

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE HAWKINS FAMILY

by

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Sometime preceding the Revolutionary War, several Hawkins brothers (there is some dispute as to the number) came to America and settled on the James River in Virginia. They were of old English lineage, intelligent and well educated.

According to the account of my Grandfather, there were three of these brothers, all of whom probably fought in the Revolutionary War and two of whom are reputed to have been Generals.

One of these brothers, whose name was Benjamin, later came to North Carolina directly from Virginia and settled near the Swannanea River on what was for some time known as the Tennant Farm and which is referred to in Dr. F. A. Sondley's notes as "Antler Hall" and which is now a part of the Biltmore Estate.

Somewhere on this Estate is an old private burying ground where Benjamin Hawkins and his wife are both buried.

This Benjamin Hawkins held some important office in the Government of his day. He was what would be considered as a Commissioner today. Benjamin Hawkins and his wife reared five children: four sons and one daughter. Their names were John, Frank, William and Bailey Hawkins. The daughter's name is at present unknown.

Frank and Bailey Hawkins moved westward into Georgia. William went to Jackson County, North Carolina and established his home there. The only daughter of Benjamin Hawkins married Robert Murray and they came to the Hominy Valley and settled near what is now known as the Boswell siding of the Southern Railway's Murphy branch. This was about 1798 or near the close of the 18th century. She was the first Hawkins to set up a home in the Hominy Valley. Their home became known some time later as the "Murray Old Fields." This site was noted as an old "Battalion Ground" for many years preceding the Civil War. Later it was known as a camping ground for waggoners passing up and down the Western Turnpike Road.

There are a great many of the great grand children of the Murrays living in the Hominy Valley today. The late Robert Gwnbey, Mrs. Wilkes Bryson, Mrs. John Pettit, Robert Murray and Joseph Parker were grand children. The old place was given up many years ago, however.

John Hawkins, the oldest son of Benjamin Hawkins, married Mary Smith and in 1815 they also came to the Hominy Valley to make their home. They settled near what is known as Ragsdale Creek and owned a farm of 316 acres. This tract was originally owned by Daniel Jarrett, Sr., who acquired the land in three grants from the State of North Carolina. The first grant was 100 acres and was dated December 15, 1802. The second grant #1233 was 150 acres, dated December 16, 1803. The other called for 60 acres and bore the date November 9, 1817. The other six acres were acquired some time later. There are now between seventy-five and one hundred families living on the land that was included in the original John Hawkins Estate.

It is hard for those of us who live in Western North Carolina today, in this age of modern conveniences, to ever realize just what hardships our pioneer ancestors were called on to bear to build up this section.

Mary Smith who married John Hawkins was a sister to James Smith, who according to history was the first white child born west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

When Mr. Smith reached Swannanea, where he decided to make his home, he constructed a house of logs. There being no lumber available, curtains served for door shutters. It was in this house that Mary Smith Hawkins was born. The father of James and Mary Smith was obliged to travel to Burke County to mill to have grain ground for bread for his family. When he made these trips to mill, a journey which necessitated an absence of about a week, he was compelled to leave his wife at home alone with her small children. Since their nearest neighbor was living three miles away, Mrs. Smith and her babies had only the dogs for protection and company. At night their entertainment consisted of sitting by the fire listening to the dogs fight with the wild animals who seemed emboldened by the absence of the master of the house. Their cries rent the night and their fighting bodies caused the curtain doors to sway in the firelight. Of such stuff was the backbone of our nation as well as this wonderful county of ours formed.

John Hawkins and his wife, Mary Smith Hawkins, had for their home the house where Mrs. Hannie Henry, the widow of the late Wade Henry now lives. Wade Henry was the son of William L. Henry, who acquired a part of the John Hawkins Estate from Albert Hawkins in 1860.

On or near this site John Hawkins conducted one of the few stores then in operation. He was also a Justice of the Peace and carried on quite a large business for that time in addition to his operation of his plantation.

John Hawkins and his wife, Mary Smith Hawkins, reared eight children. There were five sons: Dan, Albert, James, George, and Benjamin and three daughters; Mary, Jane, Sarah and Martha. Dan Hawkins, who was born in 1818 married a Miss Rogers from Georgia. He established his home in West Asheville near the present site of the Calvary Baptist Church. Their house is still standing.

