Alexander-Davidson Reunion

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SWANNANOA N C

August 26, 1911

Addresses by

F. A. Sondley, L L. D., and

Hon. Theo. F. Davidson

Alexander-Davidson Reunion

August 26, 1911

Arrangements are being perfected for a reunion of the Alexander and Davidson families at or near Swannanoa on August 26.

James Alexander, better known as "Jimpsey" Alexander, and Maj. William Davidson, the ancestors of these two families of which there are nearly a thousand living descendants scattered throughout the country, were of the famous Scotch-Irish people who settled the Piedmont section of North and South Carolina, and were especially prominent in the discussions of the questions which led to the Revolution, in which they took a very active part. Immediately after the close of the Revolutionary War the two above named pioneers crossed the Blue Ridge mountains in company and purchased lands adjoining each other and settled on the Swannanoa river at the mouth of Bee Tree creek.

These pioneers were closely related by family ties as well as political and religious associations and ideas. Their descendants have until the present day owned and occupied the lands which their forefathers acquired. During all this period their relations have been close in every walk of life.

The descendants of both of these families are now to be found throughout the United States, and many of them have borne honorable parts in the public events of the country.

It will be recalled that Maj. William Davidson, while in the state legislature in 1791, was active in the passage of the bill creating Buncombe county,

and in the following year this county was organized at his house.

It is desired by those interested in the reunion to assemble as many of the descendants at or near the old homesteads as possible, and every person who is nearly or remotely related to or connected with either or both of these familise is cordially invited to attend and this publication will serve the purpose of extending that invitation to those who may be overlooked in any special invitations which may be issued.

A "picnic" lunch will be provided and perhaps interesting papers will be read giving more of the history of the families, but the occasion is mainly intended to give an opportunity to these two families to meet and make new acquaintances, renew old friendships and to take such measures as may be thought desirable for the purpose of making permanent the historical records and traditions of the two families.

Members of the families residing in Buncombe county have effected an organization for the purpose of carrying out these purposes and the following committees have been appointed from whom further information may be had upon application:

Committee on Invitations—F. A. Sondley, Theodore F. Davidson and James M. Ray, of Asheville.

Committee on Arrangements—C. H. Alexander, S. W. Davidson, Sr., R. D. Alexander, James Burgin, Theodore C. Folsom, Henry Davidson, Jr., S. W. Davidson, Jr., all of Swannanoa, and W. D. Patton, of Black Mountain, and Herbert Millard, of Asheville.

Committee on Entertainment—Mrs. Nancy Fortune, Mrs. Addie Alexander, Mrs. T. C. Folsom, Miss Minnie Davidson, Miss Lizzie Davidson, Miss Jessie Burgin, Miss Dale Alexander, Miss Edith Alexander,

Miss Josephine Watkins, all of Swannanoa; Mrs. W. B. Williamson, of Asheville, and Mrs. Lula Platt, of Busbee.—*Asheville Citizen, July* 28, 1911.

The first reunion of the Alexander and Davidson families was held on the Swannanoa river, near Swannanoa, Saturday, August 26th, 1911.

The place and day were ideal.

The "clans" commenced assembling as early as half past nine o'clock. They came on foot, on horseback, on mule back, in wagons, buggies, carriages, automobiles and by rail, and most of them had bundles, boxes, baskets and buggy and wagon loads of provisions, fruits and melons. If ever a table (two hundred feet in length) groaned under substantial luxuries that one did, and after satisfying the hunger of the hundreds and hundreds present, great quantities were gathered up and carried away.

The exercises commenced about half past eleven with that old familiar hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," by the audience, led by the Rice-Bartlett quartette, R. M. Rice, C. H. Bartlett, C. N. Wells and J. M. Clark. Col. J. M. Ray, of Asheville, a great-grandson of James Alexander, prefaced the formal opening by saying:

"We esteem ourselves extremely fortunate in having with us today a Presbyterian clergyman who had the great good luck to secure for his wife Fannie Alexander, a great grand-daughter of James Alexander. It is eminently fitting, we think, that the exercises of the occasion should be opened by a Presbyterian, for the Alexanders and the Davidsons of the early days were almost universally Presbyterians, in fact it is said that when Col. James Mitchell Alexander joined the Methodist church, the first departure possibly from the true faith as it was then considered, there

was some commotion in the family. I shall therefore ask all to arise and be led in prayer by Rev. W. R. McCalla, of Charlotte, N. C.

The quartette next gave a song, "My Dear Old Home."

F. A. Sondley, LL.D., of Asheville, a great-grandson of James Alexander, one of the pioneers of the Alexanders settling in Buncombe county, was then introduced, and spoke for about an hour; and though largely historical and statistical, his talk was so interwoven with story and incident that it commanded the deepest attention, and made a profound impression upon his audience. The "Ode to the Swannanoa River" (Nymph of Beauty), was a most fitting climax to his address and was especially fine.

Alexander-Davidson Reunion

SWANNANOA, N. C.

August 26, 1911.

ADDRESS

of

F. A. SONDLEY, L L. D.

On the

Alexander and Davidson Families and

Family History

Address of F. A. Sondley, L L. D.

Relatives and Friends:—

To praise the virtues of a meritorious ancestry is always a pleasant undertaking. It honors both subject and eulogist. It brings the consciousness of a sacred duty honestly performed, without a reproach of egotism or a fear of injustice done to others. We have met to honor the memories of the Davidsons and Alexanders, not to depreciate the work of their companions and friends; to commemorate the worthy actions of our own ancestors, not to detract from the credit due to other people.

It is not necessary here, however appropriate it might be, to enter upon a panegyric of the Alexanders and Davidsons, who, with their companions, formed, in this vicinity, more than a century and a quarter ago, the first permanent settlement of whites in North Carolina west of the Blue Ridge, and, a few years later, joined with other settlers in organizing the county of Buncombe. Their lives and labors. their strength and endurance, their triumphs and achievements are as well known to you as they are to me. They lie before you in their results and speak for themselves. I prefer to talk of what may be less familiar to you, their origin and training, their preparation and purposes, their blood and antecedents.

