

# **History of Alamance County**

**1670-1945**

**Alamance County Architectural Survey Update**

**By Michele Vacca and Benjamin Briggs**

## Historic Context

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## **Alamance County Survey Update**

### **History of Alamance County: Historic Context**

#### **Introduction**

Alamance County is located in north central Piedmont North Carolina. Covering 439 square miles, the county is bounded on the north by Caswell County, on the east by Orange County, on the south by Chatham County, and on the west by Guilford and Randolph counties. Rectangular in form, Alamance County stretches nearly fifteen miles east to west and nearly 30 miles north to south. The topography of Alamance County features rolling metamorphic hills, meandering creeks, and fertile bottomlands. The county's most prominent natural feature, the Haw River, enters the county from Guilford County in the northwest and exits into Chatham County in the southeast. Most of the county's tributaries flow into the Haw River, with the exception of those in the extreme northeastern corner.

## **Part I: Early History and Settlement (1670-1775)**

### **Pre-History and European Exploration**

Native peoples lived in what would become Alamance County thousands of years before the European traders and settlers migrated there. When Europeans arrived, their first reports described these indigenous groups and their landscapes. Notable was German explorer Dr. John Lederer who led an expedition through Haw's Old Fields in 1670-1673. In documenting the land south of the Virginia colony for the Virginia governor, Lederer reported:

"the fourteenth of June, persuing a South southwest course, sometimes by a beaten path and sometimes over hills and rocks, I was forc'd to take up my quarters in the woods the ways were such, and obliged me to go so far about that I reached Oenock until the fifteenth. The country here, by the industry of these Indians, is very open and clear of woods. Their town is built around a field, where in their Sports they exercise with so much labour and violence, and in so great numbers, that I have seen the ground wet with the sweat that dropped from their bodies; their chief recreation is slinging of stones. They are of mean stature and courage, covetous and thievish, industrious to earn a peny, and therefore hire themselves out to their neighbors, who employ them as Carryers or Porters. They plant an abundance of Grain, reap three crops in a summer. These and the mountain Indians build not their houses of bark, but of Watling and Plaister (Lederer 1672:14)."

Lederer continued his vivid observations:

"In Summer the heat of the weather makes them chuse to lie abroad in the night under thin arbors of wild Palm. Some houses they have of Reed and Bark; they build them generally round: To each house belongs a hovel made like an oven, where they lay up their Corn and Mast to keep it dry. They parch their Nuts and Acorns over the fire to take away their rank Oyliness, which afterwards pressed, yield a milky liquor, and the acorns an Amber colour'd Oyl. In these mingled together, they dip their Cakes at great entertainments, and so serve them to their guests as an extraordinary dainty. Their Government is Democratick; and the Sentence of their old men are received as Laws or rather Oracles, by them (Lederer 1672:14)."

Lederer, referencing other settlements in the vicinity of today's Alamance County, wrote that "fourteen miles West Southwest of the Oenocks dwell the Shackory Indians upon a rich Soyl, and yet abounding in antimony, of which they shewed me considerable quantities. Finding them agree with the Oenocks in Customs and Manners, I made no stay here, but passing thorow [sic] their town (Lederer 1672:14)."

Indigenous peoples in the region, living close to the land, had settled in small agrarian villages. Archaeologists have documented several possible Native American villages in Alamance County along the Haw River, at Quaker Creek northeast of the town of Haw River, along Meadow Creek between Swepsonville and Saxapahaw, and on Stinking Quarters Creek, southwest of Bellemont. Little remains of these early groups, displaced by the advancing European population, except trading paths, archaeological artifacts, and local place names (Whitaker 1949:11).

Lederer's journeys and later publication of his descriptions by the Lords Proprietors were an important impetus for attracting traders to the Carolinas who established trade paths into the interior. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, trading caravans of 100 or so pack horses each traversed the main Trading Paths to and from Virginia (Troxler and Vincent 1999:32). This trade from Virginia continued until the 1730s when traders from Charles Town [South Carolina] began to siphon off the Virginians' commerce.

Thirty years after Lederer's writings were published, attention was again drawn to the Carolinas by the English explorer John Lawson. Lawson, traveling north from Charles Town up the Santee and Wateree Rivers, described the Sissipahau Indians (perhaps tied to the Shackory mentioned above) during his 1701 trek through the

Carolinas. Lawson, passing through present day Alamance and crossing the Hau [Haw] River, marveled over the outstanding quality of the rich soil, the superior timber, and the abundant building stone in the region (Whitaker 1949:6).

During the early 18<sup>th</sup> century through promotion by Colonel William Byrd of Virginia, settlers were attracted to the Carolinas region by the promise of rich and fertile soil. Byrd surveyed the boundary between his own state and North Carolina in 1728. He made an enthusiastic account of the land that is today Alamance County, observing:

“between Eno and Saxapahaw Rivers are the Haws Old Fields, which have the reputation of containing the most fertile high land in this part of the World, lying in a Body of about 50,000 acres . . . Some Mountains overlook this Rich Spot of Land, from whence all the soil washes down into the Plane, and is the cause of its exceeding fertility. Not far from thence the Path crosses ARAMANCHY River, a branch of the Saxapahaw . . .(Whitaker 1949:12).”

### **Colonial History: European Settlement**

After the Tuscarora Indian Wars (1711-1713) and the English Crown’s purchase of the Lords Proprietors’ Colony, settlers flowed into the Carolina interior. As the population grew, administrative government was established. Counties were formed and court systems were set up. The Colonial Assembly was set up with two legislative houses. The Upper House was composed of the Governor and his appointed Council and the lower house consisted of representatives from newly established counties. Because the majority of settlement early on was in the east and there were more eastern counties, the east controlled most of the policy-making decisions. This eastern bias later became a major factor in discontent within the colony.

Settlement, begun in the early 1700s, was characterized by large land grants to influential commissioners. One commissioner, Edward Mosely, claimed 10,000 acres in

the fertile Haw's Old Fields region. Mosely patented this land from the Earl of Granville. Granville is said to have won the property as payment on a gambling debt owed by a former governor of North Carolina, Lord Burrington. A deed of the period states:

“Between George Burrington, late Governor of North Carolina, but now residing in the Parish of St. Margaret, Westminster county, Middlesex, and Sam'l Strudwick of Mortimer street, in the Parish of St. Marylborn, in said County Middlesex, and son of Edmund Strudwick. Consideration . . . ten thousand acres. Haw Old Fields, northwest Cape Fear . . . Being a part of a tract of land patented by Edward Mosely, Nov. 1718 . . . (Whitaker 1949:22)”

The period of large Carolina land grants was rife with land speculation especially by representatives of absentee English landholders. As more settlers streamed into the region from areas north and east, problems with land transactions emerged. The dishonest and abusive manner in which the Granville lands were commonly administered led to grievances. Granville viewed the land as a source of income, and he hired men to manage the lands. These men in turn handed the duties over to others. Although the Granville land machine was not a government agency, its loose structure and inattention to accounting were consistent with the 18<sup>th</sup> century practices of the day (Troxler and Vincent 1999:59). Land taxes were kept low by giving officials opportunities to make money from their offices instead of paying them salaries. The Colonial Assembly set up a fee table for the tax amounts that could be collected. The problem in the Carolina backcountry was that officials who collected the taxes and lawyers who conducted legal business ignored the fee table and collected the amounts they wanted.

In 1752, Orange County was formed in the Carolina backcountry. Much later (1849), Alamance County would bud off from western Orange County. The original Orange County area later was divided into twelve smaller counties. When Orange



County was formed, court dates were established, vestrymen for the Church of England selected, the Governor appointed justices of the peace, and the site for a courthouse was chosen. The first courthouse was located two miles from the Pine Ford on the east side of the Haw River. The Governor ordered that a jail and stocks also be constructed.

Marmaduke Kimbrough was granted a license to run an ordinary [tavern] at his home at the site as well as the authority to build the courthouse, jail, and stocks. In 1753, because of the increased settlement along the Yadkin and Catawba Rivers to the south, Rowan County was formed from a portion of southern Orange County. Then in 1754 in a private bill, the legislature directed a committee of justices to select a new courthouse site further to the east and to build a new courthouse on the Eno River. The court town later became Hillsborough.

As settlement grew, trade and commerce increased as well. The Moravian Bishop Spangenberg, who toured the region in 1752, mentioned two taverns in the Haw River section, the “Dutchman’s” at Alamance, and “Mepern’s” near the present town of Mebane. In 1763, Hugh Smith was granted a license to operate an ordinary on Stinking Quarters Creek, and Robert Hunter was permitted to open a tavern at his dwelling house on the Haw River. Situated at critical transportation junctures, these establishments served local citizens as well as travelers and formed the nuclei of potential communities.

In Orange and Rowan Counties as in the rest of the colony, the county courts, the district courts, and the Colonial Assembly regulated county officials. The Lower House of the legislature and the Justices of the Peace were powerful in the political arena. They appointed other officials. The Justices of the Peace were appointed by the governor from names submitted by members of the Lower House who also determined the number of

Justices that a county would have. Other county officials were appointed by recommendations of the Justices and the legislature—coroners, registers, clerks, and sheriffs. Sheriffs were very powerful and justices could determine who became sheriffs. Sheriffs were empowered to collect taxes; sometimes taking grain or cattle forcefully for taxes due since currency was scarce. Justices of the Peace also appointed constables and jurors for courts. These justices often owned large amounts of land and slaves, were officers in the county militia, and overseers of the roads. Men living in a district were required to serve two weeks a year in the militia and two weeks working on the roads. Justices of the Peace, members of the Colonial Assembly, and road overseers were exempted or could send slave substitutes. This system of patronage soon produced “courthouse rings” that were connected to the eastern leadership of the Colonial Assembly and gave birth to the later political problems in the area. The patronage system paved the way for the underlying grievances that produced the Regulator Movement and later extreme political animosity during the Revolutionary War.

### **Colonial History: The Regulator Movement**

The political imbalance between the eastern counties and the western backcountry was one of the underlying causes of the Regulator Movement. The backcountry counties had two representatives per county against the newly created eastern counties which had many more representatives. Colonial Assembly-appointed sheriffs conducted elections and certified voters. After 1743 voters had to be males over 21 who owned at least 50 acres of land. Land ownership was a serious problem for some backcountry farmers due to the inability of obtaining clear titles to the Granville lands. The lack of a land title could keep a man from voting. Consequently elected officials represented the dominant

class of local landowners. “Class tensions based on local inequalities existed alongside anger toward abusive officials and resentment of eastern control. This connection among eastern leaders, Orange County officials, and Orange County secure landowners formed the backdrop for the Regulator upheaval (Troxler and Vincent 1999:61).”

Local public opinion in Orange County condemned local men who held multiple offices, overcharged on fees and fines, and manipulated people by their predatory legal actions. Other political frustrations felt across the backcountry were increased taxes to pay for “Tryon’s Palace,” the colony’s governmental seat which was placed in the east. The backcountry settlers believed that the seat of colony government should have been placed in Hillsborough with its location near the Trading Path and its burgeoning backcountry population (Troxler and Vincent 1999:63). In Orange County a poll tax was levied and collected by the sheriff. This tax added feelings of anger about the tax gouging and abuse. The poll tax was resented throughout the Carolina colony for its class bias—each man had to pay the same amount of tax, whether rich or poor.

Disorder in the backcountry was also being caused by the influx of new people to the area, by land grabbing speculators, by the continued insecurity of land tenure issues, and by overt corruption of local law enforcement. These frustrations led to a coalescing of backcountry settlers into a group dubbed “Regulators.” The basic focus of the Regulator movement was to pay no unlawful taxes or fees unless forced to do so. The Regulators were trying to act within the British system, not revolt against it. However, local officials dismissed or ignored local peaceful meetings held to address grievances, just as the Colonial Assembly ignored Regulator petitions. Regulator leaders sent a petition to the upper Governor’s Council. Since they felt the eastern counties’

representatives controlled the Lower Colonial Assembly, they knew that if they sent their petition to this lower legislative body, it would receive no action. While some officials acknowledged that sheriffs had embezzled more than half of their collected taxes and that fees collected in Orange County were higher than the law allowed, nothing was done to remedy the problem.

Court cases in Hillsborough were often exclusionary, especially those representing the Regulator grievances. Exorbitant bails and fines were often imposed. In May of 1768, two Regulators were arrested. The resulting unrest in Hillsborough influenced Governor Tryon against the Regulator's cause. These two arrests brought forth 1500 Regulators who gathered on the banks of the Haw River. The Regulators, stating their demands for reform, drew up a petition. When presented to Tryon, it was given a lukewarm response. As appeasement Tryon published a new tax fee table and then admonished the Regulators to stop calling themselves "Regulators," to pay their taxes, and to not molest public officials physically or verbally as they had done earlier in Hillsborough (Troxler and Vincent 1999:64).

Several months later, under the rumor of an Indian attack, Tryon called out the colonial militia. Those men who would have supported the Regulators' cause were called back to their militia units. Calling up the militia further aggravated the already tense situation. Correspondence by Orange County area officials sent to the Governor cast the Regulators as insurgents.

Despite efforts in 1769 to address the area's grievances through legislative means, the eastern representatives prevailed against those grievances and those protesting. New Regulator petitions were sent again to the Colonial Assembly condemning handling of

elections, taxes, court procedures, and land and religious favoritism. The land disputes in the Orange County areas were centered on suits brought up by local officials for non-payment of quit rents. Due to the scarcity of proclamation money in the area, payment of quit rents was often impossible. When this occurred, the courts would order the land auctioned. The confiscated land would be sold cheaply to those with ready cash or credit, which usually included local merchants and lawyers. These men bought the land for speculation. The Regulators drew up a petition to inform London of these land sale activities saying that land was being granted inconsistently with the King's instructions to his governor (Troxler and Vincent 1999:70). The Regulator petitioners wanted inventories of improvements on ungranted Granville land and an acknowledgement of seniority for those who had occupied the lands the longest.

The landscape of Orange County was rapidly filling up as people kept moving in, clearing land, building houses, and making improvements in hopes of some time buying the land they occupied. However, the colonial legislature tabled this petition. The lack of Colonial Assembly action on the grievances led ultimately to the Hillsborough riots of 1770 (Troxler and Vincent 1999:74).

During the Hillsborough court session of 1770, the Regulators finally could contain themselves no longer. After several days of court room problems, the Regulators took over the courtrooms themselves to redress their grievances while the major focus of their wrath, the officials, were beaten in the streets of Hillsborough. The presiding judge slipped out of town in the night. The focus of the court appearances for the Regulators was to petition the court for redress of officers taking exorbitant fees. However, the fact

that the Regulators brought weapons for protection worked against them in the eyes of the Colonial Assembly and the Governor (Troxler and Vincent 1999:75).

At the 1771 legislative session in New Bern, previously elected backcountry Regulators were barred and removed from their seats. The Colonial Assembly created the new counties of Guilford, Chatham, and Wake from Orange County and Surry County from Rowan County (Troxler and Vincent 1999: 76). These new counties meant appointment of new county courts and additional militia favoring eastern interests, further diluting the backcountry groups. In the aftermath of the Hillsborough riots, the Colonial Assembly also passed the Johnson Riot Act. This act provided prosecution for riot in any county of the colony and authorized the governor to use the militia to put down lawbreakers. Although the Riot Act was later disallowed by London, the refutation did not occur before the Act promoted drastic actions by the Regulators. Tryon in the meantime had been appointed governor of New York. One of his last official actions before leaving North Carolina was to authorize the militia to establish law and order in the rebellious districts. As an added slap at the Regulators, seventy-three percent of the militia was from the eastern counties.

As Tryon's militia gathered at Alamance Creek and the Regulators approached, the stage was set for a battle whose legacy would be felt until 1849 when the new county—Alamance—was carved from Orange County (Troxler and Vincent 1999: 76).

### **Colonial History: The Battle of Alamance**

In the face of insurrection, local magistrates were empowered by the Colonial Colonial Assembly to order the militia to attack and disperse rioters. As the Regulators

gathered on the banks of the Haw River near Alamance Creek, Tryon arrived with his militia. Only about half of the Regulators were armed—their gathering was meant as a show of strength for their cause. On seeing Tryon's militia, the Regulators sent out runners for cannon, intending to present to the Governor such an array of numbers that he would be willing to compromise on their petition demands. One hour before the battle began, Tryon read the stipulated Johnston Riot Act as a warning to the Regulators to disperse. How the actual battle started was later open to question. However, it was later stated that Tryon made a genuine effort to dissuade the opposing Regulators. When two Regulators presented their petition, the Governor replied that all Regulators must lay down their arms and surrender the ringleaders. Then the Governor took the two Regulator petitioners prisoner and, as one of the petitioners tried to leave the camp, Tryon shot him. The other petitioner was also subsequently shot and killed. The battle then commenced and waged for several hours. Reports later varied on how many were killed—from 9 to 20 for each side. When the smoke cleared, Tryon and his militia had prevailed and he arrested twelve prisoners. These men were subsequently tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. Six were later pardoned while Tryon hanged the other six.