Albert Hawkins who was born in 1820, married Miss Nancy Eveline Jones, daughter of Wiley Jones. They moved to a small house which stood near the site of the Norburn's home. He later constructed a new house which stood on the site of the house where Mrs. Ninnie Alexander Hawkins, now lives. She is the widow of the late William Hawkins, youngest son of Albert Hawkins.

George Hawkins married Miss Caroline Luther and lived for several years in the old John Hawkins house. This house and his part of his father's estate he later sold to Albert Hawkins. The latter sold the place to William L. Henry in 1860.

Benjamin and James Hawkins died while both were still young and unmarried. Their deaths were caused from typhoid fever and they were both buried in the old Sulphur Springs Graveyard where the family worshipped in the small Methodist Church.

Mary Jane Hawkins married Billard Franklin Gudger, who was the son of Colonel James Gudger of Turkey Creek. They had two children, Dillard Franklin Gudger, who made his home near Candler and a daughter, the older of the two, who married William Jones and moved to Georgia.

After Mr. Gudger's death, Mary Jane Hawkins Gudger married Augustus B. (Capt. Buck) Thrash. They reared seven children, five daughters and two sons. They were as follows: The late Martha (Mrs. John H.) Courtney, Jennie (Mrs. Robert) Sayers, Hattie (Mrs. Richard) Holcombe, and Misses Loue and Cree Thrash, who have never married. The sons are R. Lee and Pinkney Thrash. All of the above, with the exception of the late Mrs. Courtney, are living in the Hominy Valley today.

Sarah Hawkins married Wiley Bryson. They settled on Mills River. Their seven children were : James, Bob, John, George, Wiley, Ham and Martha Bryson.

That John Hawkins was interested in the progress of his community is shown by the fact that church and school had his support and cooperation. We know this because he left receipts showing that he sent his children to school and paid their tuition and also subscribed to his Methodist Church paper.

He was progressive. This is proved by the fact that he purchased a block of stock in the Greenville and Columbia Railroad Company on July 1, 1853, when the Railroad was practically a new thing.

Upon the death of John Hawkins about 1857, Albert Hawkins was appointed special administrator of his estate on February 18, 1857, since said John Hawkins died intestate. The estate was of such size that he was required to post bond of \$20,000.00. Later, April 7, 1857, Albert Hawkins was duly appointed Administrator.

We find among the Administrator's effects documents showing that John Hawkins was attended during his last illness by Dr. Hardy A. Hilliard.

The personal property of John Hawkins was disposed of at public auction and receipts show that after the expenses of the sale were paid, the proceeds were divided among his living children. His real property after having been surveyed by John Thrash, seems to have also been divided among his children. We have deeds, however, showing that Albert Hawkins purchased a good part of said estate from the other heirs.

Albert Hawkins and his wife owned several slaves. One of

whom, Mary, was a wedding present to Eveline Jones Hawkins from her father, Wiley Jones.

Another slave, old Ben, was purchased from the auction block for five dollars. Albert Hawkins who happened to be at the sale was touched by the old man's plight. From the kindness of his heart, he bought the infirm old man to give him a home for the rest of his days. Never was kindness better repaid. Ben was a very faithful old Negro, very trustworthy and gentle; hence, to him was entrusted much of the care of the children. One of Ben's characteristics was his religious nature. Many mornings he awoke his slumbering "white folks" with his songs and prayers. Ben was said to sit in the chimney corner or on the porch in the sun and smoke his pipe. When the fleas bothered him, as was often the case, he would very calmly unbutton his shirt and blow tobacco smoke on his chest to rid himself of the pests. That was one of the pictures of Ben that Albert Hawkins' children carried through life.

Many interesting stories are told of the slaves, their sagacity and inherent bent to reguery. One evening when Albert Hawkins was a young man still living in his father's house, he heard a terrible disturbance among the chickens. Taking his gun he looked out and shot among the branches of the tree in which the chickens roosted. A frightened voice, distinctly negroid, came from the branches. "Why, Missa Albert, whut y'u mean, shootin' at me? Nex' time 'possum git aftuh you' paw's chick'ns, I'll let 'em hab 'em."

Albert Hawkins was very kind and generous to his slaves and they never forgot it. That he was a good master, is proved by the fact that he supplied his slaves with a good house to live in. They ate the same food that his family ate; the same food, cooked in the same kitchen. They were not compelled to eat in the "Big House" kitchen. They carried their rations to their own house and ate it there. They kept their house in the same immaculate order as the "Big House" was kept.

