

THE
DICKSON LETTERS

COMPILED AND EDITED

BY
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OF

THE WILMINGTON BAR
(FORMERLY OF DUPLIN COUNTY.)

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TO MY MOTHER,
MARY SUSAN DICKSON CARR,
A GRANDNIECE OF WILLIAM DICKSON, AUTHOR OF
THE DICKSON LETTERS,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

INTRODUCTION.

THE WRITER will make no apology for offering this little volume to the public, except so far as it is his duty to apologize for a personal interest he feels in the affairs of his own kinsfolk, and a desire he has to record something of their history. He is certainly not moved by the modern craze to expose to public view the private letters of one whose control over them has long since ceased ; but is actuated by the hope that the public may find in these letters something of historical interest, which, unless recorded while opportunity offers itself, may be irretrievably lost.

If we had written all the history we have made, we would be rich in legends and stories, which would somewhere touch the life of every North Carolinian, and make him feel proud of his State and its history ; but our modesty in making known the achievements of our own people has contributed no little to our lack of interest in matters of literary and historical importance.

We may assume, however, from present indications, that the public will receive with commendation any family history or reminiscences which will throw even a ray of light on our State history ; and it is on this assumption that the author makes public the Dickson Letters with a brief sketch of the family record, so far as he has been able to obtain it.

THE DICKSON FAMILY.

SIMON DICKSON was born in England about the year 1607, or 1608. He was a stern English Puritan, an ardent adherent of Oliver Cromwell, and served faithfully as an officer in the Parliamentary army during that fierce struggle between Parliament and the King; his official rank, however, is unknown to us. After the Revolution was over, as a reward for his services, he received a grant of four hundred acres of valuable land within two miles of Dromore, in the county of Down, Ireland. Here he settled and had a numerous offspring, but the exact number of his children is unknown. At the restoration of Charles II, the land grants of the Cromwellian administration were annulled, and Simon Dickson became a tenant on the same land he had previously owned.

“Simon Dickson was the father of Joseph the first, who was the father of Joseph the second, who was the father of Michael, who was the father of John.” Joseph the second lived to be ninety-four years old, and Michael passed his eighty-fourth year.

JOHN DICKSON was born in Ireland about the year 1704 and died in Duplin County, North Carolina, on the 25th day of December, 1774, just at the beginning of the American Revolution. He emigrated from Ireland to the State of Pennsylvania in the year 1738 and settled in Chester County, where he resided several years and had two sons born to him, Michael and William. He then moved to Maryland, where he remained only a short while, and leaving there he came to Duplin County between 1740 and 1745. Upon his death in Duplin, in

1774, he left surviving him seven sons and one daughter, whose names are given in order of their age, as follows: Michael, William, Robert, Joseph, Alexander, Edward, James and Mary.

MICHAEL DICKSON moved to Georgia just before or after the Revolution, where it is said he has many descendants, though no definite information about them can be obtained.

WILLIAM DICKSON.

WILLIAM DICKSON, the second son of John Dickson, and the writer of the Dickson Letters, was born in Pennsylvania about the year 1740, and came to Duplin County with his father when quite a small boy. Upon arriving at manhood he took an active part in public affairs and during Revolutionary times he was the foremost man in his county as a leader in civil affairs, while his compatriot, Colonel James Kenan, was at the head of all military operations. It is probable, almost certain, that he entered the army as a regular militiaman under Colonel Kenan, and served through the entire war. His educational advantages were very limited, and a family tradition tells us that his school days were comprised within a space of three months. Notwithstanding this, he was a man of broad ideas, mature judgment, and profound wisdom; and he discussed political affairs with an intuitive knowledge and foresight that was remarkable. His comments on the American form of government (then an untried theory) in his letter of 1790, his reasons why North Carolina adopted the federal constitution, his prediction that "the southern states will not receive equal benefit in the government with the northern states" and that the North would eventually demand the emancipation of slavery (and this written seventy years before the civil war)—all these are ideas worthy of a statesman and found conception in no ordinary mind.

He was a man of wonderful native ability ; but was modest to a fault, and seldom in his letters to his cousin in Ireland does he even refer to the services he rendered in the Revolution. Tradition has it that he was for forty-four successive years clerk of the court in Duplin County ; but the writer has not examined the records for a verification of this tradition further than to find that he served in this capacity for quite a long time. He was a delegate to the first provincial congress, held at Newbern on the 25th of August, 1774 ; to the second provincial congress, held at Halifax on the 3rd of April, 1775 ; to the third provincial congress, held at Hillsboro on the 21st day of August, 1775 ; and to the fourth provincial congress, held at Halifax on the 12th of November, 1776, which framed North Carolina's first constitution. He also represented Duplin in the House of Commons in 1795. It is told of him that when Cornwallis' army marched through the county on its way from Wilmington to Virginia he concealed the records of the county in an iron pot in Goshen Swamp to prevent their destruction by the British. He died in 1820, an honored and highly respected citizen.

ROBERT DICKSON, the third son of John Dickson, moved to Virginia at the close of the Revolution, but returned to Duplin about 1784, where he made his permanent home. He has many descendants in North Carolina, chiefly in Cumberland County. He was a justice of the peace for Duplin for a number of years, and served as a member of the House of Commons in 1777, 1784, 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788.

JOSEPH DICKSON, the fourth son of John Dickson, emigrated west about the close of the Revolution ; but, being dissatisfied, soon returned to his native county, where he reared a large family consisting of one daughter, Anne, and eight sons. He served in the capacity of Register of Deeds and also as county surveyor of Duplin, and repre-

sented his county in the House of Commons in 1780 and 1797. Anne Dickson, his oldest child and only daughter, married James Pearsall, many of the descendants of whom now reside in Duplin and adjoining counties. Later in life Joseph took his entire family of eight grown sons, together with other Dickson relatives, and moved to Tennessee in quest of large landed estates, a desire for which had become common in the family. Dickson County, Tennessee, takes its name from a member of the Duplin family.

ALEXANDER DICKSON, the fifth son of John Dickson, following the dreams of his brothers, and searching for fortunes elsewhere, emigrated to Virginia about 1781, and afterwards to Maryland; but returned in 1784 and took up his permanent abode in Duplin, where he accumulated considerable wealth. He died leaving no family, and bequeathed his property, as an educational fund, to the poor children of his county. This fund has commonly been known as the "Dickson Charity Fund;" but, through years of mismanagement and ill-directed investments, it has almost come to naught, and like most bequests of this kind has not served the high purpose for which it was intended.

EDWARD DICKSON, the sixth son of John Dickson, had no ambition for political honors, but was one of the foremost and most prosperous citizens of Duplin. He married and reared a family in Duplin, and there was no man more highly esteemed and respected. His oldest daughter, Rebecca, married Rev. Jacob Williams, by whom she had a daughter, Ann, who married Dr. Stephen Graham, a noted physician of Duplin County in his day. Sarah Rebecca Graham, daughter of Dr. Stephen Graham and Ann Graham, and sister of the late Stephen Graham of Kenansville, married Owen R. Kenan, and, as a result of this union, left the following children: Thomas S. Kenan, of Raleigh; William R. Kenan, of Wilmington; James G. Kenan, and Annie Dickson Kenan, of Kenansville.