The main legacy of the Battle of Alamance was outrage that it had occurred at all. The memory lasted within the county so strongly that when the county was carved out of the western section of Orange County in 1849, it was named Alamance (Troxler and Vincent 1999:77).

### **Colonial History: Settlement Patterns**

Many factors contributed to the backcountry's distinct identity as separate from the established eastern portions of the State. One important factor was religion. There were two trains of religious thought. One was the Scots-Irish view and the other represented the other "dissenting" religions. The religious background of many of the settlers moving into the Carolina backcountry was based on the dissenting tradition out of European and English religions—of Calvinists, French Huguenots, German Reformed, Methodists, Lutherans, Moravians, and Dunkards—for whom the value of worship did not depend on an organized church. In the Alamance area, Dissenter tradition was also shaped by the Quaker experience.

As public worship became more open to lay leadership and common people took more of a part, wealthy landowners, merchants and bishops of the colony's Church of England felt threatened. Initially as settlement grew, the Dissenter religious groups had been encouraged to fill up the backcountry to serve as "buffers" for the eastern part of the colony against Indian attack. By the time Orange County was formed, eastern colonial efforts to continue the supremacy of the Anglican Church contributed to the sense of backcountry grievance against the landed and rich eastern Carolina aristocracy and its representative Anglican Church.

The Scots-Irish presented a different religious issue. In 1765 the Anglican Church had tried to impose their religious structure on the backcountry area that was largely Presbyterian. These Scots-Irish resented the attempts to lay out counties into parishes and also resisted having to pay a tax to support the Church of England. They advocated that the vestries should be abolished and that each denomination should pay its



own ministers (Troxler and Vincent 1999:90). When a petition was drawn up protesting the Anglican Church's tax, 192 signatures came from the Hawfields.

Quakers, Presbyterians, and members of the German Reformed and Lutheran faiths were largely responsible for the settlement of Alamance County. Groups with common customs, languages, and faiths often migrated to the Carolinas. These new arrivals often settled in distinct and separate colonies encompassing different geographic locations in the county.

German settlers of the Reformed and Lutheran sects settled along Alamance and Stinking Quarters Creek in the northeast section of Alamance County (Whitaker 1949:28). Along Beaver Creek families built the first Lutheran and Reformed Lutheran churches. A log church was built near the present Lowe's Lutheran Church and the Old Salisbury (Trading Path) Road. Out of differences over the Regulator position, this church split and a Reformed group built the Brick Reformed Church in Guilford County. In 1814 the log building was replaced by a brick structure that became known as "Brick Church" (Whitaker 1949:30). In 1758 members of the Brick Church congregation founded the Stoners (Steiner's) Reformed Church near Bellemont. The church stood on a small peninsula between Alamance and Stinking Quarters Creek. However, after a few years, services were suspended due to the lack of a pastor.

In 1744 the Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church was founded two miles northwest of Gibsonville. The first log building was called Schumaker's Church. In 1771 the congregation was reorganized and a two-story frame building was constructed. Through the years several new church buildings replaced the original frame building. In

the 20<sup>th</sup> century the original church's stone steps were used to form a monument in the old church cemetery (Whitaker 1949: 31).

The "Graves' Church" was organized in 1773 as a Lutheran church, now known as St. Paul's Lutheran Church (Whitaker 1949: 32). St. Mark's Reformed Church was organized at Friedens between 1768 and 1771, soon after Brick Church. Around 1857 the Reformed congregation reorganized near Boone's Station. These were the parent Lutheran and German Reformed churches in Alamance County.

Another religious faction that settled in the southern area of Alamance County along Cane Creek was the Friends or Quakers. The Quakers migrated to the South at the same time as other religious groups for economic and religious reasons, settling initially in coastal settlements. These Quakers were of English, German, and Welsh backgrounds (Whitaker 1949: 33). In 1751 the largest Quaker settlement in Alamance County, the Cane Creek Monthly Meeting, was established near Snow Camp at the Cane Creek Friends Meetinghouse. Shortly after the Alamance Meeting was formed, monthly meetings were begun at New Garden and at locations on the Deep and Eno Rivers. Around 1830 many Quaker families left North Carolina and migrated to free states in the mid-West because of slavery issues and hostile militia laws directed at them (Whitaker 1949: 34). The original Cane Creek Meetinghouse was destroyed by fire in 1879. After several frame houses of worship were built and then subsequently burned, a modern brick structure was built in 1942 (Whitaker 1949: 34).

The Scots-Irish Presbyterians chose settlements in the present vicinity of Hawfields in the eastern section of the county. During the Colonial period when large groups were migrating to the Carolinas, a group of Scots-Irish Pennsylvania

Presbyterians formed an organization known as the "Nottingham Company" (Whitaker 1949: 35). The Company sent agents to North Carolina and purchased a large tract of land in what is now present-day Guilford County on the banks of Buffalo and Reedy Fork Creeks. By 1755 there were at least seven meeting houses from the Hyco to the Yadkin Rivers. Hawfields Church in present-day Alamance County was organized around 1762. By 1770, the Presbytery of Orange was formed at Hawfields. Another Presbyterian congregation, the Crossroads Presbyterian Church, was organized at Cross Roads in 1801. During 1802 the first church camp meeting took place at Hawfields Presbyterian Church. Called "The Great Revival," this five-day preaching at Hawfields ushered in the far-reaching tradition of revival meetings as an annual part of worship.

Other religious groups in the Alamance area were the Baptists who arrived in North Carolina as early as 1695. In 1755 a Baptist church was organized at Sandy Creek in Randolph County and this section became a center of Baptist influence in North Carolina (Whitaker 1949:37). The Separatists founded a church on the Haw River near the Bynum Community in Chatham County in 1764.

By 1783, the Guilford Circuit was formed as a part of the Methodist Conference. In 1793 a Methodist circuit was established on the Haw River with the Mount Pleasant Church in Alamance County being constructed about 1790 (Whitaker 1949:38). The Methodist church in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century became divided over the issue of slavery. A Methodist group in Guilford County requested a minister so they could break away from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Whitaker 1949:38). In 1848 the first Wesleyan Methodist Church was organized at Freedom Hill near Snow Camp. By 1857 Wesleyan Methodists had spread to five piedmont counties and twenty churches. The

Methodist Episcopal Church later divided into a Republican Methodist Church faction that later joined with the Congregationalists to form the Congregational-Christian Church. The Christian Church built a church building at Old Providence at what became Graham (Whitaker 1949:39).

Over the long history of Alamance County, many churches have remained strong and new denominations have joined the ranks. While the Lutherans, both Evangelical and Reformed, Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians have historically been strong denominations, there are also churches representing the Congregational Christian, Episcopalian, Quaker, Church of the Nazarene, Church of God, Pilgrim Holiness, Pentecostal Holiness, and Catholic denominations in Alamance County (Whitaker 1949:43).

### **Colonial History: Land Use**

The diverse religious groups and settlement patterns of the backcountry fostered many different points of view among the settlers themselves. Pennsylvania was the leading source of new settlers to the area, chiefly Scots-Irish Protestants and Germans. Word-of-mouth in the northern colonies during Colonial times advised that the land in the Hawfields and westward was good although title to the land was hard to come by (Troxler and Vincent 1999:37). The term "Irish Protestant" was applied to Quakers of Irish origin but also meant Ulster Scots, or "Scots-Irish," mainly Presbyterian natives of Northern Ireland who had strong migration ties with Lowland Scotland and northern England. Because of earlier migration and assimilation in Ireland and England, these Scots-Irish Protestant immigrants brought a strong ability to adapt with them to the North Carolina backcountry. Especially notable in their settlement pattern was the uncle-to-

nephew migration pattern common in the colonies. Once established, the uncle was expected to assist at least one nephew in obtaining land, credit, equipment, livestock, and perhaps a wife among his connections. Such uncle-nephew teams spread southward over time and generations. Many Scots-Irish settlers entered the region that became Alamance County directly from Pennsylvania or Virginia coming in through present-day Durham, Orange, Granville and Person counties. The westward movement into western North Carolina continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> century especially from present-day Orange County (Troxler and Vincent 1999:39).

The different backgrounds of settlers entering Orange County also brought different views on land use. For those with an Irish, Scots, and northern English background, stock raising was more important than crops. Land tenure with legal title was not as important as accessibility to large areas for grazing. Consequently for stock raising farmers, title to the land was not of the first importance. By the 1770s there was a substantial Scots-Irish presence in Alamance County (Troxler and Vincent 1999:40). However, for farmers who relied chiefly on specific crops, land ownership was very important. These were the established patterns of migration and land-occupancy that entered northern and eastern Alamance County with its early arrivals.

## **Part II. Wars, Growth, and Development (1776-1870)**

### **Revolutionary War**

The background of the Revolutionary War overlay the ashes of the Battle of Alamance. Ironically when the Revolutionary War came, the Regulators supported the King. They saw the revolutionary ideas of the landed gentry as another bid by the eastern establishment to dominate the affairs of the backcountry. These easterners were the same ones that the Regulators had fought. The Regulators resisted supporting the Revolution's cause because of their hatred for the citizens who had not supported them earlier.

### **Revolution: Political Setting**

The pre-Revolutionary Alamance area was one of broad political contradictions. Officeholders tried to walk a line between the Regulator viewpoint and the eastern gentry's point of view. There was also tension between the Scots-Irish and the German settlers due to different views on land clearing and farming practices. These differences led to political differences. Conflict and political division in the backcountry were along the lines of Regulators and Revolutionaries with land as the central issue (Troxler and Vincent 1999:98).

Eastern revolutionary leaders who individually were Anglican understood well that in the interior, hostility toward an established church was among the issues that could support a challenge to British control. For Scots-Irish leaders of the Revolution in the Alamance area, the path from the Regulator Movement to the Revolution was direct because the Dissenter identity was strong in both. The Dissenter tradition led Quakers to sympathize with both the Regulators and the Revolution. The Quaker testimony against war complicated the backcountry revolutionary stance since the Quakers and other

religious pacifists refused to serve in the state militia—long considered a responsibility of settlers in support of the colonial government (Troxler and Vincent 1999:95).

Revolutionary supporters, to counter the influence of the Loyalists, brought the third "provincial congress" to Hillsborough in 1775. Former Regulators were counseled to break their oaths to the British crown. In 1776 the Revolutionaries or Patriots began to organize a state government, while supporters of the British began recruiting Loyalists or Tories of their own. This British courtship brought backcountry/Regulator concerns to the forefront and increased the political importance of the backcountry.

### **Revolution: Settlement**

As the country moved toward Revolution, land became the major issue. An oath of allegiance to the state was required for title to land. Registration required the landowner to declare his allegiance to one side or the other—a step that potentially could have grave repercussions if the British Crown won. Still in 1778 there was a rush to enter land claims with 538 entries in Orange County (Troxler and Vincent 1999:99).

The North Carolina Provincial Congress brought changes in land ownership requirements. The political framework of the Carolina colony began to change. A new constitution written in 1776 made the General Assembly (formerly the Lower Council) more powerful than the governor, giving it power to elect the governor and other executive officers annually (Troxler and Vincent 1999:100). The householder, whether with clear title to land or not, as determined by the tax assessor and the tax list, was a voter. It was at this time that disputes arose with the large landowners from Britain who had acquired large tracts of land in the Alamance area. The campaign to own land outright by paying tax on it continued through the war (Troxler and Vincent 1999:104).

During the Revolutionary War, filing a land entry and buying a grant from the state was the best way to obtain secure tenure to the land while paying taxes was a way to establish legal possession (Troxler and Vincent 1999:105). The colonial legislature passed a series of confiscation laws and ordinances during 1776-1783 and in 1779 the commissioners were empowered to sell land and movable property at auction. Anyone could buy the confiscated land outright from the commissioners. However, often the commission's sales of lands in present-day Alamance County went to land speculators, not individuals (Troxler and Vincent 1999:106).

### **Revolution: Regional Context**

In the fall of 1777 the British moved their attention to the southern area of the colonies and focused on invasion of the South (Troxler and Vincent 1999:108). Royal Governor Martin had counseled the British that backcountry supporters could be rallied for the British cause. However, the Patriots had made concessions to the backcountry concerns and converted many to the revolutionary view. While the British worked to court a Native American alliance with the Cherokees and Creeks, militia from the Alamance area marched against these tribes in 1776. When the British changed the tone of the war effort to an Indian war, many Loyalists changed from former British allies to pro-Revolutionary, fearing the reprisals of the Indians.

### **Revolution: Local Involvement**

By 1781 the Revolutionary War had moved to the Alamance area as Continental troops prepared to keep local Loyalists from joining Cornwallis as he moved across the Piedmont. These Loyalists had kept a low profile from 1776 to 1780-1781. While some had fought with local militia during the Indian War, when it appeared the British might



be winning, they switched sides to be on what appeared to be the winning side. The Battle of Kings Mountain which was mainly backcountry Loyalists against backcountry Patriots put a damper on Loyalists' sympathies for the British as the Over Mountain Men moved down from the backcountry, causing the British-Loyalist loss.

In the Alamance area the Patriots' goal was to block local Loyalists from reaching Cornwallis thus weakening his army. The stage was set for two Alamance area campaigns in 1781—one in the winter at Hart's Mill with a brutal battle known as Pyle's Massacre [also Pyle's Defeat]. The second encounter later became known as the "Battle at Clapp's Mill" near the confluence of Beaver and Alamance Creeks.

All forces on both sides drew supplies from the largely German area bounded by Alamance Creek, the Haw River, and the Reedy Fork of the Haw River (Troxler and Vincent 1999:123). A battle ensued at the mill belonging to Henry Weitzel (or Whitsell). This was the last engagement of the British and Patriots in the Alamance area until the Battle of Guilford Courthouse.

During this period, the Quakers had strained relationships with their Patriot neighbors. During the 1781 conflict, however, the war was dragged into their communities, their houses, their meetinghouses, and their cemeteries (Troxler and Vincent 1999:124). After the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, both the American General Greene and the British General Cornwallis called on the Friends at New Garden Meeting House to help treat wounded from the battle. Cornwallis also called on the Deep River and the Cane Creek Quakers for provisions and treatment for the wounded. While the common religious discipline of the Quakers imposed pacifism, it did not prevent trade or dictate trading partners and the Quakers sold to both sides. They were thus a significant

economic resource to all military forces. The Quakers of the area were seen as being true to their religious convictions. They went into the woods recovering the wounded or burying the dead of both sides and consequently were not the victims of reprisals (Troxler and Vincent 1999:125).

The Quakers were also called upon for humanitarian efforts during the Battle of Lindley's Mill in the autumn of 1781. The British forces surrounded Hillsborough with the intent of capturing the provincial governor, Thomas Burke, and the legislators who had moved west with the colonial government for safety to Hillsborough. After capturing Burke and others, the Loyalists intended to take their captives to Wilmington. Patriots attempted to rescue them by setting up an ambush behind a hill on the main road to Fayetteville near Lindley's Mill on Cane Creek. A battle ensued with many casualties on both sides. Loyalists retained custody of the Governor after the battle. For the Alamance area, the Battle of Lindley's Mill affected the rest of the war and local feelings for a long time afterwards. It evoked strong feelings of resentment in many local Patriots and Loyalists alike.

### **Revolution: Afterwards**

After the Revolutionary War many of those Loyalists who fought with the British ended up in the Canadian province of New Brunswick. Some Loyalists returned home and eased back into communities where “loyalism” had not been a peculiarity while others suffered reprisals for their Tory beliefs (Troxler and Vincent 1999:130). Initially some Tories had their lands confiscated, later they again became active members of their communities and purchased other lands. The hard feelings engendered by the

fighting of neighbor against neighbor in the Alamance area carried over after the Revolutionary War even until the Civil War.

### **The Early National Era**

The early National era, which followed the American Revolution, saw great change in central North Carolina. State led initiatives led to the establishment of a new capital as well as a state-owned university in the central part of the state. Migration from northern states continued and rural communities grew in population. With greater population, individuals built new houses and outbuildings, mills were constructed and religious buildings were expanded (Bishir 1990: 51). Growth slowed, however, into the 19<sup>th</sup> century as agricultural expansion was curtailed by poor transportation, as well as the ever-present allure of cheap, fertile lands to the south and west in the Mississippi Delta region.