The name Alexander is of Grecian origin and means "Protector of Men." Probably no other name in so nearly the same form has ever been used by so many nations or spoken in so many languages. It had its origin in the remote ages of Greek fable and played a conspicuous part in the world's first poetry. In that early day, there stood near the shores of the Aegean Sea not far from the Hellespont the famous town of Troy, or Ilium, whose siege and destruction

are the theme of Homer's greatest poem when he sang the wrath of Achilles. Its mighty ruler Priam reigned there, a king of men and a companion of the deities. To one of his numerous sons it was given to determine the superior claim to beauty among the three most powerful of the female gods and to receive from Aphrodite, as a reward for his decision in her favor, the fairest woman of her time. The gift became the cause of his own death and of the destruction of his country; but not until he had slain the Grecian bully Achilles. This was Alexander, better known, it may be, by his other appellation of Paris. The name became a favorite one among the Greeks and was bestowed upon him who proved to be the greatest military genius of all time, Alexander the Great. It has been borne by a Roman emperor, by eight Popes of the Catholic church, by kings of Scotland, kings of Epirus, kings of Macedonia, kings of Syria, kings of Aegypt, kings of the Jews, czars of Russia and princes of the smaller states of Europe. In Scotland the Earls of Ross, of Selkirk and of Stirling were Alexanders. In Ireland the Earls of Caledon are Alexanders. There are Alexanders in France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Russia, Greece, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Probably no civilized people can be found among whom the name does not appear. It has been borne by soldiers, statesmen, lawyers, poets, theologians, diplomats, astronomers, writers, travellers, scholars, physicians, scientists, bishops and explorers. Its contraction Sandy has become the common name for a Scotchman as Pat is for an Irishman.

In 1411, Donald, Lord of the Isles, claimed the Earldom of Ross, but was opposed in this claim by the Scottish governor, the Duke of Albany. At the head of a large body of his fellow Highlanders, Donald marched down from the mountains into Aber-

deenshire and in the famous Battle of Harlaw defeated the royal army of Scotland under the command of Alexander, Earl of Mar, son of Alexander of Badenoch and grandson of the Scottish King Robert II. He was forced to retreat, however, and afterwards entered into a treaty with the king by which he relinquished his claim to that earldom. The Battle of Harlaw was the death-struggle for supremacy between Teuton and Celt. The Gael won the fight, but its results inured to the Saxon. From this Donald, Lord of the Isles, grandson of Robert II., and son of his daughter Margaret Stuart, through his son and successor, Alaster or Alexander Macdonald (son of Donald), the Scottish family of Alexanders claim descent; thus tracing their lineage to the Bruce of Bannockburn.

One of these, William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, who became an author at fourteen, whom James I. called "my philosophical poet," and to whom that king and his son Charles I. granted Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the northern portion of the United States, was so eminent in literature that Addison, on reading his works, exclaimed: "The beauties of our ancient English poets are too slightly passed over by modern writers, who, out of a peculiar singularity, had rather take pains to find fault than endeavor to excel." He was secretary of state for Scotland and joined with James I. in making a poetical translation of the Psalms.

Another William Alexander called Earl of Stirling attained much distinction as a major general under George Washington in the War of the Revolution, during which he conducted, with brilliancy, numerous important military undertakings and received the surrender of the Hessians at Trenton. He was one of the founders of Columbia College.

The name Davidson means, of course, the son of

David. The celebrated Israelitish king is the first of that name of whom we have any knowledge. It was, like Alexander, a popular name in Scotland, and, like Alexander, was borne by more than one of the kings of that country. The Davidsons were a clan of the Highlanders, or, more accurately speaking, they were a branch of the Highland Clan Chattan, a tribal confederation. Tradition has not transmitted the earliest events in the history of Clan Davidson, and its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity. The termination "son" in the name indicates a descent from the Vikings, that wondrous race of naval heroes in the early Middle Ages, to whose unequaled enterprise and superhuman courage is to be attributed more of the world's progress than to the achievements of any other people.

At an early day in Scottish history, these Davidsons owned large possessions in Badenoch, where they resided in large numbers, and exercised great power and influence. In the fourteenth century they became noted for the bloody and protracted feuds in which they engaged with such persistency and bravery that, before the royal power could quell the quarrels, the Davidsons were nearly exterminated. The last event in the history of these tribal feuds brought them great fame in song and story, but soon ended their career as an independent clan. In 1386, some of the Camerons, then known as McEwens, occupied as tenants the lands in Lochaber which belonged to Macintosh, the captain of the Clan Chattan. These proved to be poor tenants, and their landlord was forced to collect his rents by carrying off their cattle. This they resented, and marched, with four hundred of their number, under the command of Charles Macgilony, into Badenoch to make reprisals. When Macintosh learned of this movement, he assembled his clansmen and friends, the Macphersons and David-

sons, to repel the invasion. He was elected to the chief command. A dispute arose, however, between Cluny, the chieftain of the ancient Clan Chattan, called Macphersons, and Invernhavon, the head of the Davidsons, who were the oldest branch of that clan, as to which should command the right wing. Macintosh decided this dispute in favor of the chief of the Davidsons. On this the Macphersons refused to take part in the battle with the Camerons which immediately ensued. The Macphersons greatly exceeded their allies in numbers, and the strength of the latter was reduced by this withdrawal so much that they were almost wholly destroyed by the superior numbers of the Camerons, and Lachlan, of Invernahavon, chief of the Davidsons, was slain. At this stage, the Macphersons thought proper to take a part. Rushing with their fresh forces upon the depleted and exhausted Camerons, they won an easy victory, killed the Cameron leader and scattered or destroyed his forces. For a long time, the relations between these kinsmen, the Davidsons and the Macphersons, had been exceedingly unfriendly. This dispute intensified the feeling of dislike which already existed. The quarrel did not end here. It grew in bitterness for ten years more, often breaking out in fatal encounters. At last, the Scottish king, Robert III., interfered. He sent Dunbar, Earl of Moray, and Lindsay of Glenesk, afterwards Earl of Crawford, to attempt a reconciliation. The mission failed. Upon their suggestion, however, it was agreed that the controversy should be settled in 1396 by a judicial combat, held in a meadow called the North Inch of Perth, before the king and queen and Scottish nobility and some distinguished foreigners, to be fought with broadswords, targets, bows and arrows, short knives and battle axes, between thirty Davidsons and thirty Macphersons. When the battle was about to begin,

one of the Macphersons ran away; and, as none of the Davidsons was willing to withdraw, an armorer and ruffian of Perth named Henry Wynd was substituted for the missing Macpherson. The result of the fight was favorable to the Macphersons. All but one of the Davidsons was killed. He escaped unhurt. Nineteen of the Macphersons were killed and the remaining ten of them badly wounded. The armorer of Perth escaped without wounds. The king had encouraged this conflict, hoping, it seems, that the leading men of both factions would participate in it and be slain and he would thus rid himself of dangerous subjects. In this he was disappointed, since the chiefs were not among the combatants. Sir Walter Scott has made use of this occurrence in his novel, The Fair Maid of Perth, without adhering to the facts with much fidelity.