Many a time the "Master's" children wandered out to the Negro quarters after supper to listen to them sing and pray and to hear the stories that they always had in readiness for such an occasion. Sometimes the small children grew tired and sleepy and were put to sleep in old Mary's snow white bed to be carried gently to the "Big House" in the arms of one or another of the faithful colored men. In return the slaves showed their gratitude in various ways, stories of which are told with incidents to show their sterling qualities and the trust their master and mistress had in them.

Albert Hawkins and his wife reared seven children of which number there were four sons, Joseph, Benjamin, John and William; and three daughters, Ellen, Nancy and Addie. Their parents sometimes went away for short visits, leaving the children in the care of servants with the utmost confidence that they would be diligently looked after.

Albert Hawkins served for the whole term of the Civil War. During this time he was confined to the Floyd House Hospital in Macon, Georgia, for several months. During the time that he was in the hospital he was able to write more regularly to his family. Some of his war letters have been preserved. Although he avoided mention of the war as much as possible, something of the nature of the hardships he bore can be gathered from them. Lack of good food and proper clothes are mentioned more often. His letters read like pages from some old book. Although the manner in which he addressed his family in these letters was rather stilted, as was the custom in those times, one realizes that his whole life was lived for his wife and children. His constant thought was for their welfare.

During the war he was moved from place to place so much that he could hardly receive communications from his family. In every letter he told of his prayers for their spiritual and physical welfare and of how he hoped and prayed that his children could grow up to be Christian men and women. His prayers have been answered for every generation of his descendants has had its preachers, Sunday School teachers, Sunday School Superintendents, Stewards, etc., in addition to the number of devout chirstians who live their religion without making a show of it.

Even though Albert Hawkins saw actual fighting service during the Civil War, his hardships were probably no harder than those his family were called on to endure at home. However, Eveline Hawkins was peculiarly blessed in her struggle to provide for her children because every slave stayed with her and did everything possible to assist her. In spite of this cooperation which she received from her servants, she was helpless to prevent the Yankees from driving off her livestock, taking everything they wanted to eat, and riding away on their blooded horses. Finally, all they had left was an old crippled mule which Eveline

Hawkins used for a saddle animal and a spirited young mare.

One day as she was riding home from a short visit to one of her friends, a Mrs. Reynolds, in West Asheville, Eveline was met by a party of Northern soldiers who ordered her to surrender her mount. This she spiritedly refused to do. They followed her home, intending to take the mule anyway. When they reached the Albert Hawkins house shortly after Eveline had reached home, they saw the fine young mare and were wild to possess her. They ordered the slaves to catch the horse. The poor Negroes were helpless to refuse to obey the orders but were determined to protect their master's property at any cost. They started running after the horse in a course that would take them behind the hill out of sight from the soldiers. Once they were lost to view they whipped the horse severely and angered her so that she would be too irritable to catch. This method of procedure they kept up until the soldiers left in disgust.

Shortly after Lee's surrender, Albert Hawkins returned to his home to find things in a terrible condition. All his livestock was gone and his slaves were free men, although all his slaves expressed a desire to stay with him, he insisted that the younger ones make a start for themselves. The old ones stayed with him for awhile.

It was at the close of the Great War Between the States that Albert Hawkins found himself land poor as were all of his neighbors. Although he had a large family to rear, he picked up his burden and went on without a complaint about his added responsibility. It was about this time that he was appointed overseer of that part of the Western Turnpike Road which was in his vicinity. Squire Hawkins was known all over the country as a good neighbor and a kindly husband and father. He supported his church and school and stood foursquare for civic righteousness. In addition to his duties as a planter, he was a member of the firm of Hawkins, Jones and Co., lumbermen.

Albert Hawkins' children received their educations at the Old Sand Hill Academy and the Peabody Institute. The Sand Hill Academy stood near the site of the present Sand Hill High School, and the Peabody Institute was conducted on the site of the present Middlemount Gardens.

Albert and Eveline Hawkins were both buried in the Old Sardis Churchyard, where they had attended church during their lifetime.

Joseph Hawkins, oldest son of Albert Hawkins, married Miss Martha Adella Nelson, daughter of Hirmand Nelson of Spartanburg, S.C. Benjamin Hawkins (now deceased) married Miss Martha Penland. Their home was in Asheville, N.C. Their children were Vernon, Winton, Edith, Floyd, Blanche and Frank. These with the exception of Winton and Edith, live in Asheville now. Edith died while a very young girl and Winton was still a young man when he died. His two children, a son and a daughter, also live in Asheville.