### **The Early National Era: Agriculture**

Following the Revolutionary War, attention in the Haw River turned to repairing the damage to property and to agriculture. Earliest farming was subsistence with cattle and hogs, cotton and flax, corn and fruit. Often a farmer would have a gristmill on some stream near his farm. Pork and corn became two of the most important farm staples in the backcountry area. Not only was pork valued as food, but also as a staple household lubricant and for shortening (Troxler and Vincent 1999:178). In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, hogs were rounded up from the woods seasonally and driven to market while salt pork was packed into barrels and distributed by wagons to points north and east of the Alamance area. Other products carted to distant markets were butter, flour, cattle, and “beeves” (beef) (Troxler and Vincent 1999:178).

Corn was a vital product to the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century farmer as well as wheat, oats, and rye. Corn could be prepared as multiple edible foods and its use spurred the development of mills in the Alamance area. Households usually moved in groups of neighbors who might also be relatives and settled along choice sites on streams. Virtually all the Granville grants in the Alamance county area featured waterways, with properties usually being surveyed so that the maximum length of a stream was included (Troxler and Vincent 1999:42). A gristmill in the settlement was a necessity. The miller Simon Dixon brought his millstone from Pennsylvania when he settled with his neighbors at the Snow Camp section of Cane Creek. Laughlin and Lindley also built a gristmill in this Cane Creek section.

Another crop grown in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that became big business after the Civil War was tobacco. When grown in quantity during the antebellum period, it was tightly packed in barrels (“hogs heads”) and hauled to markets in Petersburg and Fayetteville. In 1769 twenty-five inhabitants of Orange County petitioned for a public market weekly to sell their products as well as tobacco and hemp. Before local markets were established, a farmer had to sell his surplus products in Fayetteville or Petersburg or take his tobacco to the village of Weldon at the head of the Roanoke River to ship to Virginia markets. Some farmers used their workhorses to transport their neighbors' crops to market and set up freighting businesses. Farmers frequently received bills of credit instead of money (Troxler and Vincent 1999:180).

During the early 1800s, agricultural societies were formed that offered information on husbandry. Because farmers in Alamance County usually tilled their own

small land holdings, the county's slave population was lower than in other areas of the state.

### **The Early National Era: Transportation**

In the years before the Revolutionary War, transportation grew to be a key issue for the often-isolated Piedmont. The first roads followed the Indian trading and hunting paths. As settlers poured into the backcountry, the early local Colonial governments appointed road commissioners. The well-worn Trading Paths and the wagon roads with which they connected, served as market roads for the annual livestock drives. Trading paths were generally no wider than files of packhorses used, while a wagon road indicated that it was wide enough for a wagon's use. The earliest road from the Shenandoah Valley to the Alamance area was through present-day Vance, Granville, Durham, and Orange counties. As the Moravians established the successful Salem community, attention shifted to a western route through Stokes County eventually ending by 1756 at Salisbury, known as the Great Wagon Road, or "Philadelphia Wagon Road" through the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. This was the classic route into the southern backcountry (Troxler and Vincent 1999:24). An offshoot road near Danville, Virginia, entered the backcountry through present-day Caswell County, northwestern Alamance, and Guilford County bringing people from Pennsylvania's "Welsh" tract along the Delaware River, adding another cultural element to the backcountry mix.

The roads in the backcountry of North Carolina had always been a problem for farmers and merchants as well as travelers. Road maintenance was the responsibility of an appointed road commissioner and an overseer. Local manpower was mandatory for maintaining road upkeep. In 1753 the first appointed road commissioners were directed

to lay out a road from the south side of the Haw River to the “Western Path”. Another road was laid out to the east crossing the Haw River near Ossipee, known as Stony Creek Road. The Pine Ford Road crossing eventually became Trollinger’s Ford and then later the town of Haw River (Troxler and Vincent 1999:56). Early attempts had established some plank roads in the county. An early plank road ran from Snow Creek to Fayetteville.

Road maintenance in North Carolina counties in early days fell onto local citizens. Early in the Colonial period, county courts appointed overseers who were responsible for the upkeep of public roads and required those who lived near streams to build and maintain public bridges. The earliest roads followed the Indian trails or later trading paths and by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, stagecoaches were available for passengers (Whitaker 1949:81). Near the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, various companies in North Carolina began to construct plank roads in an effort to improve transportation. The Graham and Gulf Plank Road was laid out from Snow Camp in Alamance County to the village of Gulf in Chatham County. There it joined another plank road that intersected the Salem to Fayetteville plank road at Cameron. However, the plan to extend the road from Snow Camp to Graham was never completed.

Construction of the Gulf and Graham Plank Road at Snow Camp began in 1853 (Whitaker 1949:81). Mile posts marked every mile along the route between Snow Camp and Fayetteville and toll stations were erected every seven miles. At the first station that a teamster reached on the road, he purchased a ticket. Payment was two and one-half cents per mile, depending upon how many horses he had hitched to his wagon and whether or not the wagon was loaded. At the nearest station to the end of his journey, he

surrendered the tickets. Printed tickets contained: "G & G Plank road, 18\_\_\_, From\_\_\_ to\_\_\_; Horse Vehicle. Vehicles must pass to the right, giving half the plank where they can, exception hills the one going down must give all the Plank (Whitaker 1949:82)."

Although plank roads gave a solid surface over which to transport heavy loads of flour, pork, tobacco, and other products to market, after the collapse of the South's economy in the Civil War, the Plank road could not pay expenses, and it was never repaired or replaced (Whitaker 1949:82).

The most important improvement in transportation to the region occurred in 1849 along with establishing the new county of Alamance. The North Carolina legislature chartered the North Carolina Railroad (NCRR) authorizing issuance of \$3,000,000 worth of stock to build a railroad from Goldsboro to Charlotte. The shortest route, by way of Pittsboro and Asheboro, had many steep grades and curves. To go by way of Hillsborough, Graham, and Greensboro was 20 miles longer but a flatter route. The only stumbling block was crossing the rivers and streams of Alamance County. Benjamin Trollinger, a mill owner, offered to build a bridge at Haw River for the railroad if it would cross Alamance County near his Granite Cotton Factory. After much discussion, this route was chosen (Troxler and Vincent 1999:247).

The first trains passed through Alamance County to Greensboro on January 30, 1856 (Whitaker 1949:107). One problem still remained. A wood-burning locomotive needed servicing after 100 miles of travel. The North Carolina Railroad needed a location to set up its service area. Initially the NCRR investigated the newly formed county seat of Graham as a location to build its company shops. When the railroad proposed to run its rails at Graham near the new courthouse and jail, the town

commissioners rejected it heartily. They wanted nothing to do with the dirty and noisy locomotives, which they feared would frighten the horses and those gathered in town on court days.

Benjamin Trollinger again offered property two miles west of Graham at the midpoint between Goldsboro and Charlotte, the NCRR's termini (Trelease 1991: 52).

Trollinger helped the railroad secure other parcels to complete its tract. Thus was born the village of Company Shops, a town developed specifically to serve the newly completed railroad.

Construction at Company Shops began in the summer of 1855 and continued until 1859. The first building constructed was a long, one-story frame structure operated as a lodging house by James Dixon called "The Boiling Brook." In 1856 Jonathan Worth and Company built a two-story brick railroad commissary, the first business establishment, which later became the site of the Burlington freight depot (Whitaker 1949:109). The first floor was divided into Daniel Worth's general store, the railroad station, and the village post office. The Masonic Hall occupied the second floor and served the community as a meeting place and a place of worship. The railroad hired Huston and McKnight, a Greensboro building firm, to construct the Company Shops and Colonel John Hardin to grade the shop yards. Seven brick shops were built on the highest and best elevations. These included a foundry, a wood shop, a locomotive repair shop, a blacksmith's shop, an engine shed, and two car sheds. Eight small homes were built for shop mechanics and three homes for Company officials. A two-story brick Railroad Office was built between Front and Andrews Streets, adjoining Main Street, where the NCRR was headquartered for many years.



In 1857 the railroad company built a boarding house and a 30-room hotel, a large two story building of brick and wood with wide colonnaded verandas on three sites, managed by Miss Nancy Hillard (Whitaker 1949:110). Most of the structures were brick and by 1857 the village had 27 buildings and by 1859, fifty-seven buildings (Trelease 1991: 53). The population included 39 white men, 20 Negro slaves, and two freedmen making repairs on the Company cars and locomotives or in the foundry forging car wheels and other parts. The railroad line used six passenger cars, eight freight cars, and two gravel locomotives with 84 boxcars and 86 other type cars. By 1861 the telegraph arrived in Company Shops (Whitaker 1949:111). Water tanks and woodsheds were also provided to serve the wood-burning steam locomotives and to protect the rolling stock that frequently had to stop over (Trelease 1991: 52).

The Company Shops planners regarded the sylvan location of the repair shops as an advantage. The shops were expected to occupy a number of buildings and to employ many men. Company headquarters would be established at the Shops. Since employees and their families would need to live within walking distance, a town would necessarily develop. NCRP President Charles F. Fisher stated that the locality was beautiful, “elevated, healthful, and in the midst of a fruitful region where the large mechanical working force . . . can have pleasant homes, pure water, and abundant supplies at a cheap rate, remote from all disturbing influences of even a village residence.” Fisher added that the Company had by design acquired a large enough acreage to ensure its own police control over the population. This image of the healthful and possibly moral company town was a common projection for the 19<sup>th</sup> century American industrial scene (Trelease 1991: 52).

Inevitably the building plans at Company Shops evoked cries of extravagance from newspapers, legislators, and stockholders. However, Fisher and others defended their enterprise saying that the shops were the heart of the railroad, ensuring its safety, efficiency, and profits. Gradually opinion changed and by 1860 NCRR stockholders viewed the town as a “fruitful nursery for the mechanical genius” of North Carolinians and by 1861, as an “indispensable southern resource in the war just begun (Trelease 1991: 53).”

In 1861 following the death of Charles F. Fisher at the Civil War battle of First Manassas, Paul C. Cameron took over Fisher's place as head of the NCRR. Cameron offered every expertise of the company in transporting Confederate troops and supplies. Soon after the war's beginning, the Confederate Army took charge of the telegraph service at Company Shops.

In 1863 the prewar ban on building at Company Shops was lifted and the town's name was changed to “Vance,” an effort to give the village a title of more dignity, possibly with a political connotation to Zebulon Vance (Trelease 1991: 144). The NCRR approved the sale of house lots and the laying off of streets. The lots were 200 feet square and the streets 100 feet wide. However, the sales were sporadic and by 1864 the Company stockholders voted to return the village name to “Company Shops.” In April of 1865 Confederate General Joseph Johnston dismissed his troops at Company Shops and a single car and engine carried him to his surrender of southern forces to Union General Sherman (Whitaker 1949:121).

The village of Company Shops, nevertheless, had grown during the war years (Whitaker 1949:134). In 1864 new buildings were built including seven houses for

employees and four log houses for Negroes. By 1866, five new buildings had been completed for employees and in 1866 the railroad purchased a fire engine with 500 feet of hose. Also during 1866, Company Shops was incorporated, the first town built in the county that did not have an earlier history but was built from scratch to accommodate the railroad's needs. An act of the North Carolina legislature in 1879 that authorized taxation of the NCRR's non-operational real estate at Company Shops induced the NCRR to sell its non-railroad property thereby opening the door to the town's development as a textile center, later to become the town of Burlington (Trelease 1991: 323).

In 1871, the Richmond and Danville Railroad procured a 30-year rental of the NCRR's railway, rolling stock, and operational facilities. By 1875 the shops complex was in less demand as the Richmond and Danville Railroad increasingly used its own shops near Richmond for maintenance. Although Company Shops remained the official headquarters of the NCRR until 1929, most officials and employees were gradually transferred to other places.

### **The Early National Era: Crossroads Communities**

The growth of villages and towns across the landscape of Alamance County at first coincided with the major crossings of the Haw River, the Trading Paths, and wagon roads. As the population of western Orange County, and later Alamance County, grew, the crossroads became the major commercial centers of local commerce.

Notable entrepreneurs were located in areas across the county such as the crossroads west of Hawfields Presbyterian Church, named "Burnt Shop," then later called Melville for the Melville Academy. Developed by Henderson Scott in the late

antebellum period, by the Civil War the area encompassed stores, mills, plug tobacco manufacturing, tanning, and other associated businesses.

Archibald Murphey, owner of “The Hermitage”, developed the northern Hawfields intersection known as the “Crossroads,” where two major roads intersected. The earliest church there was a Presbyterian Meetinghouse between Quaker and Stag Creeks. Under the Murphey family’s leadership, a gristmill and sawmill followed. By the 1820s two roads crossed at the juncture of the church.

The growth at Crossroads was typical of the development that occurred at many Alamance County crossroads during the 1850s, especially in the county’s north section where tobacco was an important cultivated crop. As well as stores and mills, the crossroads also had merchants and mill owners. Skilled workmen such as mechanics, millwrights, and wagon makers also lived there combining carpentry and machine skills. Crossroads businesses shipped their wares to centers such as Petersburg, Virginia, and Fayetteville, NC. During shipping trips, groceries, dry goods, shoes and boots, hats, medicines, tin wares, hardware, crockery, confections, stationery, and cutlery were purchased (Troxler and Vincent 1999:207). Crossroads stores also bought from each other items that could be kept for long term, such as coffins and uncarved tombstones (Troxler and Vincent 1999:208). Other crossroad complexes grew up at Vincent and Sons Store in the easternmost Alamance intersection of Shallowford-to-Prospect Hill Road, at the McCray store near Deep Creek Baptist Church, at the store of Benjamin F. Morton near Gilliam's Primitive Baptist Church, and at the store and gristmill of Chesley F. Faucett near Stony and Jordan Creeks (Troxler and Vincent 1999:209). Physicians and dentists also traveled the crossroads circuits tending to patients. By the time

Alamance County was formed in 1849, at least fourteen merchants were listed on the tax rolls of the new county.

The Antebellum period in present-day Alamance County was a time of growth not only in population but also in occupational diversity. Families who moved into or grew large in the area added to the entrepreneurial advances. The crossroads areas offered a full range of entrepreneurial activities to their sponsors and laid the ground floor for post Civil War industrial development.

### **The Early National Era: Education**

Schools and academies also contributed to the success of crossroads. Many academies developed at local commercial centers in the 1850s.

#### **Private Education**

For wealthy families in the South a classical education defined a cultured man of good breeding (Whitaker 1949:341). The schools of the colonial period, were largely "Latin or classical schools" which prepared young men for later careers. By the end of the 18th century, about 30 academies had been chartered in North Carolina (Curtis 1996:329). These privately owned schools received no financial support from the state government, although they did function under a state-granted charter and were managed by boards of trustees. An individual could open a private school, establish a curriculum, and charge specific fees for attendance and instruction. In the beginning many of the academies and select classical schools were established for sectarian purposes; however, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century most offered curricula devoid of religious and political bias (Curtis 1996:329). A few academies admitted females only, while others were

coeducational. Most of the early schools, however, were open only to boys whose families could afford the tuition (Curtis 1996:329).

The most representative of these early private schools was the Bingham School, operated by the Bingham family for nearly 135 years. Bingham Schools were operated at different locations in North Carolina depending on where the owners moved them. In 1815 William Bingham founded the first school near Mount Repose (1815-1826) in present-day Alamance County, teaching there until his death in 1826. His son, William James Bingham, became principal, first at his father's school, then at Hillsborough Academy in Orange County. In 1844 William James Bingham established his own "Bingham Academy" at the "Oaks" in rural Orange County. During the Civil War, William James' eldest son, William, took over and moved the school to Mebanesville (1865-1873) in Alamance County. At Williams' death, his brother Robert guided the school for the next 54 years. The last 36 years of the Bingham Academy's history were in Asheville, Buncombe County. At its height in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bingham School was generally acknowledged to be the best private classical academy in the state.

At the formation in 1849 of Alamance County, the county seat town of Graham became a center of education under the auspices of the Christian Church, a forerunner of the modern-day United Church of Christ. The Christian Church established the first school in present-day Graham about 1792 at the old Providence Meetinghouse. Taught by Daniel Turrentine, the school closed in 1849.

In 1849 Rev. John R. Holt moved his school for boys from Orange County to Graham and Mrs. Rebecca P. Kerr opened a seminary for young ladies in Graham. The Christian Church bought Rev. Holt's school and opened it in 1852 as Graham Institute.