Sir Robert Davidson, Provost of Aberdeen, was a participant in the Battle of Harlaw against Donald, Lord of the Isles, and was among the slain in that fierce encounter.

The name of Davidson is often met with in the history of Scotland, as well as in that of her sister nation of England. William Davison was secretary of state of the English Queen Elizabeth, and served with distinguished efficiency, in her negotiations with the States of Holland. He married a relative of the famous Earl of Leicester and Lord Burleigh. To him Sir Philip Sidney often wrote as "your most loving cousin, Philip Sidney," addressing his letters "To my special good Friend and Cousin Mr. Davison"—a far greater honor than to be secretary of state to the queen. This was the father of Francis Davison, the author of the "Poetical Rhapsody," "the most valuable and curious collection of its day." This William Davison told Sir James Melville "that he was come of Scotsmen."

On August 6th, 1557, the Earl of Northumberland wrote that Richard Davyson, who was mortally wounded in a skirmish at Fenwick, was one of the "best borderers and guides" which the Scotch forces had.

Lucretia and Margaret Davidson, the sister American poets, rivalled in poetic power, as well as in precociousness, the celebrated Thomas Chatterton,

"the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride."

George Davidson was the greatest geodetic surveyor and observer whom the world has ever known.

An insurrection in northern Ireland was laid hold of by James I. as a pretext for declaring the land of the Irish nobility in that part of the island forfeited to the crown. In 1613, he planted on these lands in Ulster colonies of Scotch and English settlers, in order that, by means of their presence and loyalty, he might watch and control the turbulent Irish. These colonies of Scotchmen contained many members of the families of Alexander and Davidson. When William and Mary had come to the throne in 1688, the English parliament enacted rigid laws looking to the destruction of Irish manufacturers. One hundred thousand operators were driven out of Ulster by these laws. Three thousand, it is said, left that county annually and emigrated to America. Most of these people were of the Scotch settlers who had so gone to Ireland in the reign of James I. They were Presbyterians in religion almost to a man. Landing in Philadelphia in 1699, they soon formed settlements in Pennsylvania and northern Maryland. They were not contented, however, in their new home. Many of them started southward in search of more satisfactory places of residence. Crossing the Potomac, they passed into the Valley of Virginia, and settled in and around Winchester. Here their at-

tempts to cultivate the soil were thwarted by incursions of Shawnees and other Indian tribes from north of the Ohio river; their time was consumed in repelling these attacks; their property was stolen or destroyed and their lives were in daily peril. Before long many of them tired of an existence which brought no protection from danger, no surcease of vigilance, no rest from toil, no pleasure for the present and no hope for the future. Again the tide of emigration started toward the south, and the emigrants found new homes in Rowan and Mecklenburg counties of North Carolina and the neighboring parts of South Carolina. These people were peculiar in their habits and views and strongly impressed those peculiar habits and views upon all with whom they came in contact. Strict in the observance of religious forms and conceptions, determined in opposition to taxation and political oppression, fearless in the assertion of rights, they have won for themselves a place in American history distinctively their own. Many years ago, they acquired the name of Scotch-Irish. Wherever that name is encountered, there is found characteristic determination of purpose, freedom of action, independence of thought, and disregard of difficulty and danger unmistakable in character, and unvaried in expression.

But these people were not allowed long to enjoy their new home in peace. Soon the officers of the crown came to dominate and tax. The unbending spirit of a people who, in search of freedom, had abandoned their homes in Scotland to seek new ones in Ireland and when oppression came had deserted those for others in Pennsylvania and Maryland and then had left these, when their hopes were disappointed, for other homes in Virginia, and then, in turn, discarded these when expectations were not met, did not bow under this new imposition. A mere handful,

they solemnly convened and deliberately set at defiance the whole British nation, when, in 1775, they proclaimed in Mecklenburg county the first Declaration of Independence ever made on the American continent. Then followed the War of the Revolution. In that war they bore their part most manfully, until, by their undaunted exertions at King's Mountain, they raised a sinking cause and turned defeat to victory. A revival of American courage began. Then the British general was driven to the coast and to surrender at Yorktown, and independence followed.

Among these Scotch-Irish who had joined in the emigration from Scotland to the north of Ireland and then to Pennsylvania and thence to the Valley of the Shenandoah and still on to the upper regions of the Carolinas, were Davidsons and Alexanders. No names occur so often in the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence as theirs, no men performed their part more faithfully and courageously in the war that ensued. And when that war was over, none were more ready to take their lives and fortunes in their hands and advance to the frontier where difficulties were thickest and dangers most abounded.

When the British arms had put down opposition in South Carolina and the hope of the American cause had faded into desperation and General Earl Cornwallis was marching into North Carolina to complete there and in Virginia the final triumph of the conquerors, his passage of the Catawba at Cowan's Ford, on February 1st, 1781, was met and sternly resisted by a small force of North Carolina's militiamen under their commander General William Davidson. The attempt at resistance was desperate. General Davidson fell pierced by a bullet from the rifle of a Tory. Through a special appropriation made by Congress, a monument to his memory has been erected on the battle ground of Guilford court

house, and North Carolina and Tennessee have each honored his fame with the name of a county, and, in commemoration of him, an institution of learning near the scene of his death bears the name of Davidson College.