JAMES DICKSON, the youngest son of John Dickson, spent his entire life in Duplin County. He married twice and had fifteen children, eight boys and seven girls. We are told that as a reward for military services he received large grants of land in Tennessee from the United States Government; but we have no information as to what services he performed, and William Dickson in one of his letters says none of the brothers except himself actually took up arms and joined the army. He may have rendered some services in the war of 1812, but we have no direct information on this point. However, James Dickson owned large estates in Tennessee and his three oldest sons, Edward, William and Alexander, emigrated there in the early part of this century and took possession of them. Robert Dickson, the youngest son of James, married Mary Catherine Sloan, and was the grandfather of the writer.

MARY DICKSON, the only daughter and youngest child of John Dickson, married William McGowan at the age of eighteen, and she has many descendants in this and other states. She was the great-grandmother of Benjamin F. Hall of Wilmington.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE DICKSON LETTERS.

The first three letters, which are made a part of this publication, and the fourth, which is an extract taken from an old copy of the *Fayetteville Examiner*, were written by William Dickson to his cousin, Rev. Robert Dickson, a Presbyterian clergyman, at Narrow Water, near Newry, Ireland; and are printed for their historical and literary value. The fifth letter was written by William Dickson to Linda Dickson, his niece, who was at the time visiting her older sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson, of Charleston, S. C., and is printed to show the character of the writer in his domestic relations.

The originals of the first three letters are still in exist-

ence and bear on them the marks of having served their mission as a messenger of good news to a far-away cousin. Years after they were written, two young men, the sons of Rev. Robt. Dickson, we think, came to this country, and in order to identify themselves brought the original letters with them. One of the young men was drowned, the other returned to Ireland, and the letters fell into the hands of John Dickson, of Cumberland County; and the family of the late Robert K. Bryan, Sr., of Scott's Hill, N. C., and the Evans family of Cumberland County, who are descendants of the Dicksons, have carefully preserved them.

The fourth letter, or rather extract, is taken from an old copy of the *Fayetteville Examiner*, and the original cannot be produced, but there is conclusive evidence that it is genuine.

John Dickson, the father of William Dickson, had a brother by the name of William Dickson, who moved from Pennsylvania and settled in the western part of the State, where he died on the first day of January, 1775. We have no record of his family, but it is reasonable to suppose that he was the father of General Joseph Dickson, of Lincoln County, who rendered valuable service in the Revolution, and was Congressman about 1800.

In editing these letters the writer has preserved intact the wording and phraseology of the original manuscript, but has made some slight changes in regard to capitalization, spelling and punctuation, and this has been done only for the purpose of making them conform to our modern usage in this respect, and where the change would in no way impair the sense or expression of the originals.

If the reader shall be interested in them, or if by their publication one historical fact, even though local in its character, should be recorded that would otherwise be lost, then the writer would feel amply repaid for his efforts in bringing them to the attention of the public.

THE DICKSON LETTERS.

FIRST LETTER.

DEAR COUSIN ROBERT:—About two months ago I received a very long letter from you, dated in Sept., 1783, which afforded me much pleasure and satisfaction in the perusal, as it contained a historical account of the political proceedings of the Irish Nation during the continuance of the late American war. I much admire and applaud the determined resolution of the volunteers in claiming a redress of public national grievances, &c. I understand by that letter that you wrote me in May, 1783, by the ship Congress, Capt. Chenen, bound for Philadelphia; that letter never came to hand. I received another letter from you dated 19th of July, 1784, which was handed to me by my Cousin, Joseph Dickson, from Dromore, who arrived in Virginia the 2nd of October last and came to my house about the 20th of the same month with his wife and little son, all in good health. He and his family remain with me yet. He is not provided with any settlement or place of employment. Since his arrival here he has visited his friends, that is, my brothers and sister, and he has been to Bladen County, about 60 miles from here, to inquire after his Uncle Maturine Colvill's affairs; he finds that estate is much wasted and embezzled; there are only the lands and some part of the slaves found remaining, which are now in the possession of Mr. Patrick Neil, who came over last year in quest of said estate. Joseph is now gone to Wilmington to see Archibald Maclaine, Esq., who is attorney for some of Colvill's heirs, and as soon as he can be informed concerning his uncle's affairs he will write to

his father on that subject. Your letter by Colvill Dickson has never come to hand.

Your friend and relation Mr. Josie, who came over with Joseph, stayed in Virginia; he had the offer of a good school and did not come to Carolina. In both your letters which I have received you requested I would give you some account of the present circumstances and situation of our families since the war, also the present state of our civil government, also concerning religious matters and how ministers were supported in this country, and also concerning the price of plantations and whether any new settlements were about to be made on the Western waters over the Appalachian Mountains, &c. Dear Cousin, in answer to those requests I wrote you a very long letter about a month ago which was a few days after the arrival of my Cousin Joseph. That letter I sent at random by a person going to Virginia, where, I was informed there was a vessel which would sail in about three weeks for Belfast. That letter is a very long one, but written in such haste that it will appear a perfect scrawl. The person who carried it, waiting with impatience while I wrote. I had not the opportunity to review or correct it. However, if it ever comes to hand I make no doubt but you'll be able to digest its contents. In it you'll find I have attempted to give you some account of our civil government and mode of legislation, &c. Also of the different sects of religious people most prevalent amongst us in the lower counties of this State, and that the Presbyterian settlements are chiefly with upper counties of the State, where there are many large and able congregations and some of them are frequently vacant.

I also gave you my opinion that a good sound preacher of a good moral character scarcely ever wanted good encouragement. I also wrote you concerning the price of lands and plantations in this part of the country. I also in that

letter began a historical account of the war as far as concerned us and our families in the vicinity of Carolina which I have found from the commencement of the war down to the battle of Guilford in North Carolina, which happened in the spring of the year 1781, from which Lord Cornwallis returned to Wilmington to recruit and repair his damages, &c., before he could proceed to Virginia ; and General Greene marched his army to South Carolina to dispute the dominion of that State with Lord Rawdon who then commanded the garrison at Cambden: then I concluded my last letter in which you'll find none of our families concerned except my oldest brother Michael, who had his share both of good and ill fortune. I can give you no account of his present situation. The last account I had from him he was about moving his family to Georgia. Having thus brought the war to our door, I shall now give you some account of its operation here and how much it affects us and our families. About the 25th of January, 1781, Maj. Craig arrived in the Cape Fear River, landed at Wilmington with about 450 veteran troops with which he garrisoned the town and detached a party up the North East River to the great bridge about 12 miles above the town, and then demolished the bridge, seized and burned some public store ships and their contents which had been run up the river for safety, and also destroyed some private property and returned to the town, and Major Craig immediately fortified the garrison. The militia of three counties were then immediately ordered down to take post at the great bridge, and that pass was fortified by us in order to prevent the enemy from making excursions into the country. We had been there about three weeks with about 700 militia when Major Craig marched out upon us in the night with his main force and some field pieces, surprised and dispersed our piquet guard and displayed his artillery across the river upon our dirt works, but without