In 1859, the charter of the institution was changed to Graham College and it became coeducational. During the Civil War, the building was sold to H.J.B. Clark of New Bern and a tobacco factory was operated in the building (Whitaker 1949:195). In 1871 William S. Long purchased the property and reopened it as Graham High School. In 1881 the school again changed its name and focus to Graham Normal College.

In 1850 Alexander Wilson purchased a tract of land at Burnt Shop in Alamance County and started a private classical school, the Melville Academy. Wilson named his house where the school was held “Melville” and later the post office's name was changed to Melville. Wilson’s academy became another of the renowned private schools in the state. After Wilson's death in 1867, Dr. John M. Wilson continued the school. The original Melville Academy building was demolished in 1902. A later school built at the intersection of NC 54 and NC 119, the Alexander Wilson Elementary School, was named to honor Wilson.

Among the other male academies of Orange and later Alamance County were Hawfield Academy (1808), Union School (1818), Bethlehem Schools (1829), Mount Pleasant Academy (1837), and Union Academy (1839) (Whitaker 1949:191). Other schools were the Alamance Female Academy started near Mebane depot in 1856, also Rock Spring Academy, Watsonville Female Seminary, Cedar Grove Academy, Bethel Schoolhouse, and Pleasant Hill Academy (Whitaker 1949:193)

### **Public Education: The Common School System**

During the Early National Period in North Carolina, a major school development was the establishing of the “common school” system, the precursor of North Carolina’s public high schools. Through the vision and actions of Archibald Murphey, public

education in North Carolina began. In November 1817 Murphey sent a report to the Senate outlining a detailed public education plan for North Carolina. (Troxler & Vincent: 239). The report included a plan for funding a unified system of public instruction composed of primary schools and academies (high schools), whose operation would be overseen by a state board of directors. Murphey outlined a basic standardized course of study stressing the importance of discipline. The report also called for the education of poor children at public expense and the creation of a state asylum for the education of the deaf and dumb (Troxler & Vincent: 240). Major components of Murphey's plan were not adopted until 1839 when the passage of the Free School Act and the "Cherry Bill," divided North Carolina counties into school districts. In 1848, the state passed legislation providing for the education of the hearing- and sight-impaired students.

In the North Carolina Legislature the Whigs took the initiative for a statewide system of "common" schools, so called because they were intended to belong to local communities under a statewide structure for oversight and financing. A state Literary Fund was established to augment local school moneys. Once the statewide mechanism was enacted by the legislature, the popularity of the common school system was the system's own protection from demise by legislative action (Troxler & Vincent: 250).

The North Carolina Public School Act of 1839 allowed any district that provided a school building and raised \$20 in taxes to receive \$40 from the Literary Fund for support of a public school. The local county's school committee was responsible for establishing schools and hiring teachers. Local school districts had elected school committees that were responsible for both buying land and building the school or establishing a school in an existing building. The county committees paid workmen and



suppliers for ongoing maintenance and hired all teachers. Local people gave or sold an acre of land for the placement of a local school including an essential water source such as a spring (Troxler & Vincent: 252).

The Alamance County budget for these early schools was \$3,000 a year with one-third coming from the county and the rest from the state, supplied in a fall and spring dividend from the state Literary Fund. Paying the teachers was the main expense (Troxler and Vincent 199:254). Other school expenses were building repairs, wood for heating buildings, travel for local school officials, and subscriptions to the state educational journal. Money was budgeted on the basis of the number of children in the district. District lines were drawn so that streams were boundaries, making it unnecessary for the children to cross these to attend school (Troxler and Vincent 1999: 251). Teachers usually taught two or more school sessions a year with a session being two to four months long, teachers being paid about \$90 (Troxler and Vincent 1999:254). Some school buildings included a "teacher's room" which made it possible for the teacher to live in the building. These rooms usually featured a shared chimney to heat both rooms.

A few common schools were built in Alamance County prior to its 1849 formation. One was near Rock Creek Meetinghouse (1842). In 1844 a common school was organized at Union Ridge. At both schools, there had been an earlier school on the site. The new common schools frequently served to revive or perpetuate an existing isolated school and to connect it to other schools in the county. By 1845 there were common schools on both sides of Falls Branch. The common school that first met in the

pre-1855 Hawfields Presbyterian Church building seems to have been under way before the county was created. There was also a common school at Back Creek.

As the new county was created, the common school system received a boost. Calvin Henderson Wiley became the first superintendent of the state's common schools in 1852. Wiley, who grew up in eastern Guilford County in the "Alamance" community, became the South's foremost public educator of his time (Whitaker 1949:250). Wiley worked closely with the county commissioners who had oversight on the system's money. The county committee granted teacher certificates on an annual basis. Examiners were area ministers and academy masters. By 1857, five levels of competency certified teachers for each of six subjects: spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography (Whitaker 1949:255).

Legislative funding for the common schools was dismantled early in the Civil War although many common schools tried to struggle on through 1865. Following the Civil War, schools became a political issue especially concerning racially mixed schools. Late in 1870, a statewide system of racially separate district schools was built from the ground up. Only a few of the common school buildings were used in the new system and the district lines were completely redrawn. By the end of the 1870s, the common schools were mostly forgotten (Whitaker 1949:256).

By the 1850s, Alamance County had 48 school districts with most of the school buildings dating to the 1840s and 1850s. The names of the school districts often reflected names of schools or earlier meeting houses or community features. Schools were financed by a countywide tax with a spring and fall allocation from the state Literary Fund. Money was budgeted on the basis of the number of children in the

district, and figures suggest that only about two-thirds of the children in the districts attended. Some children were home-schooled, while some did not attend at all. Teachers were certified by a county committee or examiners and in 1860, a three-day teacher training session was held at Graham College, formerly Graham Institute (Troxler and Vincent 1999:255).

### **The Early National Era: Politics**

#### **A New County and County Seat**

By the early 1800s Orange County was the largest county in the state in both area and population (Whitaker 1949:89). Its western border was on Alamance Creek with a day's trip to the county seat at Hillsborough. Beginning in 1842 the western portion of Orange County began petitioning the General Assembly in Raleigh for a division of the county. However, it took seven years for the division to actually occur. Under the auspices of Giles Mebane, the Orange County representative to the General Assembly in 1846 and 1848, a bill was introduced in January 1849, to "Lay Off and Establish a New County by the Name of Alamance." A second act later in January provided for a board of commissioners to select a location for a county seat near the center of the proposed county. The act provided for purchase or donation of 25 to 100 acres of land where a town would be laid off and the courthouse and jail built. The sale of lots not needed for public use would provide the money for the building of the courthouse and jail (Laws of NC, 1849, Chapter XIV). After heated debate over the name for the county seat, "Graham" was chosen to honor then-governor William A. Graham (elected 1845). On April 19, 1849, the election for dividing Orange County yielded 1,257 votes for and 1001

against. The Governor officially proclaimed the new county established on April 24, 1849 (Whitaker 1949:92).

The newly established county government with Michael W. Holt as Chairman of the Court met at Providence Meetinghouse, near the site of the present Providence Church in north Graham. The first order of business was to establish a tax to support the county's schools, a poor house, and other expenses. Money was to be raised from a poll tax of 73  $\frac{3}{4}$  cents. A contract to build the first courthouse was granted on July 17. Sills M. Lane, a local surveyor, was hired to lay off the town and 75 acres were purchased for the village. The original town had two main streets with Main Street running north and south and Elm Street east and west. Cattle and hogs wandered freely through the dirt streets since there were no stock laws.

With the completion of the courthouse building and the moving of the courts from the Providence Meetinghouse, the village began to flourish. James Bason built the first place of business in Graham (Whitaker 1949:95). A three-story brick building was constructed on the southeast corner of the square, later owned by W.J. Nicks. During these early years, Graham served as a trading center for Alamance County, and parts of Orange, Chatham, Caswell, and Randolph counties as well. With the development of the town, two newspapers appeared: *The Southern Democrat* started in 1851 by J.W. Lancaster and in 1853, *The Alamance Gleaner*, begun by J.W. Kernodle, Sr. (Whitaker 1949:95).

### **Civil War: Local Involvement**

Alamance County was not a part of the battlegrounds of the Civil War, yet its citizens were highly involved in the conflict. The first military activity of the war in

Alamance County was the formation of the Sixth Regiment by Charles F. Fisher, the then president of the North Carolina Railroad. Fisher gathered men from the Company Shops area as well as surrounding counties and his hometown of Salisbury to march to Virginia. His movement of the Sixth Regiment by train was the first such movement of troops in the war. Fisher was killed during the First Battle of Manasses but the Sixth Regiment, known later by its battle record as the "Bloody Sixth," fought continuously until surrender at Appomattox in April, 1865. Alamance County gave twelve companies of troops to the Confederacy—more men at that time than the county had voters (Whitaker 1949:116).

The Civil War battlefronts skirted Alamance County. In February 1865, General Joe Johnson brought his troops through the Alamance area followed closely by northern General W.T. Sherman. Johnson's troops camped at the site of the Regulator's Alamance Battlefield before Johnson moved on to surrender to Sherman at Bennettsville.

Throughout the war there were undercurrents of dissent in the Alamance area. Families often transferred feelings carried over from the mid-18th century's Regulator Movement into anti-Southern sentiments. The Regulator Movement had instilled a deep distrust in some Alamance County families against the moneyed and landed aristocracy. This carry-over of feelings produced some deep-seated pro-Unionist sentiments that resulted in the development of anti-Southern networks. The first of these was a loosely organized network of pro-Union sympathizers called "Heroes of America." The "Heroes of America" (HOA) group operated as an underground movement in Alamance and surrounding counties from 1861 to 1863 when the network was exposed. After exposure of the HOA, another secret network called the "Red Strings" appeared. These

groups were made up of anti-war families who were also anti-slavery. Local sentiment was that the war was “a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight” (Troxler and Vincent 1999:296). The “anti” feelings of the two networks continued into the Reconstruction Period in Alamance County.

In 1863 at Concord in Alamance County, a "peace" meeting was held which passed resolutions reflecting local anger over wartime measures such as conscription exemptions, North Carolina's disproportionate contribution of soldiers to the war effort, and Confederate taxes (Troxler and Vincent 1999:300). Pro-Union whites, slaves, and black freedmen went to eastern North Carolina to enlist in Union units. After the end of the war when many returned home to Alamance County, they were subjected to attacks that resulted in beatings and deaths. Former HOA members after the war became members of the northern-organized Union League. Dissention between former pro-Confederates and pro-Union sympathizers led to many political confrontations.

### **Reconstruction**

During 1868-1871, Alamance County experienced a local civil war. Throughout the Civil War sentiment in the county had been divided along class and racial lines. With the end of the war in 1865, although pro-Confederates had stopped fighting, they did not give up their political power (Troxler & Vincent 1999:313). President Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's successor, appointed William Woods Holden as interim governor of North Carolina. Although once close to Governor Zebulon Vance, Holden and Vance broke politically during the war years. Holden, a Unionist, carried the stigma of illegitimate birth. During the summer of 1865 as appeasement to Southern Conservatives, Holden appointed as Justices of the Peace to the North Carolina county courts men who had been

leading Sessionists and pro-Confederates. The pro-Unionists actively and loudly opposed these appointments.

Governor Holden, although he had been a prewar Democratic Party strategist, helped organize the Republican Party in North Carolina during this time. Holden's appointment as provisional governor ended on Dec. 28, 1865, with the election of Jonathan Worth, former Lt. Governor, as governor. Later in 1868, Holden was formally elected governor on the Republican Party ticket.

Politically, the years of Reconstruction in Alamance County and nearby Caswell County were times of extreme dissension. According to Toxler, many factors came into play to make this period tumultuous (*The Alamance News: Sesquicentennial Edition* 1999). Local society, particularly local white society, was deeply divided before and during the Civil War, first over slavery and then over secession. After the war, whites who had opposed secession and the war cooperated with local African-Americans and identified with the national Republican Party. Pro-slavery and pro-secession factions became the Conservative Party.

### **The Kirk-Holden War**

As antebellum Conservative Party politicians regained control in Alamance County, local blacks and whites who had supported the Union were harassed and even killed by members of groups like the White Brotherhood and the Constitutional Union Guard which coalesced into the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK later came to include sheriffs, deputies, magistrates, and the old power structure of the county, encompassing a total membership in Alamance County of almost 700 people, about 10 percent of the County's adult white male population (Troxler & Vincent 1999:326).

In 1868 Klan violence at first targeted whites, especially those seen as "carpetbaggers" but soon began to extend beyond the white population of Alamance County to any black who was seen as "bold and aggressive." One Klan incident involved Caswell Holt, a literate former slave of textile pioneer E.M. Holt. After being appointed the county's first black deputy sheriff, Holt tried to enforce local laws and was shot and whipped (Troxler & Vincent 1999:327).

Between 1868 and 1870, the Klan's reign of terror accounted for scores of beatings in Alamance, Caswell, Guilford, and Orange counties. Local sympathy for the Klan made it difficult for county authorities to bring charges against Klan members, bring them to trial, or to secure convictions (Troxler & Vincent 1999:328).

By April 1869, conditions in Alamance County had degenerated to such an extent that the North Carolina legislature passed a law making it illegal for disguised parties to frighten citizens or commit trespass or violence against them. Even with the passage of laws and warnings, Klan outrages in 1869 occurred with continual frequency throughout Piedmont North Carolina. During 1869-1870, the legislature passed the Shoffner Act authorizing the governor to declare a county to be in a state of insurrection and to call upon the state militia to assist if a county's civil authorities were not able to protect its citizens (Troxler & Vincent 1999:329). This act was ignored and on February 26, 1870, the Klan lynched Wyatt Outlaw, a prominent Graham town councilman, leader of the Union League in Alamance County, and the county's foremost black Republican. Governor Holden responded by implementing militia law and declaring Alamance to be in a state of insurrection (Troxler & Vincent 1999:329).



The Alamance County violence was followed in Caswell County in the fall of 1870 by the murder of Republican State Senator John Walter Stephens, who had been viewed locally as a carpetbagger and one of Holden's spies. Faced with the situation of lawlessness in Alamance and Caswell counties, Holden called on the Shoffner Act's powers. Subsequently, he sent in Col. George Kirk to recruit a police force in Alamance County. Kirk had earned an unsavory reputation during the Civil War in western North Carolina as a "bushwacker and desperado." Holden hoped that by using Kirk's reputation, the Klan in these counties would be forced to back down.

Kirk brought in a force of 670 men from Tennessee and around North Carolina and immediately began to arrest men believed to have been involved in Klan activities. Even intervention by Richmond M. Pearson, North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice, did not dissuade Kirk from his arrests. Finally Conservatives in the state legislature used the federal courts to bring charges of militarism against Holden and Kirk.

During this controversy state elections had been held and the furor over Holden's actions allowed the Conservatives to carry the fall elections, gaining control of the Legislature. The Conservative Party, with a two-thirds senatorial majority, moved to impeach Holden. Following the impeachment, Lt. Governor Tod Caldwell of Burke County moved into the governorship. As a final move by the Conservatives, an "Amnesty and Pardon" program based on an already established federal program was pushed through the North Carolina legislature. This legislation granted pardon and amnesty for all crimes committed in behalf of any secret organization giving the Klan full protection under the law.

For the impeached governor, Holden's efforts against persons accused of Ku Klux Klan violence only resulted in the "Kirk-Holden War" in Alamance and Caswell counties and finally, in Holden's subsequent removal from office (Troxler & Vincent 1999:317). By 1871 Reconstruction had ended in Alamance County and North Carolina (Troxler & Vincent 1999:332).

### **Part III. The Rise of Industry (1865-1945)**

#### **Agriculture**

The soil of Alamance County was by reputation the most fertile high land in Piedmont North Carolina and was settled by dozens of farm families in the 18th century (Whitaker 1949:179). Following the Civil War many small farms grew corn as the principal crop. While some Alamance County farmers were planting cotton, other farmers were beginning to pay more attention to stock raising and improving their breeds. Other crops grown were tobacco, wheat and oats as well as other small grains (Whitaker 1949:181). Within 15 years following the declines seen during the Civil War, the agricultural resources of Alamance County largely rebounded and production levels generally surpassed those of the antebellum period. These increases were due largely to an increased use of guano and other fertilizers in the post war period, coupled with more effective methods of harvesting and cultivating more diversified crops and the increased transportation options offered by the NC Railroad (Troxler and Vincent 1999:384).