For many years a fierce struggle had been waged between England and France for the possession of Canada and the valley of the Mississippi. The French had enlisted on their side the numerous and daring Shawnees and other Indian tribes living north of the Ohio river. In order to meet these, the English earnestly sought alliances with the Cherokees and that small but warlike tribe, the Catawbas. For the purpose of affecting these objects, Captain Hugh Waddell, a Scotch-Irishman, on the part of North Carolina, and Peyton Randolph and William Bird, on the part of Virginia, were appointed to treat with the aborigines. In 1756, Captain Waddell negotiated such a treaty with the Catawbas, who requested therein that North Carolina build a fort on their lands to which, when they were absent on the warpath, their women and children might resort for safety against roving bands of predatory Shawnees who were frequently appearing, with hostile purpose, in their vicinity when it seemed safe to do so. Governor Dobbs determined to build this fort and commissioned Captain Waddell to supervise the work. In 1757, the Catawba chiefs selected the place and the construction of the fort commenced. After it had progressed for some while, the Catawbas became dissatisfied and sent to Governor Lyttleton of South Carolina, a request that the work by the North Carolinians might stop and a fort might be erected for them by South Carolina. Under the advice of the North Carolina Assembly, Governor Dobbs caused the work to cease on August 11th, 1757. Soon thereafter the difficulty was adjusted and the fort com-

pleted. It was a stockaded fort; but, as the white settlements would probably reach that place before a great while, no large expenditure was incurred in its construction. It is not perfectly certain exactly where on the Catawba this fort stood; but all the evidence as to its location points strongly to the modern Old Fort. Certain it is that in 1760 a fort existed at that place. In that year that scourge of the Indians, the small-pox, broke out among the unfortunate Catawbas, and many of the stricken gathered around this fort where they perished in great numbers. In 1776 Old Fort had become the centre of a white settlement. At about this time, it was owned by one of the Davidsons and known as Davidson's Fort. For many years it formed the extreme frontier of the whites on the Catawba, and, as settlements were formed beyond the mountains, the settlers resorted to it in emergencies for supplies and protection. Here Davidson's Mill did the grinding for the people within a radius of twenty miles or more.

Colonel William Tryon, who theretofore had succeeded Governor Dobbs in the royal governorship of North Carolina, took up the important matter of the boundary line between the white settlers and the Cherokee Indians. These Indians claimed and occupied that part of North Carolina which lies west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, as well as parts of northern South Carolina, northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee. Repeated troubles had grown up with them because of trespasses committed and settlements made by the whites upon the lands which they regarded as their own. In order to conciliate these Cherokees and prevent encroachments on their territory, Governor Tryon, acting under royal direction, undertook in 1767 to run and mark the dividing line between the white settlers and the Cherokee country. With a numerous retinue of white troops and several

representatives of the Cherokees, he ran and marked the line from the point to which that line had already been marked at Reedy River, a branch of the Savannah in northern South Carolina, up to the top of a peak of the White Oak Mountains which was then named, in his honor, Tryon Mountain, and is the peak near the town of Tryon in North Carolina which yet bears that name. Here it became evident that to continue the running of this line to its intended termination in Virginia, would be exceedingly expensive and laborious. Consequently, the survey was not continued; but it was agreed that a straight line from Tryon Mountain to Colonel Chiswell's (lead) mines situate in Virginia on New River about twelve miles southeast from the present town of Wytheville, should constitute the remainder of this dividing line. It would thus run about midway between Asheville and Rutherfordton and between Marion and Morganton. Owing to the imperfect knowledge of the geography of the country which was then possessed, Governor Tryon and all others concerned supposed that this line would run along the top of the Blue Ridge. This ridge was, therefore, treated as the Cherokee boundary beyond which white settlements must not go. It continued to be recognized as such until, after the termination of the Revolutionary War, a treaty was made on November 28th, 1785, at Hopewell on the Keowee River, in the northern part of South Carolina, the residence of General Andrew Pickens, between the United States and the Cherokees. By this treaty, known as the Treaty of Hopewell, the Cherokee boundary was to extend from a place near the site of what is now Greenville, in the state of Tennessee, in a southwestern direction about along the eastern corporate limits of the present city of Asheville. This left what is now Asheville and Hendersonville and the towns further west within the

Cherokee territory and accounts for the fact that the first grant for Asheville land did not issue until it was made to John Burton on July 7th, 1794. Another treaty, called the Treaty of Holston, was concluded on July 2nd, 1791, by the United States, acting through Governor William Blount of Tennessee, with the Cherokees at White's Fort, now Knoxville, Tennessee, by which the Cherokee boundary line was pushed back to the Big Pigeon River. Still later another treaty, known as the Treaty of Tellico, was made, on October 2, 1798, between the United States and the Cherokees at Tellico in southeastern Tennessee, the boundary fixed by which was afterwards run and marked by Commissioner R. J. Meigs and his surveyor Freeman, ever afterwards known as the Meigs and Freeman line, which ran to the west of the sites of Hendersonville and Waynesville.

Some while before the War of the Revolution closed, the Scotch-Irish settlements had extended up the Catawba to the mountains. John Davidson and his young wife Nancy Brevard with their infant child were living then at Old Fort. The Cherokees found them there and butchered them just above the location of the town of Old Fort.

After that war had ended, Samuel Davidson came, with his young wife and child and a negro woman slave, from the Catawba through the Swannanoa Gap and built his cabin on Christian Creek where the line of the Southern Railway now runs in front of the home of Mr. William Gudger. This seems to have been a short time before the Treaty of Hopewell made in 1785, and his settlement was probably an encroachment upon the Indian lands. The Cherokees were alert. Their great trail from the towns on the Tennessee and the Tuckaseigee crossed the French Broad River at the mouth of the Swannanoa and passed through the Swannanoa Gap to the

headwaters of the Catawba and the Yadkin. It ran along the crest of the ridge between Christian Creek and the Swannanoa within half a mile of Davidson's cabin upon which it looked down into the valley. He had lived here but a short time, when one morning he went out unarmed to seek his horse. Soon his wife heard the report of a rifle on the mountain above. Too well she knew what that meant. Taking her infant with her she and the servant fled, by different ways, along the mountains, until they found safety at Old Fort, sixteen miles away. At once an expedition set out from this latter place to avenge the death of their relative and friend. They found his body by the side of the trail on the mountain where he had fallen, and buried him upon the spot. And on the mountain just over there lies the body of the founder of Western North Carolina and Buncombe's earliest citizen; and there, for more than one hundred and twenty-five years, the winter winds have whistled and the summer suns have shined over his solitary grave in the forest. His avengers pursued the murderous Cherokees who had slain him until, some miles beyond, they found them and drove them, with slaughter, into the mountains.

