

Two Chatham County Tories met very different fates

Dr. John Pyle was a native of Chatham whose sympathy was with the Regulators when he and his son fought the British at the battle at Moore's Creek bridge. He was taken prisoner but was subsequently returned to Chatham County. During December of 1776 he took an oath of allegiance to the provincial government and gave bond before the provincial congress.

When Lord Cornwallis called loyalists to arms in 1781 Dr. Pyle forgot his oath to the provincials and raised a force of several hundred Tories between Haw and Deep River from an area covering both Chatham and Orange counties. A member of Cornwallis' army, Col. Tarleton, used his troops to protect Pyle's force from the local Whig's efforts to suppress the Tory sympathizers. Two young men in Pyle's command encountered Patriot Militia Leader, Col. Henry Lee, and mistook him for Tarleton. In the resulting confusion about 90 of Pyle's men were killed and almost all the survivors were wounded.

In the autumn of 1781 Pyle and his son John surrendered to a revolutionary militia officer. In spite of his opposition to the Revolution, Pyle used his medical skill to treat wounded

revolutionary militia on at least three occasions. Dr. Pyle was tried for treason in November 1782 but perhaps because of his medical treatment of wounded American militia, was found innocent. He spent the rest of his life in Chatham County.

Another Tory sympathizer with Chatham County connections was Connor Dowd, an Irishman with extensive land holdings in Chatham. Early on he was a peddler until he married Mary Overton Shields, a woman who owned 500 acres. He was illiterate but nevertheless became a wealthy merchant and planter in Cumberland County. Dowd owned a luxurious home, a tannery, a distillery, a tavern and a couple of mills.

Chatham's Historical Heritage

By Fred J. Vatter, Jr.



Between 1774 and 1777 Dow bought some 450 acres on the Deep River and he built a store, a grist mill, and a ferry serving the main road between Hillsboro and Cross Creek. He supplied the loyalists and was captured after the battle at Moore's Creek bridge. Dowd was freed on 1,000 pounds bail. He was ordered to sell his salt supplies of 110 bushels to the revolutionaries but he absolutely refused.

Dowd reportedly raised a force of about 40 mounted men to support Cornwallis, who left the area before they could join him. They fought at Hillsboro when Governor Burke was captured and 30 of them died in 1783, including Dowd's son, at the battle of Lindley's Mill. Thereafter, Dowd fled to Wilmington and then to Ireland. He also filed a claim in London for 13,500 pounds sterling for his losses when his estate was confiscated. It is said that he nevertheless left a considerable sum of money and numerous descendants in Chatham County.

Fred J. Vatter is Past President of Chatham County Historical Association and a Board Member.

Remarks at the opening of the Shakori Hills Grassroots Music Festival

Welcome to Shakori! Welcome to the Central Piedmont of North Carolina. We stand here in the Terrell's Creek watershed of the Haw River Valley of the Upper Cape Fear basin of the Atlantic Ocean. Let us sing a love song together here, a hymn of particularity, a nature song for every wind and leaf and rich wild birdcall.

Ancestors and spirits, we welcome you. Come and sit with us in this circle of gathering.

And we make a welcome to our descendants, our children and our children's children and beyond, for we are all beads in the great chain of life and the ones who come after us are looking on.

Now let us mark the day and call into this circle of community and spirit the whole of creation around us, the earth that sustains us, the stars above and the creatures of the field and wood, those under our feet and above our heads and into every unseen corner. We welcome you.

This is a time of great change. Uranus is still squared with Pluto, engaged in a conflict between the structures of the past and the pull of the new. Our emotions ride the

wind like seedlings in a storm, looking for rich ground in the muddle between reality and hope.

Tomorrow, the waxing half-moon of Capricorn will rise near midnight. The sun is in Libra, representing harmony and balance. She will rise tonight ahead of Scorpio and Sagittarius.

In the southern sky Castor and Pollux will blaze on the horizon with Orion. Bright Aldebaran, the eye of Taurus, is high overhead and the Pliedes shines like a jewel necklace, the constellation Cherokee call the 7 wandering children.

We are in a powerful changing season but field asters and groundsel trees are blooming and this is the mating season of harvestmen, known as daddy long-legs, who pulsate in masses to discourage predators. In camps tonight you'll hear the last calls of snowy tree crickets and katydids and cicadas. Ladybugs, hawks and hummingbirds are migrating south. Monarchs are on the wing to Michoacan, following ancient olfactory routes and gathering on grandmother trees a thousand generations old.

The weather is still warm but we are near to hunker-down

time, the hunter's moon. Beavers are stockpiling sweet gum branches, deer, squirrel and wild turkey are competing for acorn drops and possums and raccoons are making their last attack on ripe persimmon.

Hickories are in their glory time and the incandescent yellow leaves of sassafras are just beginning to show. Tupelo is in its color, our black gum swamp tree, longest living non-clonal flowering plant in eastern America. Just as we say goodbye to some migrants we say hello to others; on the winds of this October nor'easter cold front will arrive juncos, white-throated sparrows, winter wrens and myrtle warblers.

What a time it is! What an amazing day! The world is turning and we are gratefully gathered to celebrate music and community. May all of nature share in your joy, and may you enter together into the arms of sleep tonight blessed and protected and filled with wonder.

Let the people say "Aho!"

— Gary Phillips

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