During the 1850s cotton production doubled from 15,000 to 32,000 bales in counties along the North Carolina Railroad. After cotton's 1860s decline, it rose again to 94,000 bales in 1880 and 107,000 bales in 1900 statewide (Trelease 1991: 333). In

addition Alamance County along with other NCRR counties increased their tobacco production with a high of 695,013 pounds in 1880 and in 1890 tobacco production was recorded at 901,922 pounds.

An important agricultural product for Alamance County was commercial fruit cultivation. During the 1850s commercial truck farming was made possible by the proximity to the railroad. Due to the lack of refrigeration, fruits and vegetables could only be carried long distances in dried form. But the dried fruit trade and the nursery trade specializing in fruit trees prospered (Trelease 1991: 103). By 1860 the North Carolina census figures gave fruit and orchard products a cash value for Alamance County of \$24,333. The main shipping points were between Salisbury and Durham. Leading fruits were blackberries used in winemaking and orchard crops like apples and peaches. Drying fruit on boards in the sun or in “dry houses” allowed farm families to generate extra income, especially for women and children (Trelease 1991: 263). This rural industry lasted until the invention of refrigerator cars changed the method of shipping fresh fruit. With the introduction of new refrigeration technology between the 1880s and 1900 the fruit industry declined (Trelease 1991: 333). By the 1890 census, value of the main fruits—apples, cherries, peaches, and pears—had decreased to \$1,241.

Before 1886 there were no fence laws in Alamance County and farmlands were usually open range where livestock wandered freely (Whitaker 1949:182). Split rail fences enclosed cultivated fields. During the Civil War, livestock were almost totally destroyed either by military confiscation or slaughter. After the war, seeing the South’s great agricultural needs, the Baltimore Association of Friends set up a school where modern-day Guilford College is located. Established were a model farm and school,

called Springfield. From these models the Sylvan Academy at the Cane Creek Friends MeetingHouse was established. Springfield Farm planned to acquire a registered Jersey bull from the State of Maine for the Sylvan School's Agricultural Club. However, when the bull arrived, the Club declined to pay the shipping charges. Caleb Dixon, a farmer in the Snow Camp community paid the charges and the bull, called "General Sherman," became the sire for a large and productive Jersey herd. Encouraged by reports of the quantity of milk and the long milking-period of the improved cattle, numerous other dairy farmers began to improve their stock (Whitaker 1949:184). This was the beginning of improved stock husbandry in Alamance County and the start of the lucrative dairy industry. By 1910 the value of dairy products in Alamance County was \$103,418.

In 1911 Agricultural Extension work was introduced into Alamance County when a group of interested farmers persuaded the county to match state and federal funds to establish a county agricultural extension office. The first problems tackled by the new office's agent, H.C. Turner, were soil conservation and winter cover crops. Turner introduced the cover crops crimson clover and soybeans. With education and conservation in mind, in 1912 Boys' Clubs, forerunners of Four-H Clubs, were introduced into rural sections of the county. By 1925 two extension agents were touring the county in horse and buggy, visiting farms and holding community meetings. Farmers began to set up model practices on their farms. By 1930 a board of three farmers from each of the thirteen Alamance County townships was set up to supervise farm needs and hold community meetings to improve dairy and poultry production (Whitaker 1949:185).

The improvement of dairy production in Alamance County brought commercial dairy enterprises. In 1915 June Hornaday established a small creamery on his farm in

Patterson Township, the first commercial creamery in the county. By 1921, a farmers' cooperative, the Alamance Cooperative Creamery, was established by 50 milk producers. In 1929 the successful Creamery was sold to the Pet Milk Company. The Scott brothers in Melville Township established a retail milk plant on their farm in 1927 (Whitaker 1949:185). By 1935, they built a modern dairy plant in Burlington.

At the same time that the Alamance County agent's were working for farmers, home demonstration programs began for rural women. The home agents' work was to institute modern improvements in the rural farmwomen's homes. These programs were part of the public focus in rural areas being instituted across the United States during the 1920s and 1930s (Whitaker 1949:185).

Crops grown by mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in Alamance County included tobacco, corn, hay, and vegetables as well as raising domestic farm animals. By 1949, Alamance County ranked fifty-first in the nation in value of vegetables grown for use on farms and eighty-third in tobacco production. Alamance County continued to be known for its large productive herds of dairy cattle, sheep, and beef cattle (Whitaker 1949:185).

### **Transportation: Roads, Railroads, and Airports**

As the toll of Civil War and Reconstruction began to fade away in Alamance County, its population looked ahead to a more prosperous second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Public efforts turned attention to speeding up that recovery and prosperity.

#### **Roads**

Most of the Alamance county roads were unpaved and ill kept during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

"The conditions of some [public roads] are well nigh impassable, scarcely anywhere good. Transportation for farmers at some seasons is next to impossible; there is a risk of breaking vehicles and getting [stuck] fast in the mud. The cost of bad roads to community cannot be estimated. The statute in regard to keeping roads [up] is a dead law; roads should be kept up by taxation. The law [for appointing road overseers, etc.] always was unjust but since the war it has been especially so. One class of men cut up the roads, and another class has them to work and keep [them] in order (Whitaker 1949:150)."

As the population of Alamance County grew, so did the number of roads. Most county roads were graded dirt that turned into mire during rainy and snowy weather. In Graham, before 1888, a plank road had been laid from the business district to the Graham Depot, a mile away, and a stagecoach was used to carry passengers and mail to and from the depot. In 1892 Graham boasted the first macadam street in Alamance County and in 1896 had the greatest amount of macadamized roads for any town its size in the state. By mid-20th century Alamance County had 225 miles of paved roads and 650 miles of dirt roads. The first macadamized road in the county was NC Highway 10, the Burlington-Graham Highway, paved before World War I. (Whitaker 1949:233).

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, 1890 to 1917, convict labor or "chain gangs" were used for working on public roads. At first the practice was heralded as a reform measure. The growing need for road building and repair in the South as a whole was seen as a stimulus for chain gang activity. However, abuses and ill treatment within the system caused its steady decline and by 1915, the "good roads and good men" concept in North Carolina began to fade (Ireland 1991:125-151). In the 1920s under the auspices of Governor Cameron Morrison, the "Good Roads Governor," a program of road improvements greatly upgraded roads and transportation. More roads were paved and new roads connected all parts of the county, widening the early wagon roads into two

and four-lane highways. In 1921 through the efforts of Harriet Morehead Berry, the General Assembly passed a \$50 million road building bond to construct a 6,000-mile network of roads in North Carolina.

During the 1960s as the North Carolina interstate system became a reality, Interstates 40 and 85 cut a wide swath across Alamance County making access to large eastern and western North Carolina cities a speedy commute.

### **Railroads**

With the coming of the railroad to Piedmont North Carolina, transportation for Alamance County businesses was changed forever. Because of limited transportation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most workers lived within walking distance of their jobs. For those riding on the trains there were no sleeping or dining cars and the NCRR would operate a hotel to house and feed its single employees, visitors, and passing railroad customers. Growth of hotels and businesses followed the railroad's path (*The Alamance News*:B1).

Because of the proximity of the railroad lines, textile and other mills began locating near railroad facilities. The mills received their raw materials and shipped their finished products by rail. In 1871 the NCRR leased its roadway to the Richmond and Danville Railroad which then ran its own trains on the tracks and used its own repair facilities near Richmond. Company Shops served the growing North Carolina Railroad until 1886 when the NCRR transferred its Richmond and Danville Railroad's operations to Manchester, Virginia.

When the railroad left, there were a few stores along Main Street of Company Shops. Three cotton mills and the two-year old Burlington Coffin Factory were the only sizeable industries in the village. The railroad shops were briefly reopened in 1890. In

1893 JP Morgan, financier of New York City, organized the Southern Railway which included the Richmond & Danville and in 1897 the NCRR moved its headquarters and repair shops to Spencer, North Carolina, near Salisbury (Whitaker 1949:134).

In 1887 Company Shops' citizens selected a committee to choose a new name for the town. After much deliberation, the name of "Burlington" was chosen and the village was incorporated in 1893. Eventually the Company Shops railroad buildings burned in two fires, one in 1904 and another in 1918 (Whitaker 1949:136).

Railroads changed peoples' lives throughout the South by connecting isolated towns to the outside world, changing subsistence economies into commercial. Before the railroads most farm crops would not repay the costs of shipping and the lengthy transportation by wagon over the available muddy roads. These factors limited the surplus that farmers could afford to grow. The building of the NCRR enabled commercial farming to prosper in Alamance County. With the coming of the railroad, farmers began raising surplus crops—wheat, tobacco, and cotton—to send to outside markets. In return the railroad brought in commercial fertilizers. Land prices rose and land ownership became more concentrated in larger holdings (*The Alamance News*:B7).

Before the coming of the railroad, mills had been established along streams to utilize the waterpower. After the coming of the railroad, steam-powered mills were built adjacent to the railroad beds, making Alamance County one of the state's most industrialized counties (*The Alamance News*: B7).

Also with the railroad came urbanization with towns, stores, and warehouses. Commercial establishments multiplied to meet the demands of commerce. The NCRR was the driving force that created the Piedmont Urban Crescent along its route from



Raleigh to Charlotte. The railroad's needs created depots along its route that grew into towns. Just as earlier towns had grown at crossroads, new towns grew from the proximity to the railroad. These depots became the focal points for stores, mills, tobacco warehouses, cotton gins, and houses. The railroad provided a means of distribution of not only raw cotton but also the finished goods from the county's mills. The railroad also brought the telegraph and increased access to news of the "outside" world as well as products from farms, factories, and businesses great distances away. This increased accessibility to distant markets, however, brought competition for local products, undermining some local businesses such as shoemaking and wheat growing.

### **Buses**

Local buses began running in Alamance County in 1931 when C.A. Lea founded the Lea Bus Company. Bus service originally ran from the E. M. Holt Plaid Mill in Burlington to Graham. The service centered on access for workers to county textile mills. Eventually bus service covered the entire county.

Extended area services began in 1925 when Carolina Coach Company of Burlington, later called "Carolina Trailways," started a route between Greensboro and Raleigh. In 1938 Burlington became the cross-country junction point when the organization of the National Trailways Bus Association and Virginia Stage Lines extended routes to Burlington to connect with Carolina Trailways. By this time passengers could travel from New York to Florida by bus. By 1949 Burlington was the junction point for three routes going north, south, and west (Whitaker 1949:227).

## **Trucking**

In 1929 the Barnwell Warehouse and Brokerage Company was organized in Burlington and in 1930 expanded into Barnwell Brothers Trucking Lines. In 1942 the Barnwell Brothers and Horton Motor Lines, two of the south's largest carriers, merged with five smaller companies, Southeastern Motor Lines, Transportation Inc, Consolidated Motor Lines, M. Moran Transportation Company and McCarthy Freight Systems, Inc., into Associated Transport Company (Whitaker 1949:231). Eventually Associated located its executive offices in New York City and operated in thirteen states along the Atlantic seaboard. Although the company owned and operated thirty-eight terminals during this time, the headquarters for the southern Division was located in Burlington. Barnwell Brothers and Horton pioneered the moving of textiles from plants in the South to locations throughout the eastern United States (Whitaker 1949:232).

## **Airline Service**

Before 1931 there was little aviation activity in Alamance County. The first plane owned in Alamance County was purchased by Hardy Hurst and Walt Squires of Mebane, used for operating barnstorming tours out of Mebane. By 1931 Glenn Huffman and Dover Fogelman arranged for the county's first major airstrip to be built, locating it on Alamance Road near Burlington at what became the Municipal Airport. The first hanger built there could accommodate two planes (Whitaker 1949:229). The airport was named Huffman Field. In 1935 a corporation was formed known as the Burlington Flying Service and the airfield was moved to the Fairchild airstrip, later known as the Alamance Aviation Service Inc. The Barnwell Brothers Trucking Company also operated a flying service out of the Fairchild airstrip. In 1942 Fairfield Aircraft and Engine Company

opened a private airfield at the old Huffman Field. By 1947 a Municipal Airport was completed in Alamance County (Whitaker 1949:230).

## **Industry**

### **Textile Industry**

From the time textile mills began, it was observed that they typically grew out of long-established mills of other kinds: tanning mills, saw mills, and particularly gristmills (Troxler and Vincent 1999:200). Because farmers relied heavily on wheat flour for cash income, gristmills were built on convenient streams and operated by waterpower. Each mill served several farms (Whitaker 1949:87). In 1745 Adam Trollinger and his son Jacob erected a gristmill where the town of Haw River was founded. In 1753 Simon Dixon built a gristmill at Snow Camp.

Other types of mills also were built. In northern Alamance County about 1795, a fulling mill was working on "Fulling Mill Branch," a tributary of Quaker Creek. Fulling mills converted woolen cloth into a dense felt fabric often used in hat making. During early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Archibald Debow Murphey had a carding mill alongside his gristmill and store at present-day Swepsonville (Troxler and Vincent 1999:195).

In the Quaker Creek area by the 1820's there was at least one gristmill and a sawmill. By the late 1830's there were 41 gristmills in present-day Alamance County. Often adjacent to the mills were stores where farmers having grains ground could buy goods with part of their grain. By 1860 the complex on Quaker Creek included a gristmill, a flourmill, a sawmill, a spinning mill, and a wagon shop along with stores. In 1879 there were 40 gristmills and 24 sawmills operating on waterpower in Alamance County. In 1899 there was one gristmill built on Stinking Quarter Creek. As late as 1928

there were 30 mills, dams or mill sites located on the streams of the county (Whitaker 1949:87).

These early mills served as the basis for establishing textile mills in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Alamance County. Waterpower was transferred from use of gristmills to textile mills. In 1832, John Trollinger built the first cotton factory in the county situated on the Haw River, above Stony Creek. With others, John Trollinger formed a joint stock company called "The High Falls Manufacturing Co." which later became the town of Hopedale. John Trollinger's son, Benjamin N. Trollinger, built the Granite Cotton Factory at Haw River in 1844 (Stockard 1900:145).

In 1837 Edwin M. Holt and his brother-in-law, William Carrigan, started the Alamance Cotton Factory at Alamance Creek, later the town of Alamance. Carrigan sold his interest to Edwin Holt in 1851 and Thomas Holt, E.M. Holt's son, came into the business. From 1851-1861 Thomas Holt worked with his father and learned the dye process. From this process came the manufacture of "Alamance Plaids," the first of their kind manufactured in the South (Stockard 1900:92). In 1845 when Benjamin Trollinger's Granite Cotton Factory on the Haw River failed, Thomas Holt bought it and moved to Haw River to run it.

Other mills were also started on the Haw River and its tributaries at various points such as Glencoe, Altamaha, Ossipee, Swepsonville, Bellemont, and Saxapaha (Whitsett 1926:11). Edwin M. Holt opened a yarn mill at Saxapahaw in 1849. James N. Williamson, son-in-law of Edwin Holt, founded the Ossipee Mill.

Edwin M. Holt is credited as the most important early mill owner in Alamance County. His decision to build cotton factories in North Carolina was based on business

and manufacturing conditions in the state. North Carolina cotton growers at that time were shipping their cotton crops to northern manufacturers, while North Carolina mills were paying high prices for the yarn produced by these northern businesses. Seeing the raw materials close at hand, the low freight rates to local factories, the numerous streams for water power, and the abundant labor available to become skilled labor, Holt chose his first mill site at Alamance village (Whitaker 1949:98)

During the Civil War, the cotton mills and the railroads boomed. The Saxapaha Mill, E.M. Holt's factory at Alamance, and Thomas Holt's mill on Haw River produced hundreds of yards of cotton cloth which were sent to Raleigh to be made into Confederate uniforms (Whitaker 1949:119).

Following the Civil War Lawrence Holt built the Aurora Cotton Mill around 1881 at Company Shops, beginning the textile industry in present-day Burlington. Other mills established there at that time were Lafayette Mills (1881) built by Lafayette Holt and his partners and the E.M. Holt Plaid Mills (1883) (Whitaker 1949:366). At Graham in 1881 Scott-Donaldson and Company built a cotton mill. In 1885 L. Banks Holt purchased it, re-naming it Oneida Cotton Mill. Scott-Donaldson then built the Sidney Cotton Mill in 1885 in north Graham.