Thus when Earl Cornwallis, flushed with victory from subduing South Carolina, extended his conquests into North Carolina, it was a Davidson who met his army at Cowan's Ford of the Catawba and gave his life to repel the foreign foe; when the settlements reached up this same Catawba to the mountains, it was a Davidson who led the van and perished in the cause of progress and civilization; and when the gate of the mountain valleys beyond was opened, it was a Davidson who first passed its threshold and died for his enterprise and daring.

But there were kindred spirits left behind. Within a few months, a company of these from the Old

Fort and its neighborhood followed in his steps. Entering the valley through the Swannanoa Gap, they passed down to the mouth of Bee Tree, and there formed the first permanent white settlement west of the Blue Ridge in North Carolina. Leaders among these were James Alexander and William Davidson, descendants of the men who had gone from Scotland to Ireland and from Ireland to Pennsylvania and from Pennsylvania to the valley of Virginia and from the valley of Virginia to the counties of Rowan and Mecklenburg in quest of freedom.

Is it strange that men who claimed the blood of Bruce and whose ancestors had trod the Highland heaths, should fling off the trammels of a social thraldom, and seek the mountains for a habitation? Devotion to learning is a feature of Scottish character. In the year 563, St. Columba, of royal Scotch descent, founded on the little island of Iona that famed monastery which was the beacon light of learning and literature of northern Europe throughout the Dark Ages that followed. Doctor Samuel Johnson hated the Scotch with a hatred that has become proverbial. Yet even he made a pilgrimage to that island in 1773; and his recorded impressions of that visit are the most eloquent passage in his writings. Said he: "We were now treading that illustrious land, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved

over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona!"

Is it strange that men whose progenitors for more than eleven hundred years, had dwelt around Iona and felt its influence and memories should, in their new homes in the mountain wilds, among their earliest cares, look to the establishment of an institution of mental training? Here, in this primeval settlement on the Swannanoa, young Robert Henry taught the first school in North Carolina west of the Blue Ridge.

John Davidson was born in Pennsylvania, and, with George Davidson, his brother, removed to North Carolina in 1750. He settled in that part of Rowan county which is now Iredell, near Centre Church. George Davidson was the father of General William Davidson, who was killed at Cowan's Ford. This John Davidson had five sons, William and Samuel (twins), John, George and Thomas, and three daughters, Rachel, Margaret and Elizabeth. The son John Davidson was the victim of the Indians at Old Fort, and the son Samuel Davidson, was he who lost his life at the hands of the Cherokees on Christian Creek.

John Alexander was born in that part of Rowan county which is near Cabarrus. He married Rachel Davidson, John Davidson's oldest daughter. Their son James Alexander, was born on Buffalo Creek in Rowan, near Cabarrus county, on December 23, 1756. John Alexander later removed with his family, including his son James, to Crowder's Creek in that part of Lincoln county which is now Gaston. Then came the War of the Revolution; and young James Alexander enlisted five times on the American side, serving in each case until his term of enlistment ex-

pired and his company was disbanded. As such soldier, he was repeatedly called into service for months at a time under Generals Rutherford and Davidson, making more than one campaign into various parts of North Carolina and into the northern portion of South Carolina where he participated in several engagements, among them a severe skirmish on the Enoree between the Americans and Tarleton's Legion commanded by the redoubtable Colonel Banistre Tarleton in person. Finally came the famous battle of King's Mountain which turned the fortunes of war in favor of the Americans and led ultimately to the independence of the colonies. That battle was fought on October 7, 1780, and changed the aspect of the war. Throughout its progress James Alexander was all the while in the thick of the fight; but he escaped unharmed, capturing, among the booty, at its close, a walnut camp-chest which was said to have belonged to Lord Cornwallis and which is still owned by some of the descendants of the captor.

In consideration of his Revolutionary services, James Alexander received in the later years of his life a pension from the government of the United States. After the war was begun, he married, on March 19, 1782, on Allison Creek in York District, South Carolina, Rhoda Cunningham, born in Pennsylvania, on October 15, 1763, the daughter of Humphrey Cunningham, who had removed to Maryland before his final settlement in South Carolina. The ceremony was performed by a Mr. Watson at the home of that gentleman. After a short residence in Lincoln county, James Alexander settled in York District, South Carolina, in 1783; but he had resided there only two years when he removed to Bee Tree Creek of the Swannanoa River, then in Burke county, now in Buncombe, in 1785.

William Davidson had served the American cause

throughout the Revolutionary War. Shortly after the death of his brother Samuel Davidson, he removed, in 1785, in company with his brother-in-law, John Alexander, his sister Rachel Alexander and his nephews, James Alexander and Thomas Alexander, their sons, and others, to the Swannanoa River, and settled on the banks of that stream at the mouth of Bee Tree Creek on land adjoining that of his relatives the Alexanders. Here on this creek these men cut down the forests, cleared the land and built their cabins. In the next year, 1786, another company of Scotch-Irish settlers, consisting of William Forster, his family and his two sons, Thomas and William, came to the Swannanoa and took up their abode about three-fourths of a mile above its mouth. William Davidson soon removed to a place just across the Swannanoa from William Forster and built his residence on the south bank of that stream at what was known for nearly a century afterwards as the Gum Spring. There he was living at the time the county of Buncombe was created and organized. At that time, it was understood that the Swannanoa was the dividing line between the counties of Burke and Rutherford, the lands on the north being in Burke county and those on the south in Rutherford county. In the General Assembly of 1791 William Davidson was a member of the House of Commons from Rutherford and David Vance, who lived on Reems Creek, a member of the House from Burke. At that session a bill was passed creating, from the counties of Burke and Rutherford, the county of Buncombe to embrace all that part of North Carolina which lies west of the Blue Ridge and south a line through the county of Yancey. This territory now comprises the eleven counties of Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Madison, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain, Clay, Cherokee and Graham and part of Yancey. On

April 16, 1792, at Colonel William Davidson's residence at the Gum Spring on the south bank of the Swannanoa, the county of Buncombe was organized by the justices of the peace, commissioners appointed for that purpose by the legislature. On this commission were James Alexander and William Davidson. The residence not affording sufficient room for the assembled crowd, it adjourned to Colonel Davidson's barn on the premises upon the side of the hill to the south about two hundred yards away; and in this barn was completed the organization of that county whose extensive territory procured for it the nickname of the "State of Buncombe." Here the county court met for a year and transacted the business of the new county. At the time of the organization of that court both William Davidson and James Alexander were members of it and sat as such members. Thus these men not only participated in making the first settlement in Western North Carolina, but they also aided in the organization of its first government and in the conduct of its first public business.