any effect. The enemy, finding their attempt entirely fruitless, after staying and viewing us across the river for two days, returned in the night to Wilmington. About two weeks after this we received intelligence from Guilford County in the upper part of the State that a general engagement had ensued between Lord Cornwallis and General Greene; there the conflict was long and obstinate and the victory had been in favor of the Americans had it not been for mis-conduct of the North Carolina militia, who broke and left our part of the line exposed, which the enemy seeing, and being about to make use of the advantage, General Greene ordered a retreat and brought off the whole without any confusion. The enemy remained upon the ground. General Greene finding his troops still in high spirits and not so much diminished as might be expected, made all the necessary preparations to attack the enemy the next day, but was dissatisfied by Cornwallis precipitately decamping in the night; he carried off some of his wounded and left about two hundred of his wounded at the place of action with an officer and two surgeons whom he recommended to the compassion and humanity of the American general. Cornwallis made his retreat good to Wilmington and General Greene, after pursuing him two days without any prospect of coming up with him, turned his course and marched into South Carolina, where I shall leave him for the present. Cornwallis arrived at Wilmington, and, General Greene being gone to South Carolina, seemed to strike terror on our militia then at their post. General Lillington, who then commanded the post at the great bridge, ordered our retreat from that to Kinston on the Neuse River, about 30 miles above Newbern, where, on the 28th of April, he discharged all the militia except one company to guard the artillery and stores. The militia thus discharged, we had not the name of an army in North Carolina. Every man

was now to look to himself. The next day after being discharged we returned home. Cornwallis' army was then in the middle of our county, encamped at my brother Robt. Dickson's plantation. The whole country was struck with terror, almost every man quit his habitation and fled, leaving his family and property to the mercy of merciless enemies. Horses, cattle and sheep and every kind of stock were driven off from every plantation, corn and forage taken for the supply of the army and no compensation given, houses plundered and robbed, chests, trunks, etc., broke, women and children's clothes, etc., as well as men's wearing apparel and every kind of household furniture taken away. The outrages were committed mostly by a train of loyal refugees, as they termed themselves, whose business it was to follow the camps and under the protection of the army enrich themselves on the plunder they took from the distressed inhabitants who were not able to defend it. We were also distressed by another swarm of beings (not better than harpies). These were women who followed the army in the character of officers' and soldiers' wives. They were generally considered by the inhabitants to be more insolent than the soldiers. They were generally mounted on the best horses and side saddles, dressed in the finest and best clothes that could be taken from the inhabitants as the army marched through the country.

Our family are all obnoxious to the enemy, although none of the brothers except myself have actually taken arms and joined the army. I will now give you some account of how we all fared while the enemy were in our neighborhood. My brother Robert had left his place and removed his family and property. The enemy encamped one day and night at his plantation and destroyed some of his stock which he had not got off. The same day my brother Joseph was surprised in his own house by the dragoons, but

being determined would not surrender, fled into a thicket or swamp, and although pursued made good his escape. The enemy plundered his house, took all his corn, his horses and his wife's clothes, side-saddle, etc. The same day another party went to my brother James' house, and, not finding him at home, plundered his house of everything they could find in it, took off two of his slaves and all his corn, etc., and compelled his wife and a neighbor woman, who was there, to deliver them the rings off their fingers and the buckles off their shoes. The same day my sister's husband, William McGowan, was found driving some stock out of their way; he was made a prisoner and after being some time under guard was compelled to pilot their Light Horse to his own and several of his neighbors' houses where they took all the corn and forage, all the horses and cattle, etc., they could get. The night following they detained him under guard and went and plundered his house of everything they found in it worth carrying away, broke every lock, ransacked every chest and trunk, took away all the bedding, etc., all the apparel, even the baby's clothes, stripped the rings off my sister's fingers and the shoes and buckles off her feet, choked the children to make them confess if their father had not hid his money, and to tell where it was, etc.; and many of the neighbors were treated in the same brutish manner. The day following the army encamped near my house. Sundry portions of their Light Horse called on my house, and notwithstanding I was not at home, they went away peaceably and took nothing from me, which I thought very strange, for sundry of my neighbors were plundered of almost everything they had. The enemy being destined for Virginia, made but a very short stay in our neighborhood, but immediately after they were gone came on our greatest troubles; for the Loyalists, or as we term them Tories, began to assemble and hold councils in every part of the State, and thinking the

country already conquered, because the enemy had gone through us without being checked, they were audacious enough to apprehend and take several of our principal leading men prisoners and carry them down to Wilmington and deliver them to the guards. There were numbers of our good citizens thus betrayed, perished on board prison-ship and in their power. This so alarmed the inhabitants that none of us dared to sleep in our houses or beds at night for fear of being surprised by those blood-suckers and carried off to certain destruction. In the meantime the Governor of the State, and several others of the first character, were surprised in this manner, by some who had been personally acquainted with him, and carried and delivered to the guards in Wilmington, notwithstanding the attempt of sundry parties of the militia to rescue him.

Matters being thus in confusion, there was no subordination amongst men; but every proprietor or leading man raised and commanded his own little party and defended themselves as they could. At length we got collected about 400 men under Colonel Kenan in Duplin, and about 200 under Colonel Brown in Bladen, the adjacent county. Colonel Kenan's militia had not made a stand more than ten days when Major Craig marched his main force, with field pieces, defeated and drove us out of our works, and made some of our men prisoners (here I narrowly escaped being taken or cut down by the dragoons). The enemy stayed several days in Duplin County (this being the first week in August, 1781). The Royalists gathered together very fast, and we were now reduced again to the utmost extremity. The enemy were now more cruel to the distressed inhabitants than Cornwallis's army had been before. Some men collected and formed a little flying camp and moved near the enemy's lines and made frequent sallies on their rear flanks while others fled from their homes and kept out of the enemy's reach. Major Craig marched

from Duplin to Newbern, plundered the town, destroyed the public stores, and then immediately marched back to Wilmington to secure the garrison.

The Loyalists or Tories in Duplin and other counties, now thinking the day entirely their own, became more insolent than ever ; but Craig having again returned to Wilmington the Whigs again resumed their courage and determined to be revenged on the Loyalists, our neighbors, or hazard all ; accordingly we collected about eighty light-horsemen and equipped them as well as we could ; marched straight into the neighborhood where the Tories were embodied, surprised them, they fled, our men pursued them, cut many of them to pieces, took several and put them instantly to death. This action struck such terror on the Tories in our county that they never attempted to embody again and many of them in a short time came in and submitted and were pardoned (I was not in this action nor any afterward during this whole season of the war). I never received a wound but one, which was a shot through my right leg, though I had three narrow escapes when I was in danger of being killed or taken.