From 1881 to 1915, mills in Alamance County made the transition from water to steam power. The last waterpower mills built in the county were at Altamahaw, Ossipee, and Glencoe. The first steam powered mills were Aurora (1881), Oneida (1882), and Holt Plaid (1883). In 1884 Lafayette Holt sold his interest in Lafayette Mills at Burlington and began designing the mechanical layouts of mills. Lafayette Holt, a distant relative of the mill-owning Holt family, largely made the transition from water to steam

possible in Alamance County. Holt was trained at the Lowell Textile School in Massachusetts where he acquired a thorough knowledge of every phase of cotton goods production and processing. Besides taking courses in machine shop practice, foundry, and mechanical drawing, Holt visited numerous northern mills that were experimenting with steam engines. When he returned to Company Shops in 1881, with his father and brother-in-law, he designed and built the Lafayette Mills, credited with producing the first knitted fabric in Alamance County, perhaps the first in North Carolina (Troxler and Vincent 1999:366). This tubular knit fabric was cut and sewn into men's undergarments and knitted stockings finished with a hand-sewn toe. In 1884 the mill was sold to R.J. Reynolds of Winston-Salem who resold the mill one year later to Lawrence Holt.

After the sale of the Lafayette Mill, Lafayette Holt concentrated on mill engineering and designing. He also fabricated parts for broken mill machinery, freeing local textile mills from depending on outside sources (Troxler and Vincent 1999:36). Other mills designed by Lafayette Holt included Elmira Cotton Mills, modernization of the Granite Cotton Mill at Haw River, Burlington's Windsor Cotton Mill, Lakeside Mills, and conversion of other mills to steam power.

In 1879 there were six cotton mills in Alamance County employing almost 600 workers. This number expanded by 1886 to 13 factories and by 1890 to 17 mills. Although originally working with locally grown cotton, demand in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century out-stripped the local crop, and cotton was shipped in from other southern states.

The Holt's "Alamance Plaids" were extremely popular throughout the South as well as in the Philadelphia market. The material gave the Holts a national reputation and the plaids were to remain a mainstay of the textile mills until about 1900. In 1900 the

Holt Plaid Mills at Burlington converted from the heavy plaid fabric to lighter gingham materials and continued until 1931 when it converted to manufacturing yarn goods. By 1919 the Holt family controlled 23 of the county's 27 textile mills, 78 percent of the spindles, and 83 percent of the looms (Troxler and Vincent 1999:351).

By the 1920s many cotton mills had converted to production of rayon and other fabrics. J. Spencer Love came to Burlington in 1924 after working in his family's mill in Gastonia. In 1924 Love built the Piedmont Heights 70-house mill village and the Pioneer Plant of Burlington Mills, the first of a chain of textile factories. The Pioneer Mill produced cotton dress goods, stiffening for women's hats, and material for railroad flags. Love began experimenting with rayon, sometimes called "artificial silk," used in production of bedspreads. In 1926 Love organized a new company, Holt, Love and Smith, to produce "wide textile novelties" as its new seamless bedspreads were called. Love also built Alamance Novelty Mills to produce upholstery and drapery goods. In 1928 North Carolina Silk Mills and Piedmont Weavers were built to produce rayon dress goods. By 1934 Love's Burlington Mills was the largest weaver of rayon in the U.S. (Troxler & Vincent 1999:376).

With the 1930s, the country moved into the Great Depression. As the Depression deepened, J. Spencer Love began to purchase failed or closing mills throughout the Piedmont. By 1937 after consolidation of its 22 mills, Burlington Mills Corporation was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. During this time Love moved the company's corporate headquarters from Burlington to Greensboro. Later the company's name was changed to Burlington Industries to reflect its growing diversification (Troxler & Vincent 1999:376).

During 1935, Burlington Mills sold its mill housing, Piedmont Heights, which had become known in 1920s Burlington as "Little Chicago" because of its rough reputation. However, Piedmont Heights also had a strong religious community that was organized around the Glen Hope Baptist Church (Troxler & Vincent 1999:377).

Another form of textiles that developed in Alamance County was the hosiery industry. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century hosiery for winter was knitted from wool and for summer from cotton. Cloth of several colors was sometimes sewn together to make hosiery of horizontal stripes. The average woman of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not have access to silk hose (Whitaker 1949:85). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century John Shoffner began the hosiery industry in Alamance County. Shoffner started his textile career as a "doffer" in the Alamance Cotton Mill where he worked for ten years. Five years later he invested \$4,000 in a small frame 20 x 30-foot building and bought 24 second-hand knitting machines. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for five or six years he jobbed out his work to larger mills, getting yarn from them and returning undyed half hose for a commission. By 1927 he purchased the village of Alamance, installed a modern water plant, built 75 or 80 cottages and a 36 room brick house (Whitaker 1949:168) By 1929 Shoffner had founded the Standard Hosiery Mills and acquired interests in several other mills in the county.

With the expansion of the textile industry, the coming of the hosiery industry, and the growth of towns and communities, Alamance County began to turn from the farm to the factory and from the village store to the supermarket (Whitaker 1949:163).

### **Mill Villages**

In Alamance County the early mills were often the beginnings of local communities and their reasons for being. The mill communities were dispersed across



the Alamance County landscape wherever there was waterpower to run the mills. Later other Alamance County communities developed with the prosperity of textile manufacturing and the accessibility to the railroad. The histories of Alamance County towns and cities are inexorably tied to the textile industry.

### **Altamaha**

John Q. Gant, a local cotton gin operator, founded Altamaha in 1860. By 1880 Gant and his partner, Berry Davidson, built Altamaha Cotton Mill to manufacture "Alamance cotton plaids." Gant and Davidson built the mill at Davidson's farm, formerly the Lambeth Place. In 1884 Davidson sold his interest in the mill to Lawrence and Banks Holt.

The Gant family established the first telephone line in Alamance County from their residence "Bonnie Oaks" to Mill Point Station (later Elon) and the mill office building in Altamaha. Their mill office built in 1890 was the most modern commercial building in Alamance County for its time with central heat, hot and cold running water, and carbide lighting. In 1894 a coffin and furniture factory was built in Altamaha (Whitaker 1949:142). By 1895 the Altamaha Mill employed 275 people (Troxler & Vincent 1999:361).

In 1920 the Gant family sold their Altamaha interests to the Holt family who continued to operate the Altamaha Mill until the mill failed in the 1930s. In 1933 the Gants repurchased the mill's physical plant, modernized the old mill, and reopened it as Glen Raven Silk Mills, producing a light-weight rayon dress fabric known as "Canton Crepe." The mill also produced a rayon gabardine fabric, "sharkskin," as well as several

types of upholstery materials (Troxler & Vincent 1999:361). The Altamaha Mill Office was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

### **Ossipee**

Ossipee lies south of Altamaha. The town grew out of the development of the Ossipee Cotton Mill founded by James N. Williamson, son-in-law of Edwin Holt.

### **Graham**

Graham had its genesis not as a mill village but as the court town and county seat of Alamance County. It was created strictly for that purpose. However, Graham also had its mills with the Oneida Cotton Mill, Scott-Donaldson Mill, Sidney Cotton Mill, and later the Scot-Baker & Company Hosiery Mill. Graham's first hosiery mill was built in 1927 by John Black, the Esther Hosiery Mill.

In its early days the town's water supply came from a well located on the north side of the Court Square, but later two additional wells were dug on the Square. These served, along with private wells, until the town waterworks and electric plant were constructed in 1904. Kerosene was the principal illuminant used in the homes and for streetlights until 1905 when the electricity was turned on. In 1920 the city voted a bond issue of \$100,000 for a sewage system. The first volunteer fire company was formed in Graham in 1904 (Whitaker 1949:145).

### **Mebane**

Mebane began as a rural post office known as "Mebane Hall." The principal settlers of the Mebane area were Stephen A. White in 1854 and in 1855 Frank Mebane and Thomas B. Thompson. With the coming of the railroad and associated businesses, the town prospered. The early settlement was called Mebanesville and was incorporated

in 1881 with Stephen White as its first mayor. In 1883 the town's name was changed to Mebane. At that time, White with his brother, D.A. White, and another partner formed the White Brothers Furniture Company. Although initially manufacturing window sashes and doors and contracting for buildings, in 1896 they turned to the manufacture of furniture.

By mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Mebane was the home of the Mebane Royall Company which manufactured bedsprings and mattresses. Mebane also sustained several hosiery mills, lumber plants, two banks, and a weekly newspaper. In addition to a number of stores and other business establishments, Mebane was an important tobacco market with many tobacco warehouses. In 1907 it became the Town of Mebane and is now known as the City of Mebane. In the 1920s it received water and sewer facilities and the first paving, curbing, and guttering of streets with paved sidewalks. Mebane's first volunteer fire department was organized in 1922.

### **Haw River**

Initially settled by Adam Trollinger on the Haw River in 1747, the site was the location of a gristmill built by Jacob Trollinger, Adam's son. The settlement was known as "Trollinger's Ford" for many years and served as an important river crossing during the Revolutionary War. Cornwallis was said to have camped on the Trollinger's farm the night before the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Henry Trollinger, Jacob's son, built a toll bridge across the river in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Benjamin Trollinger, Jacob's great-grandson, built a mill there in 1844 called Granite Cotton Factory.

The development of the railroad greatly aided the town of Haw River when Benjamin Trollinger convinced the North Carolina Railroad Company to cross the Haw

River at his location. Trollinger clinched the location by offering to build the bridge himself. The 260-foot bridge over the Haw River was one of the longest on the North Carolina Railroad line and was completed in 1855. Trollinger also built a 10-room hotel adjacent to the railroad's location. The hotel was located on the eastside of the river near Trollinger's cotton mill and across from the NCRR depot. Called the "Haw River House," the hotel provided overnight accommodations for passengers and an eating place for passengers, train crews and railroad personnel. However, with the completion of a new hotel at Company Shops, Trollinger's hotel in Haw River failed and Trollinger was forced into bankruptcy. With the bankruptcy, the Granite Cotton Factory was sold to Edwin and Thomas Holt who eventually began producing the "Alamance Plaids" there. When Thomas Holt married Louisa Moore of Caswell County in 1855, they built an estate on 400 acres at Haw River.

In 1868 Thomas Holt took his wife's brother, Adolphus Moore, into partnership in the Granite Cotton Mill and the firm became known as Holt and Moore. The firm continued to process flour and meal at its two gristmills located along the Haw River. When Dolph Moore was murdered in January 1876, Holt reorganized the business into the Thomas M. Holt Manufacturing Company. In 1880, when Holt's daughter Cora married Edwin Chamber Laird, Holt built a second mill across the street from the old Granite Cotton Mill and named it Cora Cotton Mills. Lafayette Holt designed the mill. In 1881 a power dam was constructed across the river. Gradually because of the textile industry, a residential community grew up around the textile factories (Whitaker 1949:140).

In 1891 when then-governor Daniel Fowle died in office, Thomas Holt then-lieutenant governor became Governor. At the end of Holt's term, not seeking re-election because of ill health, Holt returned to Haw River and with the help of his son Charles, he developed a third mill known as the Thomas M. Holt Mill, still standing in 2002. In 1917 the mills were reorganized under the name of Holt-Granite-Puritan Mills. In the 1920s after Thomas Holt's death, the mills went into trusteeship and then were sold to Proximity Manufacturing of Greensboro, a subsidiary of the Cone family textile interests (Troxler & Vincent 1999:356).

In 1928, Proximity Manufacturing divided the property into two parts, keeping the Granite Cotton Mill plant. The rest of the facilities south of the road were taken over by Sidney Paine, president of the Textile Development Company of Greensboro. Paine renamed the mills Tabardrey Manufacturing Company, making suiting and cotton fabric for work clothes (Troxler & Vincent 1999:356). The Tabardrey Mill converted to corduroy in 1930 and sent it across the road to Granite Cotton Mill for finishing. The popularity of corduroy lasted until 1983 when it waned and the Tabardrey Mill was closed. With changes in the textile industry, the Proximity/Granite mills closed in 1997 after almost 113 years of production (Troxler and Vincent 1999:357). During its tenure in Haw River, Proximity Mill also operated a YMCA. The mill donated the land for the town's sewage treatment plant and its civic center (Troxler & Vincent 1999:357)

### **Gibsonville**

Gibsonville was named for Joseph Gibson (1785-1857), local landowner who also was active in contracting and grading for the NCRR when it was constructed from Raleigh to Greensboro. The citizens in communities through which it passed usually

performed the grading of roadbeds for the railroad. Joseph contracted with the State to work and grade 3 ½ miles of roadbed on both sides of the county line for a sum of \$4,000.00 per mile. Slaves, owned by Gibson, did the bulk of the work. Grading for roadbed was begun in 1851, with the building of the Gibsonville depot in 1854. The first train entered the Gibsonville station on October 9, 1855. The railway station, established about a mile north of his home and named for John Gibson, became the town. The first post office was named Gibsonville and the town was incorporated and chartered as the Town of Gibsonville in 1871. The original town was laid off with land in both Guilford and Alamance Counties with the railroad depot at its center. The town grew up around the railroad tracks that divided the town. Gibsonville is the only Alamance County town that straddles the Alamance and Guilford County lines.

In 1887 Berry Davidson constructed Gibsonville's first cotton mill, known as Minneola Mill. This mill was sold after a few years to the Cone textile family of Guilford County. In 1893, Davidson built a second mill at Gibsonville known as Hiawatha Mill that was eventually sold to the Holt Family. In 1945 David Cashwell organized Dixie Bell Lingerie in Gibsonville (Troxler & Vincent 1999:365). Another cotton mill in Gibsonville, called Gem Cotton Mills, was also owned by the Holt family (*The Alamance News* 1999:B2).

### **Snow Camp**

During the 1740s settlers from Pennsylvania settled at Snow Camp. In 1751 the Cane Creek Friends Church was established and in 1753 Simon Dixon built a gristmill. The plank road from Fayetteville to Snow Camp brought expansion in the mid-1800s and

academies and churches grew up. One of the earliest temperance societies in the South was formed at Snow Camp in 1833 (Whitaker 1949:141).

In 1835 the Dixon family built a cotton mill, Snow Camp Manufacturing Company. Other industries that were established were furniture making, a foundry, and a tanning yard. In 1857 E. M. and Thomas Holt bought their second mill, Cane Creek Factory, which may have been the bankrupt Dixon mill. This mill continued doing business until the late 1890s. In 1886 machinery was installed in the former foundry and a woolen mill began manufacturing all wool jeans, suiting, and wool yarn for socks.

### **Saxapahaw**

Originally named Sissipahaw, the town of Saxapahaw was renamed by John Newlin, local businessman, sometime after 1844. In 1844, John Newlin and two of his sons, James and Johnathan, formed “John Newlin and Sons” and constructed a textile spinning mill, the Saxapahaw Mill, on the east side of the Haw River. By 1848 the mill was a spinning mill and around 1853, the Newlins installed looms and began weaving fabric. During the Civil War, the factory produced cloth and yarn for the Confederacy. John Newlin died in 1867 and in 1873 E.M. Holt purchased the mill from Newlin’s sons, operating the mill as the Holt-White-Williamson Mill. After Holt's death in 1884, the inheriting family members changed the mill's name to White-Williamson and Company. The White-Williamson and Company converted the mill from waterpower to a steam generator power. The mill produced knitted tubing textile novelties called “ades” (Troxler and Vincent 1999:352). The Williamson family operated the mill until it closed in 1923.

In September 1927, investors headed by C.V.Sellers purchased the White-Williamson and Company Mill, and Sellers engaged his nephew, B. Everett Jordan of Gastonia, to run the mill. The mill became the Sellers Manufacturing Company. From the 1920s into the 1940s the Saxapahaw Mill produced mercerized cotton yarns for the hosiery industry, eventually moving to synthetic yarns including polyester and nylon blends. Later the company held an exclusive contract to provide yarn to Spring City Knitting Company of Pennsylvania, exclusive supplier of underwear to J.C.Penney and other major retailers (Troxler and Vincent 1999:352). In 1998 the former Saxapahaw Spinning Mill was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Swepsonville**

Swepsonville was named for George W. Swepson (1811-1883) who built the Falls Neuse Cotton Mill there in 1868. The town was incorporated in 1887 but its charter was repealed in 1901. After the Civil War, George W. Swepson went into partnership with a Raleigh merchant, George Rosenthal, on the Haw River. The partners purchased the former property of Thomas Ruffin, before that, Archibald Debow Murphey. By 1868, Swepson had constructed a large frame mill, a company store, and mill houses. By 1870 the mill was producing Alamance plaids. In the early 1870s, Swepson became involved in a bitter dispute with mill owners Thomas Holt and Dolph Moore over a lawsuit alleging trademark infringement of the Alamance plaids. When Moore was shot and killed, Swepson fell under suspicion and was placed in protective custody. After being acquitted, public opinion turned against Swepson and he had to leave his home on the Haw River and moved to Raleigh.