Later on, William Davidson was elected Buncombe's first member of the State Senate. Afterwards he returned to his old home at the mouth of Bee Tree, and there he died and is buried.

John Alexander and his son Thomas who married Colonel William Davidson's daughter Elizabeth, soon removed to Tennessee and settled in Williamson county, where they died.

James Alexander continued, from the time when he first crossed the mountains, to live on the farm on Bee Tree where he had settled. His first cabin was built near the line between his place and that of his uncle William Davidson, but when, later on, dangers from the Cherokees were less imminent, he built another about one-fourth of a mile further up the creek and later still, he erected the house which is now the

residence of Mr. W. R. Alexander, his grandson, situate about one hundred yards westward of the place of his second habitation. Here he died on June 28th, 1844, and his widow, Rhoda Alexander, died on January 29th, 1848. He was buried at the old Robert Patton burying ground; but, when his widow died, his body was removed to Piney Grove and placed in the same grave with his wife—together in life, together in fortune and misfortune, in joy and sorrow, in labor and achievement, and together in the grave.

Their children were:

John C., born March 22, 1783, and married to Jane Patton on December 31, 1808;

Rhoda, born November, 1785, and married to William McDaniel;

William Davidson, born January 28, 1788, and died in youth;

George C., born September 10, 1790, and married to Elizabeth Foster June 23, 1818;

James M., born May 22, 1793, and married to Nancy Foster September 8, 1814;

Robert S., born September 2, 1795, and married to Jane Wilson May 25, 1820;

Rachel, born December 30, 1797, and married to Moses White December 2, 1824;

William Davidson (the second child so named), born December 10, 1800, and married to Leah Burgin April 21, 1825;

Humphrey Newton, born June 11, 1803, and married to Mary Foster December 26, 1826; and

Elizabeth, born April 10, 1806, and married to Joseph A. McEntire January 19, 1832.

Many were the vicissitudes of this early life on the Swannanoa. The Cherokees had sided with the British in the Revolutionary War and were loath to observe the peace which was declared at its close. Old Mrs. Rhoda Alexander often told with tears to her

grandchildren the dangers and annoyances of that early life; how, when the men of the family were absent, Indians would come and frighten the women and children, take their provisions, open their feather beds and empty the contents over the house, and collect their household furniture in the yard and burn it. Finally endurance could stand no more. As James Alexander returned one day along the path which led to his home, he perceived a fire in front of his house. From this he knew that Indians were there engaged in mischief. As he advanced he presently heard three of them coming along the path from his house. He stepped behind some bushes. They came on, shouting and dancing. His rifle cracked, and the Indians disappeared. "Grandfather, did you kill him?" inquired the child to whom he was telling the story. The old man knew whether his aim was true or not. His only answer was, "I did not look back to see, my little girl."

But those days have long since gone by. The Swannanoa was named no doubt for the Shawano, or Shawnee, Indians, who probably had, at one time, a settlement near its mouth. Upon their name it sheds a brighter lustre than the ravages which they wrought or the wars which they waged. It is the same river as of yore and still flows on in pristine beauty; but the scenes are changed. It too had its early fame. Along its borders Rutherford marched his army in 1776 for the subjugation of the hostile Cherokees. Then nature reigned upon its banks in primal loveliness. It was sung in the poems of the famous Gilmore Simms and the lamented Will Martin, and in that poem of the gifted Jacques whose melody mingles in memory with the murmurs of its waters.

"Swannanoa, nymph of beauty,
I would woo thee in my rhyme,

Wildest, brightest, loveliest river
Of our southern sunny clime!
Swannanoa, well they named thee
In the mellow Indian tongue,
Beautiful thou art most truly
And right worthy to be sung.

"I have stood by many a river
Known to story and to song—
Ashley, Hudson, Susquehanna,
Fame to which may well belong;
I have camped by the Ohio,
Trod Scioto's fertile banks,
Followed far the Juniata
In the wildest of her pranks;

"But thou reignest queen forever,
Child of Appalachian hills,
Winning tribute as thou flowest,
From a thousand mountain rills.
Thine is beauty, strength-begotten
'Mid the cloud-begirded peaks
Where the patriarch of mountains
Heavenward far thy waters seeks.

"Through the laurels and the beeches,
Bright thy silvery current shines,
Sleeping now in granite basins,
Overhung by trailing vines,
And anon careering onward
In the maddest frolic mood,
Waking, with its sea-like voices,
Fairy echoes in the wood.

"Peaceful sleep thy narrow valleys
In the shadow of the hills,
And thy flower-enamelled border

All the air with fragrance fills.
Wild luxuriance, generous tillage,
Here alternate meet the view,
Every turn through all thy windings
Still revealing something new.

"Where, O graceful Swannanoa,
Are the warriors, who of old
Sought thee at thy mountain sources
Where thy springs are icy cold?—
Where the dark-browed Indian maidens
Who their limbs were wont to lave—
Worthy bath for fairer beauty—
In thy cool and limpid wave?

"Gone forever from thy borders,
But immortal in thy name
Are the red men of the forest;
Be thou keeper of their fame.
Paler races dwell beside thee,
Celt and Saxon till thy lands,
Wedding use unto thy beauty,
Linking over thee their hands."

Here in the valley of the Swannanoa, lived, rejoiced, triumphed, toiled, struggled, and suffered James Alexander and William Davidson and the wives who shared their fortunes. Here their work was done, well done. But the years rolled away and their work was finished, their joys were numbered, their triumphs completed, their toils ended, their struggles ceased, and their sufferings were over; and death, who comes to all, brought rest. In the Valley of the Swannanoa they sleep, in peace, the sleep of the centuries. Glorious old men and women! gone forever but not forgotten!

Again there was a song by the quartette, "Beautiful River."

Hon. Theo. F. Davidson, of Asheville, was then introduced as sustaining the same relationship to William Davidson, Sr. (the pioneer of the Davidsons locating in Buncombe), as Dr. Sondley to the Alexanders—a great grandson.