In Bladen County the Tories were more numerous and more insolent than in our county ; one McNeil, a Scotchman, was made Colonel of the Loyalists, and was very active against the Whigs. He was one of the principal commanders in carrying off the Governor to Wilmington, but did not live to get there himself ; for being attacked by a party of the militia, who attempted to rescue the prisoners, Colonel McNeil and several men of his party was slain, although none of the prisoners were retaken. Immediately after this a commission was sent to your friend and countryman, Maturine Colvill, to take command of the Loyalists in Bladen County, which he accepted. Some of the leading men of the Whig party in that county and Mr. Colvill having been formerly obnoxious to each other, occasioned by some

dispute among themselves, and they dreading his courage and intrepidity and the impetuosity of his temper, which some of them very well knew would be fatal to some as soon as he came to head his troops, it was so contrived that he was soon taken off by a party who slew him in his own house the morning of the same day in which he was to have headed his loyal troops. He was succeeded in command by Col. John Slingsby, who headed the troops embodied, about 400 at Bladen Court House. Colonel Brown, with about 150 of the Whigs, surprised him in the night, slew Colonel Slingsby and two of his captains and some of his men, and retreated without any loss, and returned in the morning where he found only the slain and some of the wounded, the rest having fled and made their escape. This put an end to the disturbances in Bladen County; the Tories never embodied there any more, so by this time our two distressed counties of Duplin and Bladen began to get the upper hand of their enemies. Colonel Slingsby was succeeded in the command of Royalists in Bladen by your countryman, Faithful Graham, but before he had the opportunity of doing his majesty any service he had suffered the fate of his predecessors had he not made his escape through a swamp and got into Wilmington. About this time, being about the middle of October, General Rutherford and General Butler, with 1,500 militia from the back counties of the State, came down to our assistance. Their troops began by distressing the Royalists with a view thereby of drawing the troops out of Wilmington to an engagement. Immediately upon their coming down we received the agreeable and long-expected news of Lord Cornwallis and the British army being captured at York in Virginia, upon which our troops marched down immediately to lay siege to the town. The same day that our troops encamped in the village of Wilmington, Major Craig demolished the works of the fort, spiked all the guns, de-

stroyed all the public stores he could not carry off with him, got his troops on board and sailed for Charleston, and our troops were in possession of the town the same hour the enemy went out. Thus ended the war in North Carolina, and General Greene's successes in South Carolina during the summer campaign had by this time reduced that State to the obedience of their own Legislature. Every out-post was now driven into the principal garrison at Charleston, which was then the only post they held in any of the Southern States, where they remained until they were withdrawn from there by the articles of the Definitive Treaty.

Thus, sir, I have amused you with a long and tedious relation of the war in Carolina and its effects on our families, but as it is in compliance with your request I hope the amusement will not be altogether disagreeable to you. I shall now give you some account of the present circumstances and situation of each of our families, which I flatter myself will be very agreeable amusement to you. I shall take the family in rotation and begin with myself as the oldest.

I find myself at this time in as good a situation as I was when the war began, but perhaps I would have been better off had the war never commenced, for during the war I was obliged to contract some debts for necessaries to support my family, and being in the service I could not improve my plantation nor raise anything to discharge my debts; but since the war has ended I have got over all those difficulties and am now in a more prosperous way than ever I was before. I have a very good plantation where I live, a good stock of cattle, etc., eight working slaves and some young ones growing up. I hold the clerk's office of Duplin County court, which I esteem as good as fifty pounds sterling yearly, which with my other industry and care of my plantation, etc., enables me to live

very plentifully and to maintain my family in credit and decency. My oldest daughter Ann is about 16 years of age ; my oldest son, William, is a little upwards of 14 ; the rest of my children are James, Lewis, Fanney and Susana ; the youngest is about nine months old.

Robert moved his property into the back parts of Virginia when Cornwallis went through us and returned in July to move his family there also, but his wife died the very day of his return and left him an infant but a few days old, which he put to nurse and returned to Virginia again ; but not liking to settle there he returned home as soon as the enemy left Wilmington and being resettled again he married another wife. He is a very frugal, industrious man, has about as many working slaves as I have, he lives very well and plentifully, is in as good credit as any man in the county, his oldest son, John, is about eighteen years of age, his oldest daughter, Ann, is about sixteen, the rest are Pearsall, Edward, Catherine (Mary dead) and Elizabeth, the youngest by his first wife, and Susana by his present wife.

Joseph Dickson was very much distressed and plundered by the enemy, first by Cornwallis and afterwards by Craig. He was much discouraged, had thoughts of moving away, went to view the waters over the western mountains, but did not like the country when he saw it, returned and contented himself with what little he had left to begin the world, as it were, anew. He has a good plantation, four or five slaves and some stock, he is surveyor of the county, which is as good as thirty pounds sterling a year, he lives as comfortably and decently as any man in the county, is one of the first in repute, has a fine promising family of young children, his oldest daughter, Anna, is about nine years old, the rest are Michael, Hugh, David and Moulton, the youngest, who is named for his wife's father.

Alexander Dickson, upon Cornwallis' approach removed

himself and property into Virginia and Maryland, and never returned with his property till a few days ago. He has a good plantation and four or five slaves and no family but himself. I do not know what course of life he intends to fix himself in since his return.

Edward Dickson didn't suffer much by the enemy. He never moved from his plantation, and the enemy never called on him : he has nine or ten good slaves, two good plantations and a very fine stock of cattle : he lives very plentifully, is in good credit, has three children, Rebecca, Elizabeth and Ann, the oldest is about six years old.

James Dickson, the youngest brother, inherits his father's plantation, he was very much distressed and plundered by the enemy, he has a very good plantation, some stock, has good slaves, he is a laborious industrious man, a very good hunter, he supports a good honest character, lives plentifully and well. His oldest son, Edward, is about nine years old, the rest are Elenor, Margaret, William and Alexander. My sister Mary is the youngest child of the family. She was married at eighteen years of age to Wm. McGowan, a very worthy man, a fine prudent husband ; they were much distressed and plundered by the enemy and lost something considerable each time, but is now in a good way of living again ; they have a good plantation, a good stock, six or seven good slaves and some young ones growing up. They have seven sons : John, the oldest, William, Edward, Robert, James, Michael, and Joseph, all fine children. My father died on Christmas day in the year 1774. My mother had been dead about ten months before. My uncle William Dickson died at his plantation in the back of North Carolina on New Year's day, 1775, just seven days after my father. I made some mention of his family in my former letters though I have heard nothing of them since the commencement of the war.

Dear Cousin, I have much more to write to you which I

will make the subject of my next letter, in which I purpose to entertain you with some description of this country, also the prospects of settling the western waters beyond the Appalachian mountains, etc. In the meantime I shall conclude this letter with my best wishes to you and your family, desiring also to be remembered to all my relations of your acquaintance who may inquire for me. My wife also joins me in respects to you and Mrs. Dickson. I remain, Dear Sir,

Your Affectionate Cousin,

W. DICKSON.

Duplin County, 30 Nov., 1784.

SECOND LETTER.

