



Anson County, North Carolina, Created From Bladen County in 1750

by Terry Moore, CG

My favorite television comedy is *The Middle*. The story is about a somewhat normal American family with three children. Sue is in the middle of two boys and everything goes wrong for her. She never makes a school team or is accepted in the clubs she wants to join, and at every turn she is presented with almost insurmountable challenges. She shows a little sadness when first disappointed, but before you know it she kicks her heels, smiles, and is on to the next challenge. That's the attitude needed to research in a burned county.

Ansonville, which was the county seat of Anson County at the time, suffered a fire on 2 April 1868. The fire destroyed thirty-two buildings including the county courthouse.¹ While most of the probate records and deeds survived, many of the earliest records did not, so records before 1790 may be spotty.

The earliest surviving deeds have been abstracted by Brent Holcomb. His book, *Anson County, North Carolina Deed Abstracts, 1749-1766, Abstracts of Wills & Estates, 1749-1795*,² and the *History of Anson County, North Carolina, 1750-1976* by Mary Medley³ are available on Ancestry.com. (Log into Ancestry.com, click on **Search**, then click on **Card Catalog** and type **Anson County, North Carolina**, in the keyword field.)

Anson County deeds have a handwritten and typed copy, both found at the North Carolina State Archives. Dr. Bruce Pruitt has abstracted deed books D through X and 10 through 14. He has also created a separate comprehensive index to these abstracts.⁴ The advantage of using abstracts is that not only are the grantor and grantees listed in the index, but so are neighbors and sometimes family members and other associates.

With the exception of some charred pages of the minutes of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions for the years 1771-1779, the earliest court records were destroyed in the fire. These surviving minutes

were copied and indexed in the 1930s and 40s. Several hundred pages of probate records that were found in the back of Will Book 1, dating from 1749-1789, also survived as well as tax records for 1763, 1779, and 1815.⁵ Remember, too, that probates in North Carolina before 1760 and some later than that date were probated by the Secretary of State, so that is where the records could be found.

North Carolina only took one census spanning the years 1784-1787, but there is not a return for Anson County. May Wilson McBee, in her book *Anson County, North Carolina, Abstracts of Early Records*, abstracted the petitions of Anson County residents to the North Carolina General Assembly for the years 1770-1789. These petitions are a fairly good substitute for missing tax and census records. Ms. McBee included other records in her book, also. The *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal* has abstracts for the following Anson County records:

- "Anson County, NC Quit Rents Lists 1750-1757," May 1992, volume XVIII, issue 2, pp. 73-84.
- "List of Anson Co., NC Estates Records, 1805-1953," August 1997, volume XXIII, issue 3, pp. 243-256.
- "Index to Some Anson Co., NC Estate Inventories 1749-1795," August 1998, volume XXIV, issue 3, pp. 296-298.
- "Anson Co., NC, Miscellaneous Items," May 2000, volume XVI, issue 2, pp. 208-216.
- "Montgomery Co., NC Voter List for 1779," February 1984, volume X, issue 1, pp. 44-46. (Montgomery County was formed from Anson in 1779 and there is a voter list for that year in Montgomery County, which would closely represent Anson County before the split.)

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As always, when searching in a North Carolina county with record losses, keep these tips in mind:

- Search records of the surrounding counties, including South Carolina counties, for Anson County references.
- Search the state and federal records.
- Search district court records.
- Search private records.

So kick up your heels and smile, look at all the records available for Anson County before 1790.

Notes

¹ “The Anson County Courthouse Fire, 1868” *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal* volume 3, issue 1 (February 1977): 62.

² Brent H. Holcomb, C.A.L.S., *Anson County, North Carolina Deed Abstracts, 1749-1766, Abstracts of Wills & Estates, 1749-1795* (Baltimore, Maryland, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1980).

³ Mary L. Medley, *History of Anson County, North Carolina*, (Reprint, Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2007)

⁴ Dr. A. B. Pruitt, *Index to Anson County, NC Deeds, 1749-1854* (No place: By the author, 2007). This is an index to 32 deed books.

⁵ May Wilson McBee, *Anson County, North Carolina, Abstracts of Early Records* (Reprint, Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1978), iii, iv.