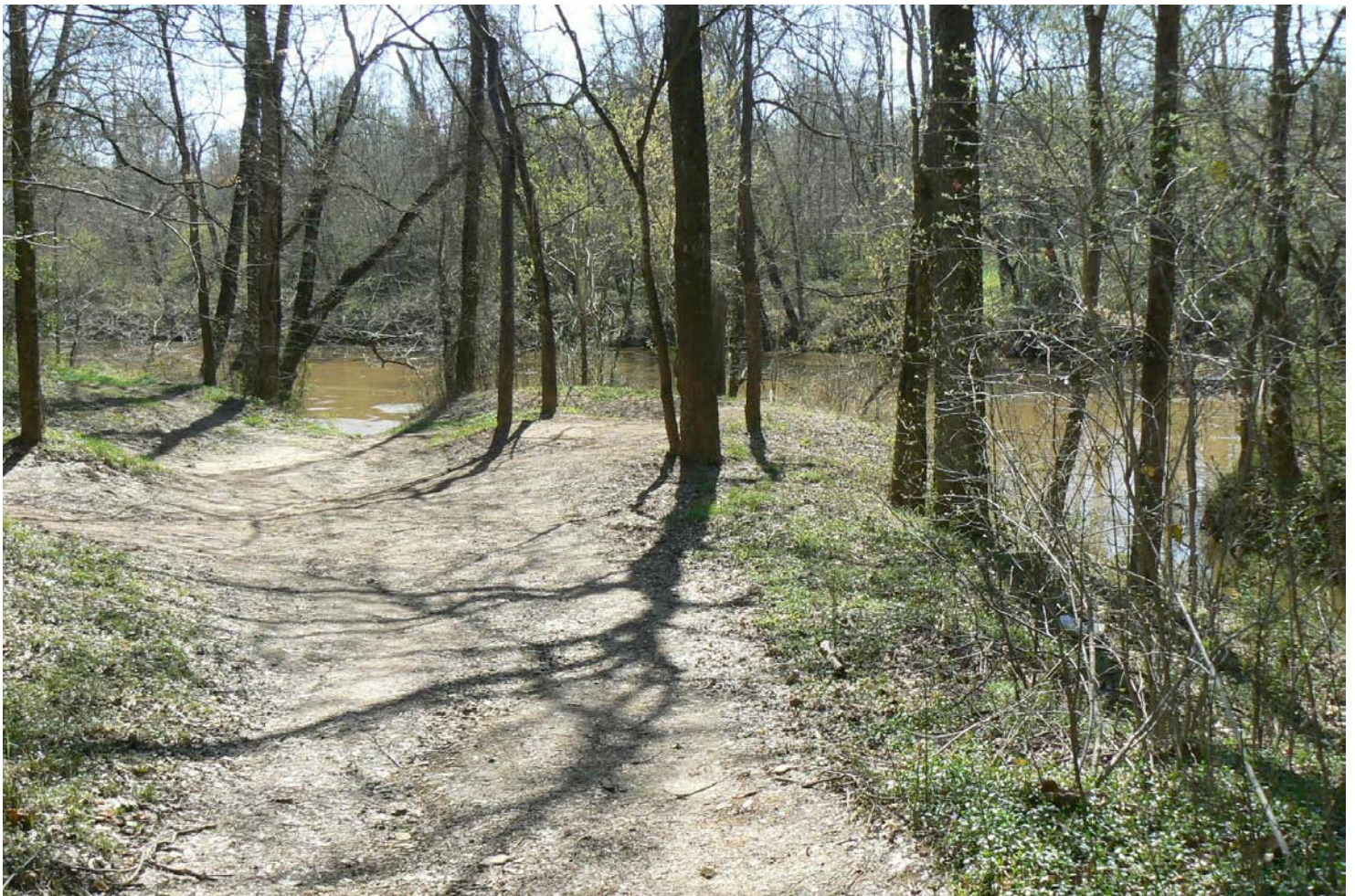
***Detail view of the ford/ferry and chapel/cemetery sites. The western landing has not been located.***





Surveys for the two land grants that comprised William Searcy's acreage on either side of the Deep River (source: "William Searcy, 1723-1776," The Wallace Family of Moore County, [www.tinyurl.com/srcy1](http://www.tinyurl.com/srcy1) and [www.tinyurl.com/srcy2](http://www.tinyurl.com/srcy2).)





***Road to Deep River at Searcy's Ford/Ferry and Waddell's Ferry at ford/ferry site.***



***Road through the woods to ford/ferry site.***





***The approach to the ford/ferry viewed from the landing.***



***Another view of the approach.***





*Ferry hook embedded in an embankment at the landing (from The Heritage of Randolph County, vol. 1, 1993, p. 43). The ferry hook was not found on a more recent visit to the site.*





***Deep River at the ford/ferry site, the width of the river clearly demonstrating the need for a crossing point.***



***The span of Deep River from the eastern bank to the western bank.***





***Waddell Cemetery Markers memorializing Edmund Waddell, Windsor Pierce and William Searcy as veterans of the Revolutionary War. The Searcy memorialized here is the son of the William Searcy who established the ford/ferry. Waddell may not have served; an pre-war stint in the Chatham County militia may have been misinterpreted as service during the Revolution. The markers do not necessarily denote grave sites; it is known that Waddell and Pierce are buried in the cemetery and assumed that Searcy is buried there.***

