

Founding of the Court House

Editor Courier:

Person county was cut off from Caswell, which was originally a part of Orange county (the mother of counties) about the year 1790 [1792], and named for General Person, of Granville county, of Revolutionary fame. The Court House for Caswell county after Person was cut off was for a while in Leasburg, on the lot afterwards owned by the late Hon. George N. Thompson. The Court House for Person was for a year or two at Paines Tavern, four miles south of Roxboro. During this time a committee was appointed by the Court, or Board of Magistrates, to select a more central point for the permanent location of the Court House, and the committee decided upon the present location as being very near the center of the county; besides, they found a good spring of water near by, known ever since as the "Public Spring;" this spring, which is near the rear of the Primitive Baptist church, had much to do with the choice of location of the county seat; this is a rocky section and wells of water were difficult to dig and not much in use.

The land for the Court House Square was given to the county by Dempsey Moore in 1792. The deed for the same can be seen by reference to Book A, in the Person County Register of Deeds office.

Roxboro was named, so I have often heard, by James Williamson, a native of Scotland of Angus county, who then lived two miles south of Roxboro on a farm, known a long while as the "Williamson Place," but now as the "Murdock Place" and belonging to the writer. It had one of the finest homes in the county. Mr. Williamson was a prominent citizen. He had the Scotch gift for accumulation and consequently owned many large tracts of land and many negroes. He was a large farmer and merchant, having a store in Roxboro and one at his home. He was married twice and reared a large family. He educated his children in the best schools and colleges in the country, thus fitting them for places of honor and trust.

One of his sons, John Gustavus Adolphus Williamson, was many times elected to the Legislature from the county, and to other honorable places. He was also appointed by the President of the United States to a diplomatic post in Venezuela, South America. He married in Philadelphia, died and was buried there. Another son was Dr. James M. Williamson, who lived in Memphis; another a lawyer in Alamance county; one daughter married Judge Dick of Greensboro; one married a Mr. Donahoe, of Milton, N. C.; another married James Ruffin, of Hillsboro, and the others married prominent men. Mr. Williamson died about the year 1832 and was buried, himself, both wives and daughter, Mrs. Ruffin, at the old home place near Roxboro, as their tomb stones there indicate to this day.

After the death of Mr. Williamson, this home was bought by Elder Stephen Pleasant, a prominent Baptist minister who lived there many years and raised a large family of children, many of whom were prominent in the business and social life of the county.

Roxboro was named for "Roxborough," a shire of Scotland on the English border and not on account of the rocky section in which it is located. The name has been variously spelled in my own time on maps and postoffice books "Roxborough," as well as "Roxboro."

Our county has always been, until late years, a very conservative county, rather slow in voting money for improvements, or for men to office who favored taxation for internal improvements. Several routes for railroads were surveyed through the county long years ago, one as far back as 1852, but none availed until years later.

Roxboro, N. C.
October 6, 1915