



Researching in Dobbs County, North Carolina

by Terry Moore, CG

The term “burned county” means a county suffered a substantial record loss but not necessarily by fire. Damage to irreplaceable records and information have also been caused by floods or by burial, which happened to the early Orange County deed books by a Civil War general or loyalist clerk making mischief. If the loss was great, where most or all records were lost, the county is referred to as “toast.” (This term is frequently used in North Carolina when there are very few records that have survived.) Toasted counties present a serious challenge to genealogists and Dobbs County is toast.

Dobbs County, North Carolina, was created from Johnston County in 1758. Wayne County was created from Dobbs County in 1779 and Dobbs was abolished in 1791 when Lenoir and Glasgow Counties were created in its place. Dobbs County records were filed with the Lenoir County Court when it was dissolved. The Dobbs County records were destroyed in the 1878 and 1880 courthouse fires in Lenoir County. Very few records for Dobbs have survived.

Researching in a burned county can be challenging. The first strategy is to determine what records were not in the courthouse when it burned. Did the clerk have some records in his home? This was not the case in Dobbs County. The Dobbs County deeds did not survive the fire, but the undated grantor and grantee indexes did. The indexes can prove someone was doing business in the county between 1758 and 1791 and that they might have had a relationship with or casually knew the person to whom they bought or sold land. A rough estimate of the date may be able to be determined according to which deed book the transaction was recorded in.

County Records

- *Dobbs, Lenoir and Johnston Counties, North Carolina, Grantor and Grantee Indexes, 1746-1880*, are available at the North Carolina State Archives in the original and on microfilm.

The indexes have been abstracted and are found in the past issues of the *NCGS Journal*: Part 1: *NCGS Journal*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, February 1995 through Part 10, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, May 1997; Part 11: *NCGS Journal*, Vol. XXVI, No. 4, November 2000 through Part 15, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, Nov 2001; and Part 16: *NCGS Journal*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, May 2002.

Very few other county records survived and county records are probably the most important ones for solving genealogical research problems. The following are among the few that did survive:

- *Dobbs County, North Carolina, Miscellaneous Records, 1762-1791, Deeds & Grants 1762-1791*, North Carolina State Archives file box CR.034.928.1. Only a few original deeds are in the file.
- 1767 civil action papers, Thomas Edwards vs. John Moring, North Carolina State Archives.
- John Parrott’s will 1791, North Carolina State Archives.

That is about it for the county records. The federal, state, and private records were also not in the courthouse.

Federal Records

- 1790 Federal Census
- Revolutionary War Pension Record images now on Fold3 and HeritageQuest Online (only select papers)

State Records

- 1769 Dobbs County, North Carolina, Tax List, Secretary of State Papers, file box S.S. 837, North Carolina State Archives. This tax list is abstracted in the *NCGS Journal*, Volume XV, No. 2, p. 73, which can be found on the NCGS website at <http://www.ncgenealogy.org>.
- 1780 tax list, Dobbs County, North Carolina, file box G. A. 46.1, North Carolina State Archives.

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- 1788 Dobbs County Matters relating to the Constitutional Convention, North Carolina State Archives.
- Dobbs County Justices of the Peace 1760-1763, G. O. 146, North Carolina State Archives.
- North Carolina land grants available at the State Archives and FamilySearch's microfilm copies.
- Secretary of State, land entry books, 1778-1790. These are indexed in William L. Murphy, Jr., *State of North Carolina Entries of Claims for Lands within the County of Dobbs, 1778-1790* (Raleigh, NC: By the author, ©1984)
- Some of the claims for land in Dobbs County are in Beaufort County land entries and indexed in Weynette Parks Haun, *Beaufort County North Carolina Land Entries 1778-1795 [1706-1708 & Claims for Land within the County of Dobbs]* (Durham, NC: By the author, 1983). Claims for land within Dobbs County can be found on pages 63 and 64.
- Granville land grants 1748-1763, indexed in Margaret M. Hofmann, *The Granville District of North Carolina 1748-1763, Abstracts of Land Grants, Volume One* (Weldon, North Carolina: The Roanoke News Company, 1986). This is a five-volume set and not every volume contains information about Dobbs County.
- North Carolina Militia records for Dobbs County, many of which are abstracted on <http://www.usgwarchives.net/nc/dobbs>.
- The North Carolina District Court Records concerning Dobbs County are indexed on the same website as above.

Until 1760 wills and estate records were filed with the Secretary of State. After 1760 these records were to be filed with the county court; however, some individuals still filed with the state until about 1789.

- The wills are indexed in Thornton W. Mitchell, *North Carolina Wills: A Testator Index, 1665-1900* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1992).

- The estates are abstracted in Dr. Stephen E. Bradley, Jr., *Early Records of North Carolina, Volume IX, Colonial Court Records-Estate Papers, 1665-1775, A-Gibson* (Keysville, VA: By the author, 2000). The estates are in three volumes.

Private Collections with Dobbs County Information

- Misc papers in Elizabeth Brooks Bowden Collection, 56 items relating mostly to land in Dobbs, later Lenoir County, which had belonged to Richard Caswell and members of the Brooks family.
- W. T., Jr., and Marion A. Parrott, Private Collection, 1740-1780, Deeds and Grants 1740-1786, North Carolina State Archives file box PC.107.1. (Markland, Dillahoit, et al.).
- James M. Hines, Private Collection, 1745-1889, Deeds and Grants 1745-1845, North Carolina State Archives file box PC.152.1. (Land grants and deeds for Craven, Dobbs, and Lenoir).

Church, cemetery, and Bible records are also contained in private records. On the USGenWeb Archives page for Dobbs County (<http://www.usgwarchives.net/nc/dobbs>), many records pertaining to Dobbs County have been abstracted and posted. And don't forget the neighboring counties, as Dobbs County records could have been filed there. In 1779, Wayne County took the western half of Dobbs County when created and other neighbors were Johnston, Duplin, Onslow, Jones, Craven, Pitt, Edgecombe, and Nash. Yes, the thought of researching in Dobbs County can be bleak, but perhaps now with this list of resources it is not quite as overwhelming. The list is a little butter for the toast.

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