In 1880 the Falls Neuse Mill was completely destroyed by fire; arson was suspected. George Rosenthal, Swepson's partner, had purchased enough insurance to cover the loss of the building, its machinery and stock, and the mill was rebuilt within a year. Swepson died in 1883 with the cloud of murder and arson on his name.

In 1883 Ashby L. Baker became president of Falls Neuse Mill, buying out Rosenthal (Troxler & Vincent 1999:358). In 1892 the Falls Neuse Mill burned again and the entire mill complex, except the machine shop and lapper room, was destroyed (Troxler & Vincent 1999:359). By 1893 Baker had rebuilt the mill using the "slow burn" brick construction favored by other area mills. When Baker's wife, Virginia McAden Baker, died in 1893, he changed the name of the mill to Virginia Cotton Mills. In 1902-1906 Baker hired an architect, Raleigh Hughes, to enlarge the mill and supervise the construction. With three large boilers to generate steam for electric power, the Virginia Cotton Mills became the first industry of its kind in the county to use electric motors for driving mill machinery. Because of increased production, Baker added more workers and more workers' housing. Baker also built a two-story, seven-grade school in Swepsonville, the forerunner of the current Alexander Wilson School (Troxler & Vincent 1999:359).

During World War I through unprecedented prosperity, Virginia Mills raised wages and shortened the workers' workweek from 60 hours to 55. Baker built an up-to-date steam/electric power plant to replace the older one and extended electricity from the mill to the mill houses. In 1917 Virginia Mills instituted a profit sharing plan, one of the first such plans in the Southeast. Although Baker died in 1921, his nephew took over and introduced the production of rayon into its formerly all-cotton fabrics. The Depression

closed the mill in 1933. The Baker family reorganized the mill with help from other mill owners. Minnie Baker, widow of A.L. Baker, was elected president, the first woman in North Carolina to head a million-dollar enterprise (Troxler & Vincent 1999:359).

Between 1934 and the end of World War II, the Virginia Mills installed jacquard looms to produce upholstery material and fancy dress goods. Looms for weaving drapery fabrics were also added increasing the complex to over 90,000 square feet of space. In 1943, the company established the Baker Foundation to promote social and recreational activities in Swepsonville. In 1989 a fire, described as the largest in Alamance County history, destroyed the mill (Troxler & Vincent 1999:359).

### **Glen Raven**

John Q. Gant, who established a mill there, named the town of Glen Raven. Gant started his textile career at the Holt Alamance Cotton Factory where he operated the company store and served as bookkeeper and paymaster for the factory (Troxler & Vincent 1999:360). In 1875 at Company Shops, Gant opened his own mercantile firm, John Q. Gant & Co., with E.M.Holt's sons, Lawrence and L. Banks. The store was known as the "Yellow Store." In 1900 John Q. Gant bought property on the westside of Burlington in an area known as "Frog Town." With his son Joe overseeing the construction, the Glen Raven Cotton Mill was built.

Glen Raven Mills produced colored canvas awning fabric trademarked as "Zebra Stripes." By 1912 Glen Raven was producing "Glen Raven Sunfast Woven Army Awning Stripes" adding in 1915 "Corella" and "Glen Rella Awning Stripes" (Troxler & Vincent 1999:361). In 1928 Glen Raven Mills was producing quality-blended fabrics containing synthetics such as orlon and dacron for upholstery, drapery, and luggage

fabrics. During World War II Glen Raven Mills produced nylon products for the war effort. In 1959 Allen Gant, Sr., invented pantyhose. Today Glen Raven Mills is known internationally for its diverse products.

### **Hopedale**

Originally the site of the High Falls Manufacturing Company built by John Trollinger in 1832, this mill, also known as the Big Falls Mill, was located at the confluence of Stony Creek and the Haw River. After the sale of the Swepsonville Falls Neuse Mill, its former part owner George Rosenthal became secretary-treasurer of the Juanita Cotton Mills, formerly Big Falls Mill. Juanita Cotton Mill went bankrupt in 1904. The mill and its village were sold to James N. Williamson and Sons, who changed the village's name to Hopedale. There the Williamsons made warps for their other mill located several miles west of Reedy Fork at Ossipee. In 1941, Copland Fabrics purchased the mill and the original building still stands as a part of a fifteen-acre complex. Today the Hopedale Mill is a part of Copland Industries, producing pocketing, commercial finishing, furniture decking, table rounds, lampshades, tablecloths, ironing board covers, and 100 percent cottons for men's and women's apparel (Troxler & Vincent 1999:358; [www.coplandfabrics.com](http://www.coplandfabrics.com)).

### **Glencoe**

In 1878 Edwin M. Holt with his sons, James and William, purchased 38 acres along the Haw River, north of Company Shops. The tract contained a gristmill, a sawmill, and a tobacco processing plant. In 1879 the Holts purchased an additional 148 acres located adjacent to the original tract (Troxler & Vincent 1999:362). During 1879 the millrace was deepened and extended 600 yards and Glencoe Mill was established. Using

the log and stone dam from the original gristmill, records show that 130 horsepower was furnished to the Holt plant (Troxler & Vincent 1999:362). Between 1880-1882, construction of the Glencoe Mill was completed. New equipment to modernize the Glencoe Mill was purchased from the Lowell Machine Shops of Lowell, Massachusetts. By 1881, Glencoe Mill was producing plaid, checked, and striped cotton cloth. By 1894, the Holts had constructed 41 three- and five-room mill houses at Glencoe. A mill village was developed with a company store, church, and fraternal lodge (Troxler & Vincent 1999:363).

Along with the Altamaha and Ossipee mills, Glencoe was the last of the country's cotton mills to be developed primarily for waterpower. In 1894 a 48-inch Victor turbine was installed in the mill and another turbine was added to generate electricity for lighting. Glencoe became one of the first cotton mills to install electric lights. By 1900, Glencoe began to modernize its machinery and began production of napped cotton fabric, used to make nightgowns and blankets. Production continued through the beginning of the 20th century up through the 1940s and 1950s when growing competition and rapid consolidation of small cotton mills disrupted Glencoe's marketing network. By 1954, the economics of scale and the lack of ample resources to adopt new technology drove Glencoe Mill out of business (Troxler & Vincent 1999:364). In 1979 the Glencoe Mill Village Historic District was established and in 1996 Preservation North Carolina purchased the mill and village for adaptive reuse.

### **Kimesville**

In 1880 William Kime established a cotton mill, Kimesville Manufacturing Company, on Stinking Quarter Creek, a tributary of the Haw River. This water-powered

mill reused an 1814 dam built for a gristmill by the Hadley family. By 1882 the village of Kimesville, named for the mill's owner, grew to include 21 company houses and the brick cotton mill building (Troxler and Vincent 1999:364).

During 1919 due to economic conditions following World War I, the Kimesville Manufacturing Company closed. The mill building was dismantled, the looms were shipped to Japan, and the company houses were sold. During the 1920s through the 1940s, Dr. G.A. Foster developed the area as a tourist attraction by creating a lakeside beach, a dance hall, and a lake for swimming, fishing, and boating. By the late 1950s as the recreation area's popularity waned, the facilities were closed (Troxler & Vincent 1999:364).

### **Bellemont**

The Bellemont Mill Village was founded ca. 1879 by L. Banks Holt and Lawrence S. Holt on the south side of Great Alamance Creek, east of NC Highway 49. Bellemont is located approximately 3 1/2 miles southwest of Graham. The Holt brothers mill complex consisted of a 3-story brick cotton mill with 23 one- and two-story frame mill houses. Contractor Berry Davidson constructed the Bellemont buildings for the Holts. Bellemont Mill was one of the last water-powered textile mills built in Alamance County.

In 1897 L. Banks Holt purchased his brother's partnership share and added Bellemont Mill to his other holdings. In 1909 he established the "L. Banks Holt Manufacturing Co." and transferred ownership to the Holt family-run corporation. When Holt died in 1920, his heirs operated the corporation until the mid-1920s when they began to dispose of some of their mills. The Bellemont mill remained with the Holt

Corporation until the 1930s when the E.M. Plaid Mill, Inc. purchased the mill and village. In 1937, the corporation sold 16 of the mill houses to five individuals. Burlington Milling Company, later Burlington Industries, purchased the Bellemont Mill and the remaining houses in 1939, renaming the mill, Bellemont Weaving. Burlington Industries operated the mill until the late 1950s, selling their remaining mill houses during the mid-1940s. In 1958 Charles Foster and William S. Foster, the Hazel Knitting Mill owners, purchased the Bellemont Mill and ran it until 1973. William S. Foster, Charles' son, leased the mill when his father died in 1973 and it became part of Flexon Fabric Inc., producing polyester double-knit fabrics. In 1981 the mill was sold to Tasker Industries, soon closing the facility. Following that sale, the mill has remained vacant.

### **Other 20<sup>th</sup> Century Business and Industry**

Textile mills were not the only important businesses and industries in Alamance County. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup>, other businesses also flourished.

Burlington Coffin Factory was chartered in 1880 at Company Shops, later Burlington. The Burlington Coffin Factory produced coffins that were shipped throughout the southeast from the Burlington Depot. Although a major fire destroyed the factory in 1904, the company rebuilt, and by 1949 was averaging 10,000 caskets annually. In 1963 when the firm closed, it had been one of Burlington's oldest continuously operated businesses (Troxler & Vincent 1999:390).

In 1881 White Furniture Company was incorporated in Mebanesville, now Mebane, by David and William White. The firm switched from window sashes and

doors to production of furniture in 1896 and was known as one of North Carolina's oldest continuously operated furniture factories. The White Furniture Company's main complex of buildings was constructed between 1905 and 1924. During World War II, White Furniture Company manufactured beds and footlockers for the military and tool cribs and sheds for bomber plants. The Company closed its doors in May 1993. The White Furniture Company site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

L. P. Best, Jr, founded Craftique, another Mebane furniture company, in 1946. The company is noted for its high-end 18<sup>th</sup> century mahogany reproductions as well as furnishings developed around a "Thomas Day" line. This line is drawn from the work of a 19<sup>th</sup> century free black cabinetmaker from Caswell County. In 1988 Craftique was sold to Pulaski Furniture of Pulaski, Virginia. In 1997 the company was sold again to an investor group representing Henredon and Kittinger Furniture Companies (Troxler & Vincent 1999:390).

Byrd Food Stores is a grocery store chain that developed during 1946-1948 in Burlington from the North Main Street Grocery and the Church Street Grocery. Eventually the Byrd family's chain extended northward along the I-85 corridor and eastward to coastal North Carolina encompassing 40 grocery stores with its main warehouse facility located in Mebane (Troxler & Vincent 1999:390).

Charlie W. Stadler founded "Stadler's Hams" from a small grocery store on Highway 100 near Elon College. The store sold popular salted and smoked "country hams," processed from hogs raised by the family. By 1958 a larger facility and an improved technique for curing were needed. After consultation with experts at North

Carolina State University, the curing process was reduced to 95 days and Stadler's Hams became the first producers to use controlled conditions in commercial ham production. After 1963, the business expanded to include sales to fast food franchises and packaged meats to food stores. In 1994 the company moved its headquarters near Elon College and is one of the largest family-owned and privately held businesses in Alamance County (Troxler & Vincent 1999:391).

D.W. Ledbetter of Roxboro incorporated Mebane Home Telephone Company in 1919. The company was purchased in 1922 by S.M. Hupman, Sr. and modernized by converting to an automatic system. During the 1960s and 1970s the company grew and became the first in North Carolina to have an all-private line system. In 1976 it was one of the first telephone companies in the nation to introduce electronic switching. In 1986 digital switching was instituted. During the 1980s and 1990s the company expanded into cablevision, cellular telephone, and security monitoring systems. The firm's official name was changed to MEBTEL in 1990. The company was purchased in 1998 by Madison River Corporation (Troxler & Vincent 1999:392).

Thomas Edward Powell, Jr., founded Carolina Biological Supply Company in 1927 after he realized the difficulty of obtaining specimens for scientific laboratory work. In 1930 despite the Depression, Powell, a biology professor at Elon College, grossed \$2,000. The business grew steadily and Powell held the presidency of Carolina Biological Supply Company until 1977. Powell then progressed into physics and mathematical applications, computers, and videotaped scientific films and lectures. Powell, one of North Carolina's most outstanding entrepreneurs, has established a western division and specimen collection stations in Louisiana, Texas, and Maine (Troxler and Vincent



1999:393). Other Powell businesses in Alamance County are Granite Diagnostics in Burlington, and Mecklenburg County, Virginia as well as Bobbitt Laboratories, Wolfe Sales, and Omni Resources. Warren Laboratories in Warrenton, NC, devotes land to production of genetic corn (Troxler & Vincent 1999:392).

LabCorp was founded in 1969 by three of Dr. Thomas Powell, Jr.'s sons as Biomedical Reference Laboratories, a medical diagnostic testing firm. In 1982 the company was one of three testing labs the Hoffman-La Roche Company joined to form Roche Biomedical Laboratories. By 1989, Roche Laboratories was one of the four largest medical testing labs in the nation. During the early 1980s the Roche Laboratories was located between Burlington and Elon College. In 1984 it moved to downtown Burlington and extended its operations into downtown structures. In 1995 the company merged with National Health Laboratories Holding, Inc. The new company, known as Laboratory Corporation of America (LabCorp), resulted in the formation of the nation's largest reference laboratory for molecular diagnostic testing. The \$1.6 billion company performs diagnostic tests nationwide. In 1997 the company was the first commercial reference laboratory to offer HIV genotyping. Powell resigned as president and CEO of LabCorp and founded AutoCyte to concentrate on PAP smear diagnoses and their standardization. AutoCyte is based in Burlington (Troxler & Vincent 1999:393).

Although there has been much modern development in Alamance County, starting around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the City of Burlington has made the greatest strides in growth. Burlington became the city that served as the nucleus of modern advancement in water service, electricity, and industry. While Alamance County began as an agrarian county, with the development of textile industry, its towns became factory-centers. The

advent of the 1960s interstate system and its growth into the 21<sup>st</sup> century have made the area along the high-speed corridor accessible, changing the face of development to diverse industries.

### **Non-textile Communities**

#### **Little Texas**

Although not founded around a part of the textile industry, the Little Texas community of Pleasant Grove Township is of historical interest. It represents one of the oldest continuously functioning “communities of color” in the Piedmont, if not the state. Settled in the early 1780s by mixed-race Revolutionary War veterans from the Greensville County, Virginia, area, the community reached a population of 250-300 by 1830. Roughly 80% of these families were traceable to the acculturated Indian communities which had formed along the Virginia/North Carolina border by the mid-1700s. In the 1830s many “Little Texas” families left the community for Ohio and Indiana, seeking less restrictive social conditions. Today many residents of the Little Texas community are identified as members of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation. The Occaneechi Band received official acknowledgement from the state of North Carolina as an Indian tribe in 2002.

#### **Elon**

Formerly known as Mill Point for a freight depot for shipping mill products manufactured nearby, the town's name changed when the College of Elon was moved from Graham in 1890. Elon was incorporated in 1893. Around 1905 the college built an electrical powerhouse and made available to the residents of the community both electricity and running water. Prior to that time, each household had depended on a well,

wood for fires, and kerosene lamps. The Elon Home for Children, an orphanage, moved to Elon in 1907 when the Christian Church was built. In 1923 the town gained its own power from Piedmont Power and Light. In 1924 the town drilled a town well and erected a water tank. This well was in use until 1966-67 when the town drilled two new wells and closed the first well. More recently, the school of Elon College changed its name to Elon University and the town's name to Elon.

### **Education: Educational Facilities**

When the Civil War began, there were 49 common schools and 34 teachers in Alamance County (Whitaker 1926:192). Most of these schools did not survive the War. During the post-war period in the late 1870s, a statewide system of racially separate district schools was instituted. Few of the common schools were reused and new districts were re-drawn. Soon even the names of the early schools had been forgotten (Troxler and Vincent 1999:255).

The post Civil War years brought to the South momentous challenges and far-reaching changes, especially in schools where the idea of higher education was undergoing reevaluation. In an environment of social and economic privation, the demand for useful knowledge over classical education became increasingly more emphasized (Curtis 1996:365).