While Dr. Sondley had left nothing unsaid about the Alexanders and the Davidsons that could be said, a less ready man than Mr. Davidson would have been somewhat at sea as it were, but he was fully equal to the occasion and made an interesting speech, replete in anecdote and story, and left his hearers in a most happy state of mind.

Alexander-Davidson Reunion

SWANNANOA, N. C.

August 26, 1911.

ADDRESS

of

HON. THEO. F. DAVIDSON

On the

Davidson Family History.

Address of Hon. Theo. F. Davidson

I am, borrowing the favorite phrase of a late, but happily not lamented, President of the United States, "dee-lighted!"

"This is the way I long have sought
And mourned because I found it not."

At last here we are, on the banks of the beautiful Swannanoa, in "The Land of the Sky," on the soil won by the courage and sagacity of our forefathers, in sight of spots they selected for their frontier homes, and the places, when, after lives well spent, they sleep until the Resurrection Morn. From city and town, farm and factory, from over the Ridge and beyond the Alleghanies and the Mississippi the descendants of those hardy and worthy pioneers, have come to pay tribute to their memory, to renew old friendships, to form new acquaintances; to cement the ties of family and kindred, and to provide for the preservation of names and events of which we are, and of right, may be proud.

Here are gathered the representatives of five generations of the two families whose reunion we celebrate, and I think I may safely say that nowhere on this continent is it possible to assemble an equal number of people of purer blood, of more worthy ancestry, or higher type of those sturdy civic virtues which laid broad and deep the foundation of the Republic, and upon which it must rely for its continuance.

Five generations of these families have lived side by side, in the closest intimacy, not only with each other, but with their cherished neighbors—the Pattons, Whitsons, Fosters, Vances, Weavers, Westalls, Reeds, and many others whose names will readily oc-

cur to you, in this beautiful valley, encircled by these magnificent mountains.

I look out on this valley and see neat villages, fertile farms, the landscape dotted with school houses and churches, and the comfortable homes of a thrifty, intelligent, law-abiding and God-fearing people.

I should like to present this scene to those sentimental and rather silly people, who for a decade or so, have been harrowing their souls, harrassing sensible people, and flooding the spectacular periodicals with their hysterical notions of the wretched and heathenish condition of the "Mountain Whites" of the Southern Appalachians!

Not long since I met in Boston a most charming and excellent woman, one of the cream of the highly cultivated and thoroughly good circles which have given that city its preeminence for culture—who expressed the greatest interest in these poor "Mountain Whites" and a desire to visit them in their mountain fastnesses. I said to her: "Madame, I can assure you that whenever you come, and whatever your motive, you will have a hearty welcome, but if your only purpose is to see the Mountain White, you need not stir; behold me! I am a Mountain White 'of the straightest sect,' and so were my forbears for more than a hundred years. I and my people glory in the fact, and we hope to live and die as did our fathers and mothers, brave, independent and upright Mountain Whites." Her polite astonishment was quite amusing.

Permit me, here to express what I am sure is the universal and profound feeling of gratitude of the representatives of these two families—indeed, I am confident the feeling is not confined to them, but extends to all who are interested in the history and literature of Western North Carolina—to our kinsman, Doctor Sondley, for his address which we have just

heard. It bears the stamp of most careful and conscientious preparation, and I happen to know that it represents years of patient and intelligent research of every available reliable source of information. I know of none who could have done the work so well. We must see that it is put in permanent form and preserved not only for our own pleasure, but for the generations that are to come after us. And I especially desire it to be distinctly understood, now and hereafter, that whatever I may say today upon any topic or phase of our family history which has been presented by Doctor Sondley, his version should be preferred. His faculty for research, his power of discrimination and lucid arrangement, give the results of his investigations the highest historical value. I think you all know me well enough to believe that, in saying this, I am not using words of idle flattery, but in soberness and truth, to place before our kindred the best sources of information.

Do not be alarmed at this formidable bundle of papers I hold in my hands. I do not propose to read them, but may refer to a few. They are letters, deeds, wills, and miscellaneous documents, relating to our family and the early history of Western North Carolina, which I have been collecting for many years; and at one time I contemplated preparing a history of those times, but the time for me to do the work has passed, and I can only continue the work of collection and preservation for the future family historian. My limited opportunities have confined my inquiries to our branch of the family, directly descended from that John Davidson, of Rowan, to whom I shall refer later, and what information I may have been able to gather of the collateral branches is fragmentary and not always reliable.

Our kinsman, Hugh Davidson, Esq., of Shelbyville, whom we are gratified to have with us today,

has recently prepared and published a history of those branches of the family who emigrated from Buncombe and settled in the Duck River section of Tennessee early in the nineteenth century; and in the genealogy of the distinguished Tillman family of Tennessee, prepared by George Newton Tillman, Esq., and published in 1905, there is much interesting matter relating to our family—the author's mother being Martha Catherine Davidson, a daughter of James Davidson (grandson of our John Davidson), and who was born in Buncombe county, September 12th, 1796.

I am glad to hear that our kinsmen in Mecklenburg, Rowan and Iredell counties, of this State, and known as the "Mecklenburg Davidsons," will soon publish a history of that branch, which is fitly represented here today by our honored guest, Baxter Davidson, Esq.

These facts admonish us to be up and doing our part in the preservation of the history of our branch. The material is abundant, and I feel confident the love and devotion of some one—perhaps some of my hearers—will soon put it in enduring form.

Let us not leave this day without arranging for a permanent family historical organization, which shall be empowered to collect and preserve all proper material relating to the history and traditions of these two families. Much interesting and valuable material has been collected—much more is scattered among the private papers of individuals and families, which is in danger of destruction in the vicissitudes and changes of life. Much is in the form of tradition which will soon fade from memory.

We can show our appreciation of the virtues and sacrifices of ancestors by collecting and preserving these evidences of their lives, and the events in which they took honorable part, more appropriately and effectively than by simply meeting in reunions. And

I venture to say, a truthful chronicle of these two families will constitute a no small part of the history of Western North Carolina. In every period of that history, in peace and war, in all the phases and walks of life, our kindred have had not unworthy share. Let us record it, and, yea, let us make it known to all the regions round about, and send it on to those who come after us, with the charge to keep the record pure and true.