John Hawkins (now deceased) married Miss Luna Moore. They made their home in Hominy Valley finally settling on the Ragsdale Creek in the Starnes Cove, where his widow now resides. They reared five children. Their names are Paul, Gladys (Mrs. Charles Plemmons), Winfred, Rachel (Mrs. Wayne Melton, now deceased), and Charles.

William Hawkins (now deceased) married Miss Ninnie K. Alexander. They made their home in the old Albert Hawkins house where his widow now lives. The names of their children are: Mrs. Una Morris, Roy Hawkins, and Mrs. Mildred Morrow. Roy Hawkins who married Miss Norma Thomas is connected with the Carolina Power and Light Company in the capacity of cashier.

Ellen Hawkins (now deceased) married A. H. (Ham) Folmet, teacher and for some years Superintendent of Public Schools. They built a home on a part of the Albert Hawkins place where the Norburn house now stands. They lived a very useful and influential life in community, church, school etc. They later moved to Asheville where their children (with the exception of Mrs. Beale who lives at Aeton) now live. Their children are: Claude, Gorda (Mrs. J.W. Alexander, now deceased), Will, Lucy (Mrs. C. D. Beale), Fred, Nannie, (Mrs. J.J. Mackey), Maude (Mrs. C. M. Cooke), Carl and Linna (Mrs. Scott Montgomery).

Claude Folmet is at present chairman of the County Board of Commissioners. Will, Fred and Carl compose the firm of Folmet Brothers.

Nancy Hawkins married James Hughes. They moved to Liberty, S.C. where they have since made their home.

Addie Hawkins married Pinkney Taylor. They have always made their home at Aeton. Their children are: Clyde, Lora (Mrs. Sellers), Pearl, Bessie (Mrs. S. L. Ballard), Annie (Widow of the late Will Taylor), and Theodore (now deceased).

Rev. Joseph M. Hawkins was a member of the Hoston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for a time. Some time later he located and bought a part of the Old Hawkins Estate and built a house on what was then known as the State Road from Asheville to Waynesville.

He preached as long as his health permitted, assisting in revivals, and accepting regular appointments when anyone desired him to do so. If anyone offered him remuneration for his services he was glad, but he never preached for money. His ways always in demand for funerals, etc., because of his kind and loving sympathy. Rich, and poor, black and white, alike sent for him in times of trouble and distress, and as long as he was able he never refused a request. As long as the state road followed its old course, he operated a general merchandise store near the intersection of the road with the Railroad, which was between Acton and Sulphur Springs Railway stations. He served as Postmaster of the Acton Post Office for many years.

When the course of the state highway was changed, he built a new store on the new highway. This store he operated for some years. As his health failed, his daughter, Miss Grayce Hawkins, gradually took over his business and still operates a store on the same site.

Joseph M. Hawkins and his wife, Martha Nelson Hawkins, reared seven children: Ida, Clarence, Gussie, Daisy, Ralph, Grayce, and Ella Sue. Miss Ida Hawkins has been for some years a teacher in Buncembo and surrounding County Schools. Clarence Hawkins married Miss Bertha Duckett. He started out in the footsteps of his Hawkins forefathers in the merchantile business, but was forced because of asthma, to take up a trade which would enable him to be out in the open air as much as possible. Since that time he has been a carpenter. Clarence Hawkins and Bertha Duckett Hawkins have seven children: Katharine, Kibel, Donald, Evelyn, Frances, Julian, and Barbara Ann. Gussie Hawkins married Wade I. Caldwell, of Hickory. They and their son Joseph live in Hickory, where both Mr. and Mrs. Caldwell are members of the firm of Hickory Flour & Feed Company. They are prominent in church and civic circles. Daisy Hawkins married Melvin Nelson (now deceased). They made their home in Miami, Florida. Since Mr. Nelson's death she and her daughter Doris have been living at Acton.

Ralph Hawkins married Netta Goodman. They and their four daughters (Helen, Jacqueline, Martha and Mary Sue) live in West Asheville. Ralph Hawkins operates a wholesale fruit and produce business.

Miss Grayce Hawkins is proprietress of the Acton Grocery at Acton. Miss Ella Sue Hawkins has for some years held a position of trust with the Bon Marche, Asheville's select department store. She is also an accomplished musician.