



Surviving Buncombe County, North Carolina, County Records

by Terry Moore, CGSM

Asheville, North Carolina, and the awe inspiring Biltmore Estate are located in Buncombe County, which was created in 1791 from Burke and Rutherford Counties. A number of counties were created from Buncombe including Haywood, Yancey, Henderson, and Madison. Buncombe County was named after Colonel Edward Buncombe, a Revolutionary War soldier.¹ The courthouse fires of 1830 and 1865 destroyed many records including many early court records. The Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society is an active society with a History and Family Research Center in Asheville located at 128 Bingham Road, Suite 950. Nancy Manning is the Historian/Genealogist.

Original Buncombe County records before 1850 at the North Carolina State Archives

- Indenture Bonds, 1794-1878 (copied from court minutes)
- Bastardy bonds and records, 1824-1928 (two fibredex boxes, so probably not many for the early years)
- Officials' records, 1854-1909, are filed in the miscellaneous records C.R. 013.928.7.
- Minute Docket for the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1792-1796, 1798-1812, 1822-1824, 1832-1868
- Appearance Docket for the County Court, 1852-1868
- Execution Docket for the County Court, 1807-1814, 1825-1868
- State Docket for the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1826-1868
- Trial and Appearance Docket for Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1796-1805, 1823-1828, 1833-1851
- Trial Docket of Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1851-1868
- Minute Docket of the Court of Oyer and Terminer: rough minutes of September term 1865 contained in land entries, 1794, C.R. 013.404.1
- Minute Docket of the Superior Court, 1812-1815, 1857-1869 (includes the Execution Docket of the Superior Court 1863-1868)
- Equity Trial and Appearance Docket Superior Court, 1808-1845
- Equity Proceeding for William Brown and others, Margaret Latimer and others, 1848-1867
- Execution Docket Superior Court, 1850-1853, 1858-1863
- Superior Court Execution Docket, 1863-1867
- Superior Court State Docket, 1833-1869
- Superior Court Trial Docket, 1853-1866
- Civil Action Papers arranged chronologically, no date, 1812-1857 (broken series), and 1857-1899 (Images are on FamilySearch.²)
- Civil Action Papers concerning land, no date, 1808-1870 (broken series)
- Criminal Action Papers, 1832, 1851-1909
- Abstracts of Miscellaneous Dockets: Superior Court Minute Docket, 1824-1830; Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions Minute Docket, 1859-1862; Equity Trial and Appearance Docket, 1808-1845
- Record of Deeds, 1789-1875
- Index to Deeds, 1794-1924, arranged by year then alphabetically by name of grantor or grantee
- Ejectments, 1818-1905
- Land Entries, 1794-1919
- Attachments, Executions, Levies and Liens on land, 1814, 1855-1879
- Miscellaneous land records, 1795, 1798, 1802, 1804-1836, 1835, 1841, 1846, 1847, 1857, 1860, 1853-1889
- Record of Probate of Deeds, 1798-1804, 1820-1825
- Record of Estates, 1845-1868

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- Record of Accounts begins in 1868.
- Loose Estate Records, 1801, 1815-1924 (Images are on FamilySearch.²)
- Guardian Records, 1829-1915
- Record of Settlements, 1864-1891
- Marriage Bonds (before 1868), 1 fibrex box
- Marriage certificate for of William Cathey and Catherine Turner in papers of Colonel Joseph Cathey, 1800
- Marriage records, no dates specified in archive index, file box C.R.013.928.6 contains several folders of marriage records.
- Divorce records, 1830, 1867-1918
- List of Justices of the Peace, 1812-1821
- Lists of Justices of various counties File box G.O. 149
- Wills, 1826-1964 (Images are on FamilySearch.²)
- Will Docket A, 1831-1868
- Road Docket 1812-1816, 1849-1868
- Road and Bridge Records, 1838-1916
- Railroad records, 1857-1912
- Miscellaneous Records:
 - Citizenship and naturalization records, no date, 1860-1889 (broken series)
 - McDowell Records, 1850-1853, 1858, 1861
 - Court order for persons to attend as jurors, 1795
 - County accounts, no date, 1853-1870
 - Insolvent debtors, 183_ to 1867
 - Constables, 1854, 1860-1861
 - Powers of Attorney, 1858-1916 (broken series)
 - Records concerning deserters from Confederate military service, 1863-1866
 - Slave Records, 1830-1869 (broken series)
 - Assignees', Receivers', and Trustees' records, 1837-1911
- CRX files*:
 - School Records, 1859-1860
 - Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1810-1812
 - Equity Enrolling Docket, 1808-1824; 1810-1832