DEAR COUSIN ROBERT :—This is the third letter I have written to you since I received yours of the 12th of Sept., 1783, by which I was informed you had written me one before, of the 1st of May, 1783, which never came to hand. About a month after I received your letter of the 12th of Sept., 1783, I received another from you of the 19th of July, 1784, which was handed me by our cousin Joseph Dickson from Dromore, who landed in Virginia about the first of October, and came to my house about the 20th of the same month with his wife and little son, all in good health. I was much rejoiced to see a friend and relation who could give me a particular account of the situation and circumstances of our friends in Ireland, whom I had never heard from since my father's death, which happened a little before the commencement of the war. I was much delighted with the information you gave me of the politics of Ireland. I much admire the spirited resolution of the Nation in asserting their rights and privileges as a free people. Nothing in my opinion can be more commendable and noble amongst mankind than that free, generous and undaunted,

persevering spirit of the volunteers, determined to assert and maintain their own and their country's freedom, notwithstanding the haughty menace of a tyrannical Prince and venal Parliament who had stationed a royal army in the heart of their country to awe them into their measures. I heartily wish success to the volunteers of Ireland in everything that can contribute to advance and raise the dignity of their country. Shortly after I received your letter I wrote you two very long letters, in answer to yours which I had then received, the first I sent by way of Virginia for a passage, and the second I sent to Archibald Maclaine, Esq., in Wilmington, who got it a passage with his letters which he was then sending to his friends in Ireland. In these letters (agreeable to your request) I gave you some accounts, as well as I was able, of the different sects of religious professors in this country. That the Presbyterian settlements were generally in the back counties on the heads of our rivers and were mostly, I believe, supplied with ministers, who were annually supported by subscriptions in their congregations, which I believe to be generally about as good as 200 pounds in our money or perhaps equal to 100 pounds sterling. Land since the war is becoming very high ; a good plantation, such as a man can live comfortably on, with about three or four hundred acres of land and improvements and some convenient buildings, will cost two or three hundred pounds sterling ; but plantations of an inferior quality may be purchased for much less, according to the value of them.

I did not give you any encouragement to come to this country, as Presbyterians are very thinly settled in the lower and middle parts of the State and mostly indifferent about paying and supporting a minister. I also in these letters gave you a particular account of the situation and circumstances of each of our families with the number and names of all their children, etc.

I also gave you some account of the progress of the war in the southern states, particularly of Lord Cornwallis' march through our settlement, what we suffered and the effects his march had on our families and properties ; also of Major Craig, who commanded a body of troops under Cornwallis and garrisoned Wilmington for ten months ; of his march through our neighborhood and what we suffered by his means ; the division he caused amongst us in the county, commonly known by the character of Whig and Tory.

Our family were more fortunate than common during the whole course of the war, all rigid Whigs and generally engaged in the militia service, none of us or our family connections lost any lives, though some of us lost considerable of our property. I never received a wound in battle but once, which was very slight, though I was three times in danger of being taken prisoner, but always had the good fortune to escape. I cannot boast that I ever was in any battle when we got the victory.

These accounts, Dear Cousin, being mentioned at large in my former letters (though in a crude and unlearned style) should they ever come to your hand will, I make no doubt, be pleasing and entertaining to you, though I have some reason to doubt those letters ever reached you. I shall now, however, omit any further repetition of what I wrote you before, and shall now proceed as well as I can to give you some description of this country which I have not done in any former letters.

As I never since my infancy traveled anywhere beyond the limits of the State of North Carolina except in some of the frontiers of South Carolina, so that I am not otherwise acquainted with any other state than by information.

Carolina, from the seashore to about 120 miles back, is generally a low, flat, sandy, barren woodland country, and very thinly inhabited except along the rivers and creeks

that run through it, many of which are navigable. The upper part of the country from thence to the mountains, which are generally about 250 miles back from the sea, is generally a hilly broken country and some places very stoney, the land generally more fertile and rich, abounding with herbage and fine pasture, pleasantly situated and much better watered, but not so well timbered as the low country. The soil of the low country is natural to Indian corn, potatoes, peas, indigo, and if properly managed will produce wheat, oats, flax and tobacco. Great quantities of tar, pitch and turpentine can be made here. Our swamps and marshy lands are natural for rice when properly cultivated. The lands higher up the country are generally of different cast, the soil much richer and stronger, are natural for Indian corn, wheat, oats, rye, barley, flax and hemp. Orchards of any kind, with proper care, will thrive in any part of the State; the peach is natural to the climate; apples generally thrive better in colder climates. Stock of every kind, formerly when the country was new and fresh, would thrive in the wood with very little attention or care; but at present, the country being more thickly settled and the wild range chiefly consumed, no stock of any kind can be raised without great care and application. The low country near the sea is best for cattle and the middle country best for pork; the hilly country in the back counties is best for raising horses and sheep. The richest and most fertile lands on this continent that have ever yet been discovered are said to be on the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi. A few years before the commencement of the war sundry gentlemen in Virginia and North Carolina who had outlived their incomes, and their affairs becoming somewhat desperate, went without the concurrence of government and held a treaty with the western Indians and purchased a very large tract of country from them on the west of the Appalachian Mountains, extending from said

mountains westward to the river Ohio, and bounded by Cumberland River on the south, and by Louisa or Kentucky River on the north. They carried thence a great number of the poor inhabitants of the country and formed the great settlement now called the Kentucky settlement. Perhaps no part of America ever settled so rapidly. In the time of the war they furnished their quota of men in every expedition, and were able to defend themselves against the excursion of the several nations and tribes of Indians who live adjacent to them, and were encouraged and supported, with arms and ammunition to make war against, by our enemies.

The soil of this country is thought by some equal to the richest in the universe, and lies in the latitude of Virginia. The Legislature of that State, thinking it was not just that a few individuals should monopolize so large a territory of country to themselves (about the time of the conclusion of the war), passed an act to limit the purchasers thereof to a certain bound within the said purchase, which they judged sufficient to compensate them for their trouble and expense in purchasing and settling that large country, and all the rest of the said purchase they seized for the use of the government.

About the same time, or very soon afterwards, a settlement was founded on the waters of Tennessee River, that is, on Cumberland, Holstien and Nola Chuckie rivers, in the latitude of North Carolina, and being also a very fine fertile country. This settlement became so very numerous, and lying far remote from the seat of government, were much disconcerted, notwithstanding the Legislature of North Carolina had granted them counties and District Superior Court of law, and appointed their judges, etc. About the beginning of the year 1785 they revolted and declared themselves to be an independent State by the name of Franklin. They elected their Governor and Council,

formed Constitution, established a Legislature, sent a delegate to Congress and solicited to be received as one of the States of the Union. What may be the consequence of their proceedings is yet unknown. Their delegate was not received at Congress, and neither Congress nor the Legislature of North Carolina have yet taken any notice of them.