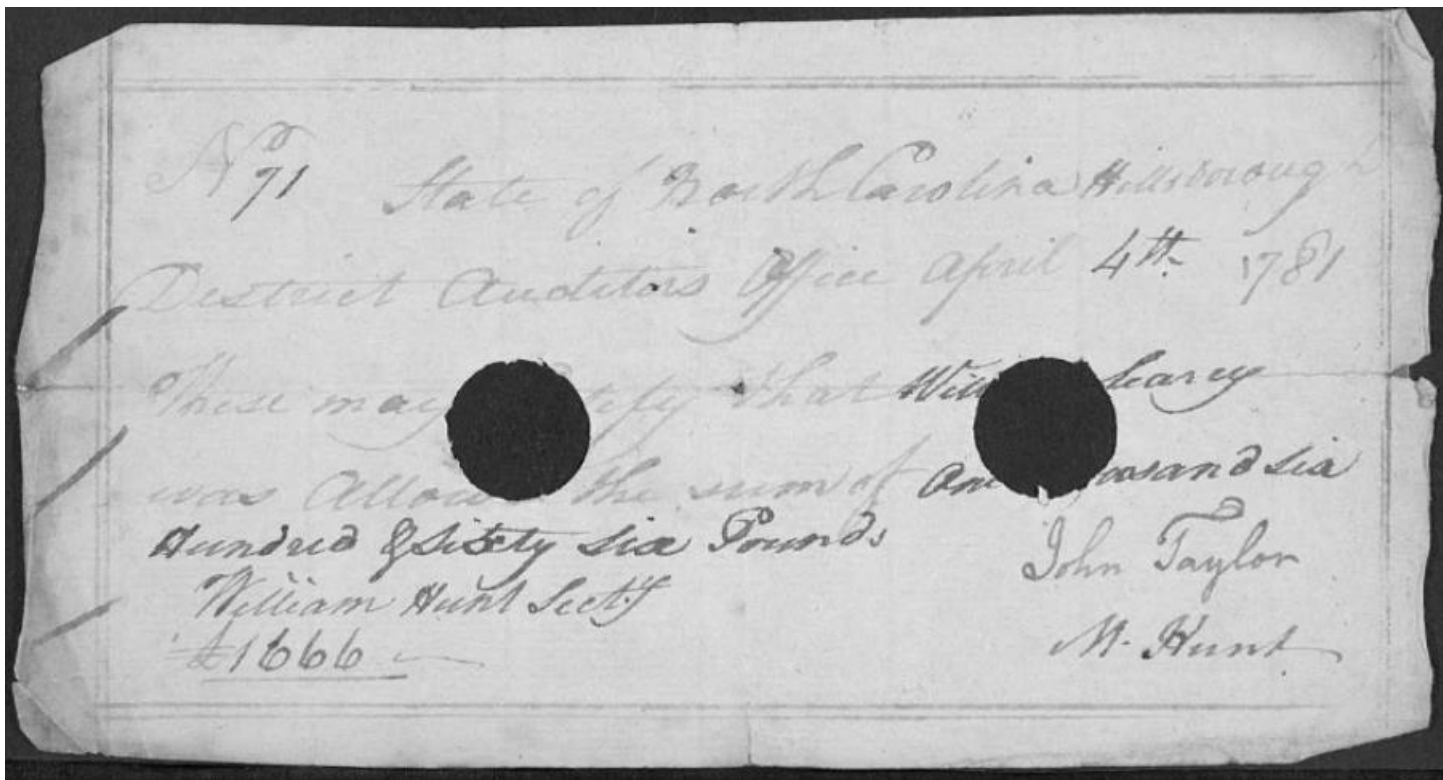


***Waddell Cemetery***



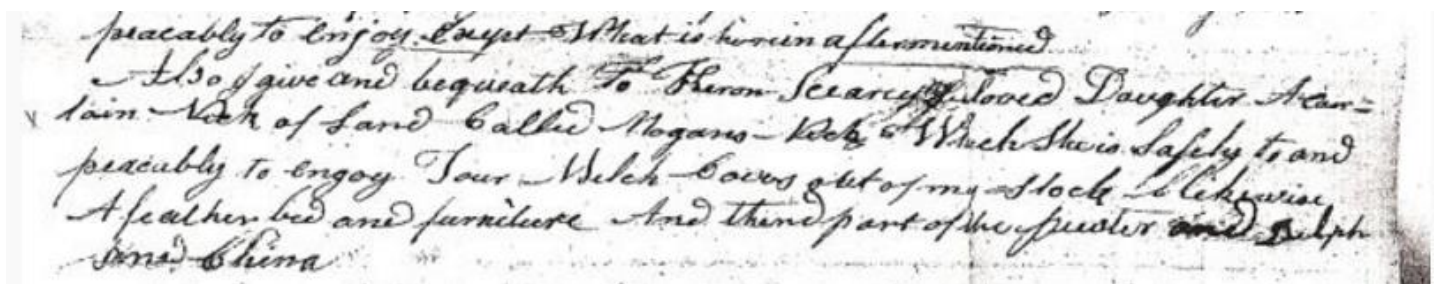
***Waddell Memorial Chapel***





**A payment voucher from the State of North Carolina to William Searcy [Jr.] dated 4 April 1781, for £1,666 — a very substantial sum. The date corresponds with the period in which the Continental Army under General Nathanael Greene crossed the Deep River at Searcy's Ford on its march to South Carolina.**

Source: "North Carolina Revolutionary Pay Vouchers, 1779-1782," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q2WT-GRC3> : accessed 20 March 2017), William Searcy, 04 Apr 1781; citing Hillsborough, Orange, North Carolina, United States, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.



**Section of William Searcy Sr.'s will bequeathing the presumed ford/ferry property to daughter Keron.**

Source: "William Searcy, 1723-1776," The Wallace Family of Moore County, <http://tinyurl.com/zmcgergo>





*Marker at near the chapel describing the ford and ferry.*