

John Anderson and the Old Eno Presbyterian Church

by Mary Claire Engstrom (Mrs. Alfred G. Engstrom), February 1970

[Edited from typewritten original by William Lee Anderson III, January 2008. References to John Anderson-Ann Moore's original home place location are shown in **strong (bold) typeface**.]

The *Anderson Family Papers* [elsewhere known as [Anderson Family History by James Henry Anderson](#).] state (p. 3) that a Mr. Thompson wished to give the land for Old Eno Presbyterian Church but that Mr. John Anderson "having a knowledge of law" understood "that a consideration of money was necessary in the transfer of real estate." Mr. Thompson therefore in 1754 deeded the plot of land to Mr. John Anderson for some unrecorded sum, and the compiler of the *Anderson Family Papers* says that this "old deed was still in existence a few years ago, and in the hands of Mr. Thompson." The historic deed was until 1900 or later and may still be in existence.

The "Mr. Thompson" who gave the land for the church was Mr. Thomas Thompson. Local historian Frank Nash in his sketch "The History of Orange County — Part I" (published in *The North Carolina Booklet*, Vol. X, No.2 (October 1910), 55–113 by the North Carolina Society Daughters of the Revolution) records some valuable data concerning Thomas Thompson of Cedar Grove, although he refers to him only as "Mr. T. T." (pp 65–68). "Mr. T.T.," he says, "of Berks County, Pa., had lost a child in the severe winter of 1750–51; he and his wife Ann, therefore made their way to the milder Eno River lands but not before their neighbors had gathered at their local schoolhouse and the schoolmaster had drawn up a sort of passport of good conduct for the travellers." "This I copy from the yellow and time-stained original," wrote Mr. Nash. "It is preserved in the family as a precious heirloom."

To all persons whom these shall concern — GREETINGS: Whereas T(homas) T(ompson) and Ann his wife, the bearers hereof, are determined, God willing, to remove with their family in order to settle in some parts of his Majesty's new settlements, and as divers of us have been well acquainted with them from their early youth, we do certify you that they are of a sober, honest, peaceable and good behaviour and are about to depart in good esteem of the neighborhood and acquaintances in general. Therefore, as such we commend them to the favorable reception of those among whom it may be their lot to sojourn and settle, heartily wishing their prosperity and welfare on all counts.

In testimony whereof we, their friends and neighbors inhabitants of the township of Heidelberg and places adjacent in the County of Berks, in the Province of Pennsylvania, have hereunto set our hands the 14th day of May, Anno Domini 1752. [signatures]

Mr. Nash says the Thompson family arrived at their new home about August 1, 1752. "That home was established and is still in the possession of some of the descendants of the original owners" (p. 67).

According to Mr. Nash, a log structure that served as both schoolhouse and church was built in 1755 on the land donated by Mr. Thompson" and it was in this building that the Rev. Hugh McAden preached. "In the same year there was a regular Presbyterian Church organized there, and soon after a frame building was erected, the log-house continuing to be used as a school-house." (p. 68)

Mr. Nash does not indicate whether Thompson or Anderson built the first log structure; presumably both had a hand in it since both had arranged for the land.

One Thomas Thompson is listed on the 1755 Tax List as paying tax on three white male polls; another "Thos. Thomson" is listed as having one white male taxable. It is probable the second was Thomas Thompson of Eno. There are eight mentions of a Thomas Thompson (mostly jury duty and road overseer work) in the Minutes of the Orange County Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1752–1766.

The Will of "Thomas Thompson of Eno" dated 17 March, 1794, proved February 1796 (Will Book C, 70), mentions his wife Ann, that he is leaving the home tract to his son Abraham Thompson (who had married Sarah De Bow), and a 150-acre tract "adjoining Maddon's and Chamberlain's" to his son Samuel. His daughter (unnamed) has married a

De Bow, their neighbor on the north. (This was Ellin Thompson who married Benjamin De Bow in 1783 (cf. Marriage Bonds).)

The Reverend Hugh McAden entered the Province of North Carolina in early August, 1755, made a great circular swing westward, southward, eastward, and northward again, and finally departed the next spring on or about May 1, 1756, over the same route by which he had entered. He had spent nine months in his labors in the North Carolina Province and had visited John Anderson's home at Eno three times, perhaps four (in fact, it seems to have been a sort of headquarters for the touring McAden), and had clearly become warmly attached to Anderson (see below).

From Hugh McAden's *Journal* — items concerning the pioneer John Anderson and the settlement at Eno (as quoted in the Rev. William Henry Foote, *Sketches of North Carolina* (New York, Robert Carter, 58 Canal Street, 1846) pp 166–175).