Congress have it in contemplation to form several new States to the westward and northward, bordering on the lakes and the river St. Lawrence, and on the waters of the Mississippi, and have laid a plan for carrying their purpose into effect, but the contents or particulars of that plan I am not able at present to acquaint you with. About the time of the commencement of the war a very considerable purchase of territory was made from the Indians in Georgia, extending from the former boundary line nearer Augusta, on the Savannah River, to Altamaha River and Ockmulgee River, containing 100 miles square, and the most fertile part that has yet been settled in that country, but the war being hotter in Georgia than in any other of the Southern States, that country became almost quite depopulated and prevented that new purchase from being then settled, but that country is now resettling very fast, as it is thought, that if the peace continues, will soon become one of the most flourishing States in the Union, as it contains a vast extensive frontier quite back to the river Mississippi, which is generally a fine level country, well watered and timbered, and scarcely any mountains. It lies convenient to the navigation of Florida and the river Mississippi, and in a most desirable climate between the extremes of heat and cold.

Dear Cousin, I would be exceedingly glad if it suited your interest to come to America and live the remainder of your days amongst us. I think a gentleman of your character and abilities would be very useful amongst us, especially to the young and rising generation, which by

appearance is likely to be numerous in our families, and it is now upwards of twenty years since we have had a Presbyterian minister placed in this part of the country ; but as you are now far advanced in life and likely to have a young family, and as I understood you are very agreeably and happily settled where you are and in a situation where you can live very comfortably your life-time, I cannot advise you to leave your native country and come to America on uncertainties.

The old Presbyterian settlement in this place is much reduced. The old heads of our sect are all dead, and the young set tho' more able to support the church are more luke-warm in religious principles which now becomes rather unfashionable. However I think a good smart gentleman might get a genteel maintainance here if he could take upon himself the fatigue of riding to two or three different places of meeting about twenty miles distant from each other, but perhaps this might be too fatiguing for a person of your advanced age in life.

At our last session of Assembly in this State we got an act passed for establishing an Academy for the education of youth in the Grove neighborhood in this county. This school is fixed in the heart of the Presbyterian settlement where our family all live and we have a considerable share in conducting it. We have purchased a piece of ground pleasantly situated for the purpose, on which we are now building a house, which we expect will be finished about twelve months hence. From the pleasantness and agreeableness of the situation and the country adjacent around it, which is generally esteemed very healthy, we have the greatest expectation that the success of it will be agreeable to our wishes. The presidency or tuition of this academy we think at the beginning or soon after will be as good as one hundred pounds sterling per annum, but no gentleman will be admitted to this charge unless he be of approved

abilities and good conduct, and good sound moral character. We think a gentleman of the clergy might have a meeting house in the neighborhood and a small congregation and superintend the academy also, having a prudent young gentleman as a teacher under him and might by that means acquire a genteel support. As no gentleman is yet engaged, if you were here and the acceptance of it agreeable to you, I would not make the least doubt of your obtaining it. I think we could have the interest of all the trustees in your favor, but as matters may be precarious I will not advise you to come in this expectation unless it be your wish and desire to come to America. Should you not think of coming to this country yourself you will perhaps recommend some gentleman of known abilities, character and conduct who would wish to accept the place. I am convinced it will not be engaged in less time than ten months from now and perhaps longer time. I hint this as a matter for your consideration and leave yourself to determine on it.

When our Cousin Joseph Dickson came to my house first he and his family wintered with me. In the spring of the same year he went up to Hillsborough, a small town about a hundred and ten miles distant from where I live, and kept a store for one Mr. Sampson ; sometime in June he moved his family from my house up there. The last time I heard from there he was teaching school, his family were all well. Last October I received your very affectionate letter of the 21st April last, which was sent me by Rev. Alexander Patrick who soon after made me a visit and tarried some days with me, in which time I contracted a small acquaintance with him. I heartily thank you for the recommendation you gave me in his favor, from the good opinion I have conceived of the young man as well as from his apparent modesty and candor as from your recommendation I will pay every attention to his

interest and the good success of his affairs as may be within the compass of my power. His brother I have never seen : I understood he is living with one Mr. White in Bladen county. Mr. Patrick immediately on coming into this country got possession of one of the late Mr. Colvill's plantations on the N. West River and some of his slaves ; the plantation he has rented out and the negroes he has hired for wages, which rent and hire he tells me amount to about one hundred and thirty pounds per annum. About Christmas he came down to our neighborhood at the Grove where we made him up a small school of fourteen or fifteen boys which is the first attempt that has ever been made to teach the languages in this part of the country. This little school will be about as good as forty or fifty pounds sterling to him. Those now under his tuition are intended to be removed to the academy when opened, when it is probable Mr. Patrick may be employed as a teacher if he is approved of ; the school is in the same place where the academy is fixed. Mr. Patrick lives with my brother Joseph and has a convenient room and bed to himself.

Among the boys under his tuition are my second son, my brother Robert's second son and my sister's oldest son. Mr. Patrick is much esteemed in the neighborhood. I request that you will acquaint his father that he is doing well.

Dear Cousin, I cannot conclude without thanking you for your correspondence ; of the five letters you mention you have written me I have received three, and am much concerned to find by your last that you received none of mine, though I never wrote you but two before this ; but they were both very long as well as this, and contained much of other matters. I shall, however, omit no opportunity of writing to you, and hope you will continue your correspondence with me. Notwithstanding the mis-

carriage of my letters, please let me know in your next letter if you ever received the letters I wrote you last year. When you write, direct to the care of Archibald Maclaine, Esq., Wilmington, and if not sent by a person who will see it delivered, direct it to be put in the Post Office of North Carolina. I take the opportunity of sending this letter by the hands of Mr. Bostwick Gillespie an acquaintance of mine who is going home to Ireland with his wife to see their friends who live in the county of Monaghan about 20 miles from Newry where he expects to call. If you should see him he can give you a satisfactory account of our families as he is well acquainted with all of them; he has a brother who lives in this country at the Grove, who ever since the Revolution of this State has been a member of the Assembly, and now is a member of the Supreme Council of the State.

My brother and sister and their families are all well; nothing has happened amongst us since I wrote you before; our families are generally young and numerous, but no marriage has ever yet taken place amongst any of our children though some are grown up.

I shall add no more at present, but conclude with my best respects and compliments (in which my wife joins me) to you and Mrs. Dickson and little son. I remain, Dear Cousin, with all due respect and esteem your sincere and affectionate Cousin.

WM. DICKSON.

Duplin County, 24th Feb., 1786.

THIRD LETTER.

GOSHEN, 30th Nov., 1787,
Duplin County, N. C.

DEAR COUSIN:—Your letter of the 24th August, 1786, and a duplicate of the same dated the 3rd October, 1786, I received both together, from the post-office in Wilmington, about the first of September last, and about three weeks ago I received your letter of the 7th August last by our young cousin, Hugh Dickson, from Dromore, who arrived at Wilmington about the first of this month, and came immediately to my house. The books and pamphlets you sent me were a very agreeable present, and very acceptable to the youth of my family. I esteem it as a token of your affection and remembrance of us. I congratulate you upon the rising prospect of your family, but much regret the decline of your health as well on our account here as that of your own and your family's. We had flattered ourselves with the pleasing prospect of yet seeing you in this country amongst us and at the head of our infant seminary of learning. We are not strangers here to your general good character and well-known articles in literature. This motive induced me to write to you in the manner I did expressing a desire that you would remove to Carolina and spend the remainder of your days amongst us, and though I could not present to your view anything lucrative to induce you to remove from so happy a climate to this wild country, I was conscious if it was agreeable to your inclination and suited your convenience otherwise to remove here, you might be very useful amongst us, and doubly so as a teacher and minister to the rising generation.

