

RICHMOND PEARSON

(Condensed from Wheeler's "Historical Sketches")

Richmond Pearson, late of Davie county when a part of Rowan, was born in Dinwiddie county, Va., in 1770, and at the age of nineteen years came to North Carolina and settled in the forks of the Yadkin river.

When the war of the Revolution broke out he was a Lieutenant in Captain Bryan's company (afterward the celebrated Colonel Bryan, of Tory memory). After the Declaration of Independence, at the first muster which occurred, he requested some on whom he could rely to load their guns. When Captain Bryan came on the ground he ordered all the men into ranks. Pearson refused, and tendered his commission to Bryan, whereupon he ordered him under arrest. This was resisted, and he was told that the men had their guns loaded. They then came to a parley, and it was agreed by the crowd, as matters stood, that Bryan and Pearson, on a fixed day, should settle this national affair by a fair fist fight, and whichever whipped, the company should belong to the side of the conqueror, whether Whig or Tory. At the appointed time and place the parties met, and the Lieutenant proved to be the victor.

From this time the Fork company was for liberty, and Bryan's crowd, on Dutchman's creek, were Loyalists. The anecdote illustrates by what slight circumstances events of this period were affected. When Cornwallis came south, Pearson, with his company, endeavored to harass his advance. He was present at Cowan's Ford on the 1st of February, 1781, where General Davidson fell in attempting to resist the passage of the British. Captain Pearson was a successful merchant and an enterprising planter. He died in 1819, leaving three sons and one daughter: 1st, Jesse A.; 2d, Joseph; 3d, Richmond; and 4th, Elizabeth Pearson. Jesse A. Pearson was frequently a member of the General Assembly from Rowan county. In 1814 he marched as Colonel of a Regiment to the Creek Nation, under General Joseph Graham, and was afterward elected Major General of the State Militia. He died in 1823, without issue.

Hon. Joseph Pearson was a member of the General Assembly in the House of Commons from Rowan county in 1804 and 1805, and a member of Congress from 1809 to 1815. He died at Salisbury on the 27th of October, 1834. He was thrice married. By his first wife, Miss McLinn, he had no issue; by the second, Miss Ellen Brent, he had two daughters--one, the wife of Robert Walsh, Esqr., of Philadelphia--the other, the wife of Lieutenant Farley, of the U.S. Navy; and by the third wife (Miss Worthington, of Georgetown), he left four children.

Richmond Pearson married Miss McLinn. He was never in public life, but was an active, enterprising man. He left the following children: 1st, Sarah, who married Isaac Croom, of Alabama; 2d. Eliza, who married W.G. Bently, of Bladen county, N.C.; 3d. Charles, who died without issue; 4th. Hon. Richmond M. Pearson was born in June, 1805, educated at Statesville by John Mushat, and graduated at Chapel Hill in 1823.

He studied law under Judge Henderson, and was licensed in 1826. He entered public life in 1829 as a member to the State Legislature from Rowan county, and continued as such until 1832. In 1836 he was elected one of the Judges of the Superior Court, and in 1848 was transferred to the Supreme Court, which elevated position he now occupies; 5th.

Giles N. Pearson married Miss Ellis, and was a lawyer by profession. He died in 1847, leaving a wife and five children; 6th. John Stokes Pearson married Miss Beattie, of Bladen county. He died in 1848, leaving four children.

The reader may be curious to know something of the fate of Colonel Samuel Bryan, who commanded the Tory regiment in the forks of the Yadkin, which was so roughly handled and cut to pieces by Colonel Davie and his brave associates, at the battle of the hanging Rock.

About the time Major Craig evacuated Wilmington in 1781, Colonel Bryan, Lieutenant Colonel John Hampton and Captain Nicholas White, of the same regiment, returned to the forks of the Yadkin, were arrested and tried for high treason, under the act of 1777, entitled "An Act for declaring what Crimes and Practices against the State shall be Treason," &c.

Judges Spencer and Williams presided. The prosecution was ably conducted by the Attorney General, Alfred Moore, and the defence by Richard Henderson, John Penn, John Kinchen and William R. Davie, truly a fine array of legal talent.

Public indignation was so greatly excited that Governor Burke found it necessary, after the trial, to protect the prisoners from violence by a military guard.

Colonel Davie's defence of Colonel Bryan, in the argument made to the jury upon the occasion, was said to have been a brilliant exhibition of his forensic ability. For many years afterwards his services were required in all capital cases, and as a criminal lawyer he had no rival in the State. They were all convicted, had sentence of death passed upon them, were pardoned, and subsequently exchanged for officers of equal rank, who were at the time, confined within the British lines.

Source: Sketches of Western North Carolina, Historical and Biographical
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