

Hopewell Church and Graveyard.

Among the earliest settlements in the western part of North Carolina, is Hopewell Church. For many months before a building was erected for a place of worship, the people would assemble at or near this place to discuss matters pertaining to the welfare of the country, as well as to hold religious services, as they could get a supply from some passing missionary. The first church was built in the year 1765, ten miles northwest of Charlotte, and two miles east of the Catawba river. The first house was built of logs, and shaded on all sides, so as to be comfortable for women who had young children to look after without disturbing the congregation; also to entertain large crowds who at that time thought it no hardship to ride horseback ten to fifteen miles to church.

In 1830, or thereabout, a very handsome brick house took the place of the first, and about 1860 it was enlarged and capacious galleries were added. The old graveyard is full of historic interest.

Rev. John Williamson was pastor of Hopewell from 1818 to 1842. His wife sleeps beside him. They were worthy people. As far as it is known, he was the only minister who has ever been buried here. Hopewell has always been blessed with preachers well equipped for their work, and gave general satisfaction.

The Hopewell section was thinly populated in 1750, by people moving from Pennsylvania and Maryland hunting a congenial climate to build their home. Richard Barry is said to have moved here many years preceding the Revolutionary war; but we are told that he was 55 years old when he participated in the battle of Cowan's Ford; that he and his friend, David Wilson, carried the body of Gen. W. L. Davidson, who was killed February 1, 1781, and prepared it for burial in Hopewell graveyard. In this spot it has ever

rested, without a marble shaft or even an humble stone, to mark the spot where one of the noted patriots of Mecklenburg is buried, who gave his life for the freedom of America. It is a shame that the United States, the richest and most powerful nation on the face of the earth, who pays its most ordinary officers from one thousand to fifty thousand dollars a year, and not contribute one dollar to mark the graves of Gen. Davidson and Gen. Nash. A bill was recently introduced in Congress to erect a monument over each of their graves to cost \$5,000 a piece, which was defeated. If they had been from the New England States, government appropriations would have been made, that every school boy or girl would have been familiar with their military powers.

A noted character of the Revolutionary days was Capt. Francis Bradly, a true patriot, who took an active part in the skirmish of McIntyre's Branch and was murdered November 14, 1780, by a small band of Tories. Physically he was said to be the strongest man in the county.

Here also is the grave of John McKnitt Alexander, the secretary of the noted convention that met on the 20th of May, 1775, and made the first and the most defiant Declaration of Independence that ever was thrown to the breeze in America, or in the world. Around his grave are a host of his posterity. His two sons, Dr. Joseph McKnitt, and William Bane Alexander, and one sister, Rev. Mrs. S. C. Caldwell, and a great congregation of their descendants. In the fourth generation from the old secretary, we see the name of Capt. Francis Ramsay Alexander, a great-grandson of John McKnitt Alexander—killed in front of Petersburg, Va., in one of the terrific battles in June, 1864. We see here another evidence that the patriots of 1775 would leave indelible impress of patriotism through many generations. Blood will tell. The most numerous persons are of the name of Alexander in this city of the dead. Now but comparatively few of the old family of Alexanders are in the settlement. They have moved to other sections, and strang-

ers have moved in. The Barrys have all gone; the Davidsons and Torrances, and Sam Wilson's posterity are fast disappearing; and their lands have passed into hands of strangers. All the great forests have been cleared up, "the cattle upon a thousand hills" have disappeared; the fish that stocked every creek and branch in great abundance, are no longer to be seen; and the deer and wild turkey that were in former years so plentiful, now only exist in stories of a past age. The whole face of the country has been changed within the memory of an average life time. Here lived Maj. John Davidson, a signer of the immortal document, the Declaration of Independence. He was in a number of engagements with the British and Tories. In after life he went into the iron business with his son-in-law, Capt. Brevard. From this neighborhood came Gen. Joseph Graham, who was present in Charlotte on the 20th of May, 1775, and testified as to the truth of the Declaration of Independence. After he gallantly served in the war of Independence, he became the sheriff of Mecklenburg county. His brother, Gen. George Graham, was a true patriot. He came from Pennsylvania in 1764. He was educated in Charlotte at Queen's College, and in 1775 he and a few others rode all night to Salisbury, seized the Tory lawyers, Dunn and Booth, brought them to Mecklenburg, thence they were carried to Camden and imprisoned.

When Lord Cornwallis lay in Charlotte (1780), Gen. George Graham was very active in attacking his foraging parties. He was one of the band of twelve who forced the British, who had four hundred in their foraging party, to flee in such haste that they reported to their commander "there was a rebel behind every bush." He was a Major-General of militia of North Carolina. For many years he was clerk of the court of the county, and was frequently a member of the Legislature. He died in 1826, and was buried in the old grave yard in Charlotte.