- County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions Rough Minutes, 1808-1810

**CRX files are those that were out of official custody for a time period.*

Published abstracts for Buncombe County

Buncombe County Male Marriage Index 1851-1937, A – K (Ashville, NC: The Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, 2007).

Buncombe County Male Marriage Index 1851-1937, L – Z (Ashville, NC: The Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, 2007).

Buncombe County Female Marriage Index 1851-1937, A – K (Ashville, NC: The Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, 2007).

Buncombe County Female Marriage Index 1851-1937, L – Z (Ashville, NC: The Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, 2007).

Carol Allen, *Buncombe County, North Carolina Estate Records' Index 1815-1924* (Baltimore, MD: by the author, no date).

Carol Allen, *Buncombe County, North Carolina, Apprenticeship Bonds, Book B, 1795-1868, 1890-1891* (Baltimore, MD: by the author, no date).

Carol Allen, *Buncombe County, North Carolina, Wills Index, 1826-1909* (Baltimore, MD: by the author, no date).

Carol Allen, *Buncombe County, North Carolina, Estate Records' Index 1815-1924* (Baltimore, MD: by the author, no date).

William G. Bennett, CG, *Buncombe Births 1858-1888, Journal of Dr. James Americus Reagan* (Raleigh, NC: Privately Published, 1989).

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Thurlo V. Byers, *Some Possible Pennsylvania Beginnings of Old Buncombe County, NC, Pioneer Settlers* (St. Louis, MO: by the author, 1990).

Patricia Reese Dockery, *Early Buncombe County, North Carolina, African –American Marriage Records, 1814-1868* (Ashville, NC: by the author, no date).

Margaret W. Haile, James E. Woolley, Vivian Wooley, Doris Cline Ward, and Clarence A. Tillery, *Abstracts of Wills, Buncombe County, NC, 1792 to 1904* (Ashville, NC: Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, 2001).

Frances Terry Ingmire, *Abstracted Wills of Buncombe County, North Carolina, 1831-1872* (Signal Mountain, TN: Mountain Press, 1984).

Nancy Manning, *Buncombe County Court Records, Volume I, Includes Court of Pleas & Quarter Session Minutes 1792-1796 and Probate of Deeds 1796-1804* (Ashville, NC: Old Buncombe Genealogical Society, 2009).

Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, *WNC Bastardy Bonds, Buncombe County 1824-1899, First in a Series* (Ashville, NC: Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, 2012).

Dr. A. B. Pruitt, *Abstracts of Land Entries: Buncombe Co., NC, 1794-1796 (Second Edition)* (No place: by the author, 1999).

Lillian Ledbetter Stumpp, *Marriages of Buncombe County, North Carolina, 1851-1899* (No place: by the author, 1990).

James Wooley, *Buncombe County, North Carolina, Index to Deeds, 1783-1850* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1983).

In 2014, Dorinda Whitley published a wonderful set of books about the early northeast Buncombe County land records in four volumes. Her books

include an every-name index, plat maps, maps of mountains, creeks, and a history of how the area was settled. Book four contains the plats.³

Many records have been abstracted and published in the journal of the Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society, *A Lot of Bunkum*.