Out of the common school tradition grew the public schools of Alamance County. Sylvan School at Cane Creek Meetinghouse, first known as Sylvan of the Grove Academy, began in 1866. It was originally built where Cane Creek Friends Meetinghouse is located today. In 1912, having outgrown its size, a new two-story building was built

located on top of Flint Hill. Sylvan School is the only school in the county that is partially operated with a trust fund. This school was the first consolidated rural high school in the state in 1912. The Sylvan School also had the first "school bus" in the county, a horse-drawn covered wagon that the Board of Education purchased to carry pupils to classes. The pupils paid ten cents a day for their ride (Whitaker 1949:206). The building became an elementary school in 1961 and the 1912 two-story building burned in 1974 (*The Alamance News* 1999:C6).

Another school in the Cane Creek section of Alamance County was the Oak Dale Academy, founded in 1876 but destroyed by fire in 1895. In the Altamaha area, John Gilliam started the Gilliam Academy in 1879, three miles from Altamaha. Other schools during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were: Friendship Academy, southwest of Graham, Stainback's School in the Cross Roads section, Nicholson's in the Eureka community, Salem Academy at Cedar Cliff, the Yadkin Academy for Negroes at Mebane, Miss Forest's School at Mebane, Union Academy at Union Ridge, Swepsonville Academy, Pleasant Lodge Male Academy and the Bingham Academy at Mebane.

Subjects taught in the county high schools in 1907-1908 included English, grammar, composition and rhetoric, English literature, advanced arithmetic, algebra, English history, ancient history, America history, NC history, Latin, and physical geography. By 1912, foreign languages had been added (Whitaker 1949:206).

There was no high school education for African-American children before 1928. During that year the County Board of Education built the Pleasant Grove Negro School. In 1931 a four-year African-American high school was established in Graham and at Pleasant Grove (Whitaker 1949:207).

Before 1933 special school charter districts were operated in the Graham, Haw River, and Mebane school districts. Each of these districts had its own board of education and was more or less independent of the County Board of Education (Whitaker 1949:206). In 1933 the Legislature repealed all acts creating special charter districts and these schools were added to the county system.

### **Elon College**

In 1887 the Christian Church voted to lease the Graham Institute in the town of Graham and operate it as Graham College while looking for a permanent site for the school. After some problems with the town of Graham, the College opted to establish a new college at a location outside the existing city boundaries. The new college was named Elon from the Hebrew word for "oak." The intention was that the original location in Graham would revert to a Christian Church high school, however the building burned in 1892 and was not rebuilt.

The new location of Elon, west of Graham, had formerly been known as Mill Point. In 1890 the post office at Mill Point changed its name to Elon College and in 1893 the town was chartered as the Town of Elon College. By 1890 there were 88 students enrolled in Elon College's single classroom building. The women's dormitory was completed in 1891. West Dormitory and the electric powerhouse were completed in 1904 and campus heating and water systems were installed. During that year nine other buildings were built on the campus and six buildings off-campus for the use of faculty members or as dormitories. During January 1923, fire destroyed the administration building. Following the fire, five new buildings were constructed (Whitaker 1949:214).

The original 25-acre campus later encompassed 502 acres with 48 major buildings (*The Alamance News*: C:5).

### **Alamance Community College**

In the late 1950s, due to a shortage of trained workers for highly skilled local jobs, industrial education was promoted as a key to attracting industry to Alamance County. Alamance Community College grew as a result of the pressing economic and employment needs. Local individuals were determined to aid in finding solutions to these needs (Troxler & Vincent 1999:398.) In the 1970s a campus on Haw River and a Burlington campus were established. By 1988 Alamance Community College was firmly in place meeting the educational needs of Alamance County.

### **Services: Development of Public Facilities and Utilities**

As Alamance County entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it followed the pattern of other North Carolina counties by developing public facilities such as hospitals and utilities such as water, electricity, gas, and transportation.

### **Hospitals**

Before World War I, medical care in Alamance County was dependent on the local family doctor. If extra medical attention were needed, the patient was sent outside the county to a large hospital (Whitaker 1949:233). In 1916, Dr. Rainey Parker built a private hospital near US Highway 70, east of Burlington, named the Rainey Hospital. In 1929 an annex was added to the original building. By 1937, its name was changed to Alamance General Hospital, Inc. In 1948 a new emergency room and delivery room were added as well as a 20-bed addition.

During this time, individual doctors or partnerships established smaller private hospitals in various communities of the county. Some of these specialized in treatment of particular branches of medicine (Whitaker 1949:233). By 1949, a new 100-bed general county hospital was built adjoining the Alamance County Tubercular Sanitarium on Hopedale Road in Burlington (Whitaker 1949:234)

### **Recreation and Communication**

Although a public recreation area was built at Kimesville in the 1920s, most county recreation facilities were related to schools and churches. In some mill towns like Haw River and Swepsonville, mill owners opened local YMCA or social facilities. In the 1940s and 1950s Burlington and vicinity sported the baseball athletic fields, Elon Park and Graham Park. Other facilities included small local municipal parks, tennis courts, and golf courses. Public lakes were located at Kimesville and at Alamance Camp, south of Graham (Whitaker 1949:242).

The Alamance Broadcasting Company, an affiliate of the Dixie FM network, was established in 1941 with its studio in Burlington at WBBB, interpreted locally as “We’re Building Better Burlington.” Early in 1947 WFNS, organized by Alamance County businessmen, began broadcasting (Whitaker 1949:240).

The first newspaper in Alamance County was published from Graham, named *Ratoon*. *The Southern Democrat*, established in 1851, had J.W. Lawrence as its first editor. By 1875 a third newspaper, *The Alamance Gleaner*, was published by Capt. E.S. Parker. In 1880 the newspaper was bought by the J.D. Kernodle and T.B. Eldridge but came under complete control of the Kernodle family in 1882. From 1909 to 1919 *The Leader* was the paper of choice in Mebane, succeeded by another weekly, the *Enterprise*.

In 1887 Will F. Clapp began publishing the forerunner of the *Burlington Daily Times-News*. By 1893 Burlington's tabloid was *The Burlington What-Is-It?* started by W.P. Ezell and E.E. Workman.

### **Utilities: Water**

Public water facilities usually followed as the population of a town increased. The City of Burlington's first water program was the digging of a well in 1888 known as the "Community Well" (Whitaker 1949:217), supplying water to all businesses of that time located in the city. The overflow from the well's pump furnished water for horses and other animals. This well was used as the city water system until 1916 when a 50-gallon tank was installed and a drinking fountain was built at the sidewalk (Whitaker 149:218). Between 1908 and 1916, three additional wells were dug. By 1918, the wells were being pumped dry daily and the city expanded to a filter plant in January of 1919. After the addition of more filters in 1922 and 1937-1938, a five-foot dam was started followed almost immediately by a 30-foot dam with a hydro pump, encompassing a watershed of 108 square miles (Whitaker 1949: 218). Other towns followed this pattern with Graham eventually pumping its water supply from Burlington when its town wells declined and the demand for water exceeded its capacity (Whitaker 1949:219).

As the area's population grew dramatically by mid-century, the county and local municipalities undertook programs to impound waters from a number of area streams, such as Back Creek and Quaker Creek, creating reservoirs. In 1993 Lake Mackintosh was opened by impounding the Little and Great Alamance Creeks.



**Utilities: Electricity**

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, candles and kerosene lamps lighted Alamance County. In 1902 Burlington opened a small electric plant. In 1913 the Alamance Railway and Electric Company purchased the Burlington plant. The availability of electricity allowed the company to build a "street railway" from Burlington to Graham and into the town of Haw River. This trolley line gave Alamance County its first major local advance in transportation following the building of the railroad. When Piedmont Power and Light Co. acquired the trolley line, a car barn was built in Burlington. The streetcar operation ceased in early 1924 as automobiles took precedence for travel. The trolley barn later became City Laundry until the building was destroyed by fire in 1941 (Troxler & Vincent 1999:395). During its operation, the effects of the trolley system changed many working and living standards. The new line gave employment to many people, expanded shopping areas, and allowed business to be conducted on a coordinated scale between the three textile mill centers (Whitaker 1949:219).

Initially electric service was not widespread in Alamance County. Some local skeptics doubted its worth while others feared the dangers associated with it (Whitaker 1949:221). In 1921 electric streetlights were installed in Burlington and the service was extended to Graham in 1923. The Piedmont Power and Light Company with headquarters in Greensboro purchased the Alamance Company in 1923. During the 1920s the North Carolina Company followed by the Southern Public Utility and finally the Duke Power Company purchased stock and assumed control of Alamance County's electrical needs (Whitaker 1949:221).

**Utilities: Natural Gas**

The North Carolina Power Service Company installed natural gas service in Burlington in 1926. Initially 15 miles of gas main were laid with 450 connections. By 1949 this usage had grown to 1800 customers in Burlington and Graham and 2500 farm customers (Whitaker 1949:222). By 1950 about 2,000 customers in Burlington and Graham received piped natural gas, and bottled propane was being supplied for more than 2,500 local farms (Troxler and Vincent 1999:395).

#### **Utilities: Telephones**

Telephone service began in 1886 with communication between the Burlington Aurora Mill and the Burlington Railroad Depot. By 1890 a telephone line connected Altamaha-Ossipee to Elon College, Graham, Glencoe, Saxapahaw, and Burlington. The first telephone exchange was started in Burlington in 1895. Between 1901 and 1905 Southern Bell Telephone System purchased the local company and expanded facilities into farming areas, businesses, and residential areas. In 1915 Southern Bell changed its system from magnetic to battery. Then in 1947 Southern Bell switched from a manual operator system to a dial system. In Mebane in 1919 the Mebane Home Telephone Company was formed. The company had about 175 subscribers with a magneto system of hand-crank type telephones. In 1937 Mebane converted to an automatic system (Whitaker 1949:223).

#### **Utilities: Telegraph**

The earliest days of the telegraph were devoted to the railroads. The first telegraph system was installed in 1861 by the Southern Express Company at Company Shops. The telegraph was considered a major weapon of the Civil War and its facilities

remained at Burlington when the North Carolina Railroad moved to Spencer (Whitaker 1949:224). Gradually by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it was replaced by telephone service.

## **Twentieth-Century Events in Alamance**

### **The Great Depression**

By 1930 the effects of the Depression were being powerfully felt in Alamance County and throughout the South. Some mills closed or cut back production. The Cone family of Greensboro attempted to shore up some Alamance County mills by taking over their management. The Cone Company also helped the Bank of Haw River remain solvent (Troxler & Vincent 1999:357). As the Depression deepened, J. Spencer Love began to purchase failed or closing mills throughout the Piedmont. However even during the Depression, the hosiery mills of Alamance County operated. The growth of Burlington Industries helped areas of the Alamance economy flourish steadily (Troxler & Vincent 1999:368).

A major problem for mill owners during the Depression was the attempts by union organizers to organize textile workers, based on earlier occurrences of union activity in Alamance County. In 1887 the first organized workers' strike in the textile industry occurred in the Swepsonville Mills. Issues centered on the 75-hour workweek. Workers at some other area textile plants worked a 66-hour workweek. When mill workers quit in protest to mill owners' refusals to acquiesce to their demands, the mill owners hired new workers and continued production. Although unsuccessful, the strike provided impetus for further unrest in Alamance County. In 1887 workers at the Ossipee and Alamance Mills, led by members of the Knights of Labor Party, went out on strike.

A result of this labor unrest was felt politically by mill owner turned politician, Thomas Holt. Due to lobbying among mill workers, Holt narrowly won his bid for re-election to the N.C. House of Representatives. Out of Holt's near political loss grew labor changes including a reduction in workers' hours by Holt and his brothers at their mills (Troxler & Vincent 1999:371).

In 1900 through the National Union of Textile Workers, a strike was organized around Haw River and Burlington that involved over 20 mills, most belonging to the Holt family. Problems originated at the Thomas M. Holt Manufacturing Company in Haw River and spread to nearby Cora and Granite Mills. In October 1900 Holt Mills announced in the interest of harmony between workers and employers that their mills would be operated with non-union labor only (Troxler & Vincent 1999:372). Faced with evictions from their mill housing, workers had to choose between renouncing the union and returning to their jobs or moving away. The *Alamance Gleaner* reported that the great majority remained firm and moved away to textile jobs in South Carolina and Georgia (Troxler and Vincent 1999:372). Throughout the 1920s there was constant flux in textile workers with mill owners in Alamance County reporting a nearly 100% workers' turnover rate.

In 1934 the United Textile Workers Convention passed a "General Strike Resolution." The results had widespread ramifications as workers went on strike in textile communities in South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and many North Carolina towns including Gastonia, Shelby, Erwin, Roanoke Rapids, Greensboro, and Durham. National Guardsmen were on duty throughout the state. When union caravans came to

Alamance County, mill owners ordered work stopped and workers released. Two companies of National Guardsmen were scattered throughout Alamance County.

On September 14, 1934 National Guardsmen clashed with workers at Burlington's Plaid Mill, injuring strikers. The next day the Plaid Mill was bombed and most of the mill's windows were blown out. In Saxapahaw B. Everett Jordan requested National Guardsmen to protect the mill and the village of Saxapahaw. Guardsmen surrounded the Sellers Manufacturing Company. The "Flying Squadron," the armed and mobile union organizers' group, avoided the village and trouble was averted. Union organizers again tried to unionize the mills in 1951 but were voted down. By that time workers were already receiving the benefits being advocated by the union (Troxler & Vincent 1999:373).

Union organizers also attempted to unionize the Burlington Mills Company against the mill's president, J. Spencer Love. However, due to the mill's supervisor, James Copland Sr. and the management policies of Love, unionization was deflected. As an added precaution against future unionization problems, Love scattered his mills throughout the Piedmont attempting to minimize problems by decentralization (Troxler & Vincent 1999:373).

Another strategy adopted by mill owners in Alamance County was the sale of their mill village houses. Burlington Industries sold its Piedmont Heights housing. Glencoe, Burlington Mills, and other mills offered the sale of mill houses to their workers.

One effect of the Depression that was profound in Alamance County as well as mill closings was the failure of banks. The crime rate surged upward as banks were

robbed, cars stolen, and textile shipments were hijacked. In 1934 the Public Works Administration was established in Alamance County to attempt to alleviate some joblessness. One of the first projects completed was the construction of a stone wall around Burlington's Pinehill Cemetery. A Civilian Conservation Corps was formed to employ local men in reforestation projects. The Civil Works Administration, which became the Rural Rehabilitation Administration, built 940 privies during 1934. Also during these programs many one-lane bridges were constructed in rural Alamance County (Troxler & Vincent 1999:389).

### **World Wars**

During World War I, over 1000 Alamance County servicemen took part in active duty. There were 110 casualties among them, including those who were killed in action and those who died of disease or other causes (Whitaker 1949:238).

“The citizens who stayed behind did their part well in the home-front war. A rationing program was instituted for flour and fats, and wastepaper collections were made regularly in the different communities. The ladies of the county sold Liberty bonds at street rallies; sauerkraut became known as ‘liberty cabbage;’ a quantity of corn meal had to be purchased with every bag of flour. . .An epidemic of influenza and other diseases spread through the county, and churches and schoolhouses in some communities were turned into temporary hospitals to take care of the ill. Many victims died. . .The armistice, when it finally came, brought tears and thanksgiving (Whitaker 1949:248).

During World War II, selective service began to draft men from Alamance County in 1940. The local National Guard Company was called into the Federal Service to train enlistees and inductees. More than 5,000 Alamance County men and women joined the military. Fairchild Aircraft Corporation established a war plant in Burlington to produce training planes for the Army Air Force. War industry work put hundreds of

residents back to work as well as attracting hundreds of new workers to the county (Whitaker 1949:251).

In Alamance County as across the country, there were rationing programs for food, gasoline, tires, and housing while the industrial plants of the county converted their machinery or production to meet the demands on the home front. War bonds and war stamps were sold by banks, post offices, schools, factories, and businesses (Whitaker 149:252).

During the World War II years, textile industries in Alamance County flourished. The adoption of man-made fibers, begun early in the century and introduced in the 1920s and 1930s into Alamance County mills, included rayon, acetate and nylon. These synthetic fibers became important products for the war effort. Nylon was the most popular and widely utilized as sewing thread, parachute fabric, and women's hosiery. During World War II nylon replaced silk in tires, tents, ropes, and various military supplies (Glass 1992:82). Glen Raven Mills held lucrative government contracts for the production of parachute and tenting materials (Troxler and Vincent 1999:362).

The introduction of synthetic fibers meant the development of new technology and the installation of new equipment. After World War II Burlington Industries spent \$50 million to replace old and outdated equipment, to enlarge existing plants, to build new power plants, and to install better working conditions through new lighting, flooring, and humidifying systems (Glass 1992:83).