But, my dear cousin, when I reflected on the agreeable

situation in which Providence has placed you, wherein you enjoy the esteem and affection of your brethren of the clergy as well as that of the people under your ministry, the pleasant and agreeable situation of your dwelling, wherein you enjoy all the necessary comforts of life, added to the domestic pleasure of spending your latter days in the enjoyment of your agreeable rising family, and when I also consider the advanced period of life to which you have now attained, and the decline of health which you have lately experienced, together with the trouble and difficulties with which a removal to Carolina would be attended, and the prospect (as you justly observe) of not being perhaps more useful generally here than where you now are, I acknowledge your determination against a removal founded, as I think, upon principles of prudence and consideration. Our Grove Academy (as it is styled by the Legislature) is not in a more flourishing condition than when I wrote you last (altho' yet short of our expectations or of what you wish it to be), the house is now finished, the school was removed into it last week, there are yet but twenty-five students under a master who teaches only the Latin and English grammar and the Latin and Greek languages. We have no other fund for the support of it but the fees of the students and the benevolence of public-spirited gentlemen, which have as yet appeared to be very low. I wish I could with propriety give you a description of it more to your satisfaction. The Genius of the people of this part of the country is not adapted to the study of learning and science. The most desirable object that people here have in view are interest and pleasure, but I flatter myself that that period will soon arrive when an emulation will take place amongst the youth (who are of most discernment) to aspire to the attainment of that which in the end will be most permanent and profitable, and that this infant institution (altho' far inferior to that erected at

Strabane, or indeed almost any other), through the exertions of some who are concerned in it, may yet become profitable and rise to repute. During the course of the last summer a grand convention of delegates from the several States of America were assembled at Philadelphia. The only production of their councils which I have yet seen published is a constitution for the United States of America, to be submitted to the Legislature of each State for their approbation and concurrence, a copy or pamphlet of which, for amusement, I herewith enclose you.

Our General Assembly for this State are now convened and have it under consideration. We hear that debate runs high concerning it, also the populace in the country are divided in their opinions concerning it. For my own part, I am but a shallow politician, but there are some parts of it I do not like; however, I expect our Legislature will adopt it in full. The ancient Romans when they deposed their King and abolished the Royal Government, so jealous of their liberties, would not trust the sovereign power and command of their armies to one consul only, but for the better security of the Republic had always two consuls with equal powers, whence it could scarcely be supposed that one could lay any plan to usurp or subvert the government without being opposed or rivaled by his colleague. Those consuls were amicably elected and were not eligible to be elected the ensuing year. Yet, notwithstanding all their precautions, both Sylla and Cæsar, each in their turn, found ways and means through the powers they had to hew their way through blood to the throne. How much easier may it be for a President of the United States to establish himself on a throne here, invested with sovereign power for a term of four years at once and eligible to the same again at the expiration of that term; invested with the sole command of all our armies and no rival to circumvent him. I conceive the way is in a manner laid open and plain

before him, should his ambitions inspire him to aim at sovereign power. However, the constitution of an empire is too deep and extensive for my comprehension, therefore it does not become me to cavil with it.

My dear Cousin, from the purport of your last letter I am now divested of all hopes or expectation of ever seeing you on this side of Time. I shall therefore the more earnestly request you will continue a correspondence with me by letter. Your letters are all very acceptable, agreeable and entertaining to me. I regret my own defect that I have not a liberal education so as to enable me to correspond on equal terms with those who possess these advantages, nevertheless you may be assured I will cheerfully embrace all opportunities of answering your letters and communicating to you (in such a manner as I can) anything that may occur here which I think may be amusing or entertaining to you. I am much indebted to you for the relation you gave me of our friends about Dromore and Two Mile Mill. My family and brothers and sisters and their families are all well. On the first day of this month Robert's daughter Ann was married to a Mr. Bryan a widower about 36 years of age: he has had two children. He is a man of unblemished character and possessed of considerable property. She is his fourth wife, it is a match very agreeable to herself and all her friends, and is the first and only marriage that has yet taken place amongst all my Father's grandchildren.

My wife joins me in respects to Mrs. Dickson and all your family. I remain Dear Cousin with respect and all due esteem your sincere friend and

Affectionate Kinsman

WM. DICKSON.

FOURTH LETTER.

(Copied from *Fayetteville Examiner*.)

A female friend has placed in our hands a letter found among her family papers and written by her collateral ancestor, Wm. Dickson of Duplin County, to his cousin, Rev. Robt. Dickson, a Presbyterian clergyman, living near Narrow Water, Newry, in Ireland.

The letter is dated, "Goshen, 28th December, 1790," and is interesting on account of its presenting the views of a very intelligent and observant man of the time on subjects of public importance. It is closely written, and fills six pages of foolscap paper, much of the space being devoted to family matters. The records of the Dickson family carry us back to 1608. William Dickson was a native of Ireland, county of Down, and in faith a Presbyterian. He was a descendant of Simon Dickson (probably his great-grandson) who was an English Puritan and an officer of Cromwell's Army. William Dickson came to North Carolina before the war of the Revolution and was a very prominent citizen of Duplin County. He filled many positions of high trust, being one of the representatives of Duplin County in the conventions which were held at Newbern in 1774 and at Halifax in 1775. He was also a member of the convention at Halifax in 1776 which formed the first constitution for the State of North Carolina. The following extract is taken from the body of the letter we have spoken of :

"I am much indebted to you for the pains you have taken in considering and giving me your opinion of the general plan of our Federal government. I will readily agree with you that a better could not be formed for the United States in general. I think that it is formed so as to lay the foundation of one of the greatest empires now in the world, and from the high opinion I have of the illus-

trious characters who now hold the reins of government, I have no fear of any revolution taking place in my day. Since I wrote to you on the subject I have become reconciled to it. I was convinced of the propriety as well as the necessity of yielding up some of the privileges we enjoy as freemen for the sake of a more permanent and efficient government, but I believe that the State of North Carolina would not have adopted the government of the United States for this principle only. It was a matter of necessity rather than choice when the convention of North Carolina received it about twelve months ago, we being the last state except one (Rhode Island) which came into the measure. Virginia, though with much reluctance, and the other states around us having previously adopted the federal plan, the state of North Carolina could not remain independent of the union and support the dignity of a state itself. Had Virginia only stood out with us, I think North Carolina would not have been in the union yet. It appears to me that the Southern States will not receive equal benefit in the government with the Northern States. The interest, manners and customs and trade will be more united and by being more numerous and more powerful will form the laws of the General Government more to their own advantage and convenience.