- p. 166 “On Tuesday, August 5, 1755, he preached at Solomon De Bow's: on Wednesday, August 6, he rode 10 miles further to South Hico. He went home with a Mr. (Aaron) Van Hook 5 miles and preached at his house on Thursday, August 7, and on Friday (August 8) was conducted by Mr. Van Hook ‘to Eino (Eno) about twenty miles to a Mr. Anderson's.’ The Sabbath of August, the 10th day, he preached at Eno – ‘to a set of pretty regular Presbyterians’ who appeared to him to be in a cold state of religious feeling. **‘In the evening returned to Mr. Anderson's;** here I tarried till Tuesday the 12th of August; preached again to the same company.’ From these expressions it would seem there was a house for public worship on the Eno.” Reverend McAden then made a brief tour eastward to Tar River and remained there and at Granville Court-house until Tuesday, August 19.
- p. 167 ‘On Wednesday (August 20), he returned to Mr. Anderson's on Eno.’ He then preached at Hawfields, Buffalo settlement, and lodged at William Mebane's, Adam Michel's (Mitchell's), Robert Rankin's, John Vannoy's, and Henry Sloan's. Finally he went on westward and into the country of the Catawbas.
- p. 175 After a long winter and spring of travelling eastward then northward again, he reached a Captain Hampton's on Wednesday, April 21 (1756), ‘and on Thursday (April 22, 1756) got to John Anderson's — who seemed very joyful to see me returned so far back again, tarried till Sabbath (April 25, 1756) and preached. On Tuesday, 27th preached at Hawfields, on Wednesday 28th at Eno; on Thursday (April 29) to Aaron Van Hook's, and next day (April 30) to John McFarland's on Hico ...’

Thereafter, presumably on May 1, McAden left North Carolina. It is certain that he visited John Anderson's home three separate times: 1) from August 8, 1755, to August 12, 1755 (or perhaps August 13) — five days apparently; 2) from August 20, 1755, to perhaps August 21, one or more days, although the *Journal* is not clear on this point; and 3) from April 22, 1756 till April 25, 1756, four days, although here again the *Journal* is not clear. Certainly he preached at Eno again on Wednesday, April 28, 1756, but this may not have entailed a separate visit.

Altogether, Hugh McAden stayed at least ten days with John Anderson, “who seemed very joyful to see me,” and preached at Eno four times. Reverend McAden was careful to note when he preached at his host's house. **He makes a clear distinction between preaching “at Eno” and returning to John Anderson's house.** As the Reverend Foote observed, it would appear that there was a church structure at Eno by August 10, 1755.

The *Anderson Family Papers* (9 typed sheets now owned by Mrs. Alexander Anderson, N. Queen St., Hillsborough, N. C.) were compiled in or about 1907 by James Henry Anderson, Seattle, Washington, the great-great grandson of the native Irish pioneer John Anderson, reputedly the earliest settler (ca. 1738) in the Eno River Basin and in Orange County. James H. Anderson used his grandfather Alexander Anderson's collection of memorabilia including some invaluable items in the pioneer John Anderson's own handwriting. He also used an **“old” family Bible belonging to his uncle William Henry Anderson of Cedar Grove, N. C.** Actually the grandfather Alexander Anderson had himself intended to compile a history of the Anderson family and had made an attempt to collect data, but old age apparently intervened.

The *Anderson Family Papers* are surprisingly accurate and are supported in almost every instance by the proof of the Marriage Bonds, Wills, Tax Lists, Court Minutes and Cemetery Records of Orange County. One exception seems to be the apparent confusion between the families of William and James Anderson, the two eldest sons of pioneer John. There may be, however, some as yet undiscovered explanation for the seeming discrepancy.

Included here is an extension (primarily genealogical) of the *Papers* which includes nearly all pertinent county records, that is, marriage records, tax listings, court minutes, cemetery records, and so on. The family of each of John and Ann Anderson's ten children is explored separately so far as seems practicable. The Andersons'

connection with the Eno Presbyterian Church is of special note. No attempt has yet been made to locate the original Moore grant of land, apparently conferred in England well before 1720, which antedates the great Granville grant, defined in 1744. It seems likely that it may not be entered in American records at all, although it was apparently never questioned or challenged by any Provincial official at the time. Neither has any work been done as yet on the Orange County deeds records of Anderson lands.

Certain facts about the Anderson family emerge from the accompanying data: they tended to marry within other Irish families who had also emigrated from northern Ireland from Counties Derry, Antrim, and Down, that is, the Mebanes, Lapslies, Armstrongs, Tinnens, and Allens; and they had strong bonds with their Irish Quaker neighbors the Wilkinsons, Marises, and (James) Thompsons. The Andersons were an exceedingly long-lived family as records and gravestones attest. Several members, both male and female, in each generation were likely to remain unmarried. Most of the Andersons were farmers. They married into two unusually well-to-do early Orange County families, the Mebanes and the Allens. Occasionally a miller (John Thompson) appears in the early family or a brewer (David Mitchell) of Hico), a “taylor” (William Anderson) or a minister (the Reverend Alexander Anderson of the Cumberland Presbyterians) — but they were the exceptions. **Alexander Anderson (son of Robert) of the old home plantation near Cedar Grove** appears on all counts to have been an unusually able man, actively interested in church, politics, history, and civic affairs as well as in his own plantation.

Sadly enough, no tombstone of any first or second generation Anderson survives today at Old Eno Cemetery. Although John’s wife Ann was the first person buried in the Cemetery in 1759 (or later?), no trace of her grave can now be found. **John himself must have been buried in 1756 on his own plantation.** The earliest Anderson tombstone (there are only eight at Old Eno and five at New Eno is that of Alexander Anderson (son of Robert and grandson of pioneer John) that is, a third generation tombstone. All the rest are later. Indeed, there are so few very early tombstones at Old Eno that one wonders if an earlier cemetery around the first church may have been lost to view.

The following notes and genealogical records are necessarily incomplete, but they add data that were not accessible to Alexander Anderson or to James Henry Anderson. The constant duplication of family names has created some difficulties as has the lack of children’s names in many instances. Undoubtedly some of the remaining gaps can be filled in gradually as research is continued concerning early Irish settlers.