Online resources

- The website of the **Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society (OBCGS)** is <http://www.OBCGS.com>, the e-mail address is info@obcgs.com, and the eBay store is <http://stores.ebay.com/obcgs-bookstore>. The Society can be found on Facebook under “Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society.” The OBCGS website has a number of transcriptions of records that can be found under Research Resources.
- The **FamilySearch Wiki**, https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Buncombe_County,_North_Carolina, has many links to Buncombe County records. It is almost a one-stop shop with links to wills, probate records, marriage records, cemetery records, and more, that can be found on FamilySearch, Ancestry, and other websites.
- A keyword search of **Ancestry**’s card catalog revealed two Buncombe County history books: *A History of Buncombe County, North Carolina* by F.A. Sondley, written in 1930, and *Ashville and Buncombe County* by the same author, written in 1922.
- **Newspapers.com**, <https://www.newspapers.com>, has the following early Asheville newspapers: the *Asheville Messenger* 1840-1851; *Asheville News* 1851-1869; and the *Asheville Spectator* 1853-1858. Newspapers from other cities may also contain information about Buncombe County residents.

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- **Genealogy Inc.**, <http://www.genealogyinc.com/northcarolina/buncombe-county>, has a great list of online links for Buncombe County.
- Pam Toms, retired Genealogy Reference Librarian at the North Carolina State Library, recommends the **Speculation Lands Collection** website from UNC-Asheville (http://toto.lib.unca.edu/findingaids/mss/speculation_lands/biographies/tench_coxe.htm). From 1795-1797, Tench Coxe acquired 400,000 acres of land in McDowell, Henderson, Buncombe, Polk, and virtually all of Rutherford County. The site has maps, plats, land grant descriptions, and surname and geographic indexes. This is a site you must explore for land records in the above counties.

Remember to search the FamilySearch catalog for records not online that you want to access. They may be on microfilm, which is available to rent and use at your nearest Family History Center or you can purchase microfilmed records, or ask to have the microfilm digitized, from the North Carolina State Archives⁴ at a reasonable cost.

Buncombe County abstracts and articles in the NCGS Journal

James Bailey, “Ex-Residents of Buncombe County, N.C. in 1805, 1807, 1809” *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*, volume 4, number 4 (November 1978): 261.

Helen F. M. Leary, “The Two James Medcalfs of Buncombe Co., N.C.” *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*, volume 6, number 2 (May 1980): 118.

Robert Scott Davis, Jr., “The Settlement at the Head of the French Broad River, or the Bizarre Story of the First Walton County, Georgia [includes NC Land Grants in Buncombe Co., NC, 1802-1806]” *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*, volume 7, number 2 (May 1981): 62-74.

Jonathan B. Butcher, “Joseph Gash’s Children, Buncombe Co., NC, 1807” *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*, volume 10, number 4 (November 1984): 222.

Search the *NCGS Journal (1975-2010)* on CD or the soon-to-be-finished online index, for Buncombe County or the name of the ancestor you are searching as many from Buncombe County are mentioned in abstracted early newspaper and divorce records.

Conclusion

As always, when searching in a North Carolina county with record losses

- search records of the counties bordering Buncombe and the counties from which it was formed in 1791 as well as South Carolina and Tennessee counties that bordered Buncombe County and nearby Georgia counties;
- search the state and federal records;
- search district court records; and
- search private records.

Endnotes

¹ “Sources of North Carolina County Names” *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*, volume 31, number 1 (February 2005): 92-94.

² See the “Guide to Locating Probate and Other Records on FamilySearch” on the NCGS website for directions on how to access the records section of FamilySearch. (To view the guide, go to the NCGS website at <http://www.ncgenealogy.org>, click on Resources in the menu bar across the top of the page, then select “Tools of the Trade Articles.” The link to the guide is near the top of the page.)

³ Dorinda Whitley, *Early Northeast County, NC Land Records Including portions of Madison & Yancey Counties Volumes 1-4* (No place: by the author, 2014).

⁴ The North Carolina State Archives, 4614 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC, 27699-4614, 919-807-7310, archives@ncdcr.gov.

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