The Southern States will have their vote but will not be able to carry any point against so powerful a party in cases where either general or local interests are the object. Some attempts which were made in the course of the last session of Congress have much alarmed the Southern people. The most strenuous exertions were made by some of the Northern representatives to liberate and emancipate the slaves in the United States, and though they did not carry their point they seem determined never to drop the matter until they do. This, if effected, will be arbitrary, cruel and unjust. The people in the Southern States who

have any property hold it mostly in land and negroes, and if divested of their negroes their lands will become useless or rather burdensome to them. They will not be able to cultivate or pay the taxes on them and the most opulent and considerable families would in a short time be reduced to indigence and extreme poverty.”

FIFTH LETTER.

GOSHEN, 13th March, 1818.

MY DEAR LINDA:—Your kind letter of 7th. January last came to hand in due time, tho’ I have not answered it until now. We all rejoice to hear that you enjoy good health, but lament to hear that your sister Johnston has not been so well.

Myself and your sister Nancy are well at present. I have lately heard from your mother and other friends; they are also well.

It is with pleasure I hear you are now at school under the tuition of a lady under whose instruction you expect to make useful improvements. My dear Linda, you have now arrived at that period of life when the mind is capable of receiving useful instruction and improvement thereby, and I have not any doubt but you will be attentive and make the best use of your time to acquire as much useful knowledge as possible. To improve the faculties of the mind is much more ornamental to any person than dress and outward show. The one will continue for life, the other will vanish with the times. In two or three years more you will appear upon the theatre of the world, exposed to the view and criticism of all manner and ranks of people, when it will be prudent so to conduct yourself with propriety so as to gain the applause and good opinion of the most virtuous and respectable class of our fellow citi-

zens. This I make no doubt will be your pride and ambition to obtain. Nature has done a good part for you in the formation of your personal graces, and intellects of the mind, and your mother, as far as in her power has given you opportunities for improving them, which I sincerely hope and believe you will.

I expect you frequently receive letters from your mother and other friends by which you have information of the times in this place, some deaths and some marriages have lately occurred which perhaps you have not yet heard of. About two months ago old Mrs. Beck of this place died, and about a month ago Mr. Andrew McIntire at the Court House died; his complaint was the dropsy, which had afflicted him upwards of six months. Your Cousin Joseph Dickson is no better yet than when you went from here, he continues in the same condition.

Last Tuesday the 10th inst. was married Mr. Allen Whitfield of Wayne County to Miss Mary Sloan, daughter of Gibson Sloan, of this county; and yesterday evening Mr. John Whitfield of Lenoir County to Miss Carolina Wright, daughter of Thomas Wright of this County.

Your brother James is well; he continues to live with us and goes to school daily.

Your sister, Dolly Maxwell, has a daughter Susan Ann. Nancy Pearsall has a daughter named Linda.

I have nothing worth communicating that will be of any amusement to you. Your sister Nancy joins me in love to yourself and respects to Mr. and Mrs. Johnston, etc.

I remain Dear Linda with due affection

Your Uncle,

WM. DICKSON.

Miss Linda Dickson.

N. B. I here enclose you a lock of my hair, and Nancy sends you a lock of your Father's hair. They are tied together. Your Father's is the shortest.

NOTE:

“The Grove Academy” referred to in the letters, was incorporated by the Act of 1785, Chapter 30 (Martin’s Collection of Statutes), as follows:

AN ACT TO ERECT AND ESTABLISH AN ACADEMY IN THE COUNTY OF
DUPLIN.

Whereas, the establishing an academy in the said County for the education of Youth, will be attended with great advantages to the State in general and the County of Duplin in particular:

1. Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, that Thomas Routledge, James Kenan, Joseph Dickson, Thomas Gray, William Dickson, David Dodd, John James, Israel Bordeaux and James Gillespie, Esquires, be and they are hereby constituted and appointed trustees with full power and authority to receive into their hands and possession all monies and other property which have been or hereafter may be subscribed for the purpose of erecting an academy on the lands lately purchased of Nicholas Hunter in said County, by name of Grove Academy; and the said trustees and their successors shall be able and capable in law to ask for and demand, receive and possess of the several subscribers all sums by them respectively subscribed, and in case of refusal of any of them to pay the same, to sue for and recover by action of debt or otherwise, in the name of the trustees, the sum which such person so refusing shall have subscribed, in any jurisdiction having cognizance thereof; and the monies when collected and received, to be applied by the said trustees or a majority of them towards paying for the lands already contracted for, and erecting thereon a suitable and convenient house, to contract with and employ a tutor or tutors, and to perform every act or thing that they or a majority of them shall think necessary and expedient for the advancement of the said academy and the promotion of learning therein

2 And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that the trustees hereinbefore mentioned, shall, previous to their entering on the execution of the trust reposed by this Act, give bond to the court of the County, payable to the Chairman and his successor, in the sum of One Thousand Pounds specie, with condition that they shall well and faithfully account for and apply all gifts, donations, bequests and monies which they may receive of and by virtue of this act for the purposes aforesaid

3. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that if any of the trustees by this Act appointed shall die, refuse to act or remove away that he cannot attend the duties of his appointment, the remaining trustees may appoint another in his stead, who shall exercise the same powers as trustees appointed by this Act; and when met together within the said County shall have power and authority to elect and constitute one or more tutor or tutors, and a treasurer, and also to make and ordain such rules and regulations, not repugnant to the laws of this State, for the well ordering of the students, their morals, studies and academical exercises, as to them shall seem meet; and to give certificates to such students as shall leave said academy, certifying their literary merit; in general they shall or may do all such things as are usually done by bodies corporate and politic, or such as may be necessary for the promotion of learning and virtue; and the said trustees, or a majority of them are hereby empowered, and shall have lawful authority to remove the tutor or tutors, treasurer or any of them if they shall find it necessary, and on the death, resignation or refusal to act of any of them, to appoint and elect others in the stead of those displaced, dead or refusing to act.

4. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that the trustees by this Act appointed, or a majority of them, and their successors, shall meet annually on the first Friday of March in each and every year, or at any other time they may find more convenient, and elect a proper person out of their own body to preside for the term of one year, who may convene the trustees at any time he may find it necessary: Provided always that he shall give ten days previous notice of such meeting and that the President and Treasurer shall be chosen on the said first Friday of March unless in cases of unavoidable accidents.

5 And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that the treasurer of the said Board of Trustees shall enter into bond with sufficient security to the trustees, conditioned for the faithful discharge of the trust reposed in him by this Act, and that all monies and chattels that shall be in his hands, at the expiration of his office, shall be immediately paid into the hands of the succeeding treasurer; and every treasurer shall receive all monies, donations, gifts, bequests and charities that may belong or accrue to said Academy during his office, and at the expiration thereof shall account with the trustees or a majority of them for the same, and on refusal or neglect to pay and deliver as aforesaid, the same mode of recovering may be had against him as is or may be provided for the recovery of money from sheriffs or other public officers.