And you will, I know, indulge me in suggesting to you that the spirit which produces occasions of this kind, has far greater significance for the thoughtful and patriotic citizen of free and republican government than many people think. Their influence is much wider than at first sight appears. The founders of this nation were earnest, brave, sincere men and women—plain and temperate in their lives, decided and loyal in their political and religious opinions—having clear conceptions of civic duties. Upon these traits were laid the foundation of the Republic—upon them it must forever rest, and I can conceive of no better means by which this can be done than by frequent assemblies of this kind where these noble qualities can be kept alive, and the fires of patriotism kept burning on the altars of our country.

So, while we today, and I hope on many days to come, are thinking of our forefathers, and enjoying the social blessings that are ours, let us not forget that we too have duties to the state and nation which those forefathers gave us. And thus we may best repay them.

The precise relation to each other of all the Davidsons who came in the great emigration from Pennsylvania and Maryland from 1748 to 1752 and settled in North Carolina, is difficult now to fix; that they were related is, I think, without doubt. The fact that they came South, from the same section and about

the same time; that it was a common habit with Scotch-Irish to emigrate in groups of families and relatives; that they made their homes in the new settlements near each other; that they held the same religious and political beliefs and opinions; the prevalence of family names for successive generations, for example, William, George, Hugh, Benjamin, Joseph, Rachel, Ruth, Mary, etc.; the recurrence even to this day of marked physical and mental resemblances among their descendants, and the traditions of the members of the various families and of the people who knew them, seem to make this conclusion safely reliable.

There are two branches of the Davidsons yet in Scotland, of the "gentry"—and of apparently some consequence, as they are noticed in "Burke" and each has its coat of arms—very like in general design. So it seems we have always been "some punkins."

The tradition is, and it is pretty well established, that in the emigration of the Scotch to north of Ireland in the reign of James I. of England, were several Davidsons, some of whom were active in the affairs of the stormy years following. They were Whigs and Presbyterians. From these came our ancestors. Some time in the first half of the 18th century they came to America and located in York, Lancaster and Northampton counties in Pennsylvania—the greater portion of them, perhaps, at, or near Chestnut Level in Lancaster county. It may be one, or more, settled in Western Maryland and Northern Virginia. I have, however, not been able to secure any reliable information of this fact. From Pennsylvania they came with the great Scotch-Irish "emigration" to North Carolina, as I have said—settling in Anson and Rowan counties, from which Mecklenburg and Iredell counties were soon afterwards formed. The records in the office of the Secretary of State of

North Carolina, show that grants for lands issued, from the years 1743 to 1780, to George Davidson, Thomas Davidson, John Davidson, Joseph Davidson, Robert Davidson, James Davidson and William Davidson—the name being invariably spelled in these records down to about the year 1768, *Davison*—the second "d" being omitted; and by the way, in the printed copy of the note from General Wm. Davidson to General Green, announcing the result of the Battle of King's Mountain, General Davidson omitted the second "d," yet in his will, the original of which is now on file in the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court of Rowan county, he used the second "d," and in all other documents I have seen, and in all records, public and private, which I have examined, the spelling is with the second "d," since the end of the eighteenth century.

The grant to Joseph Davidson was for land in Craven county, North Carolina. I have not the dates, but my memorandum says it is recorded in Book 5, page 67, Secretary of State's office, North Carolina. About the same time are grants to John Davidson for land in Tyrell and Bertie—adjoining Craven. I am at a loss to account for this, as those three counties are in the extreme eastern part of North Carolina and had been settled many years, principally by English from the Colony of Virginia and from the Old Country, and there are, so far as my information goes, no records or family traditions that any "Davisons," or Davidsons ever settled or resided in that part of the State. I apprehend that, in contemplation of the emigration to the South, these lands were acquired, but afterwards when the movement was determined, the "Piedmont" section of the State was selected; at any rate from 1743 down to 1780, grants issued to George, Thomas, John, Robert, James, Benjamin and William Davidson, for land in what is

now Anson, Rowan, Mecklenburg and Burke counties—and one to Robert Davidson in Cumberland county—adjoining Anson.

There were evidently *two* George Davidsons of the original emigrants—one in Anson and the other in Rowan. Not only were grants issued to George Davidson in Anson, but at the Provincial Congress which met at Halifax on April 4, 1776, in the military organization of the State, or Province, George Davidson, of *Anson,* was appointed major, and was one of the delegates sent by Anson county to the convention which assembled at Halifax on the 12th of November following to frame a constitution. He also represented Anson county in the General Assembly in 1777-1778 (Wheeler's History of N. C., Vol. 1, 81-85; Vol. 2, 25). Of this George Davidson I have no further knowledge, except a tradition that, soon after the Revolution he emigrated to Tennessee and settled near Nashville. It is probable the records, public and private, of Anson county, may furnish some information of his family.

There was another George Davidson, of Rowan county. He and his brother John (the last named being our great great grandfather), came to North Carolina with the "Emigration" and settled at or near Center Church, then Rowan, now Iredell county. This George was the father of General William Davidson. His will is recorded and the original is in the office of the Superior Court of Rowan county. It is dated May 19, 1758. In it he speaks of three sons, George, William and Samuel. It is said George died while a young man and I presume before marriage; of his son Samuel, I never heard anything. General William Davidson married a Miss Mary Brevard, sister of Dr. Ephraim Brevard, author of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. There were five or six children of this mar-

riage, who went West with their mother about the beginning of last century and their descendants are scattered throughout Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri and the Southwestern States. In "Hunter's Sketches of Western North Carolina," there is, I think, a full statement of the names of these children and the places to which they removed, etc. This George was a captain in military organization of the State and also a member of the "Committee of Safety" for Rowan county. (Wheeler's History, Vol. 2, page 368). Of his descendants I know but little; many of them reside in Iredell and Mecklenburg counties —chiefly in the vicinity of Davidson College.

John Davidson, our great-great-grandfather, the brother of the last named George, was also prominent and active in the Revolutionary struggle—being an officer in the military organization of N. C., and a member of the Committee of Safety and Correspondence of Rowan county (Wheeler's History, 1, 81; 3, 368). It has been claimed by some that he was one of the "signers" of the "Mecklenburg Declaration," but I am rather inclined to the opinion that John was a son of Robert Davidson. The tradition—the truth of which I think is reasonably well established—is that George, of Rowan, John and Robert were brothers; that Robert died in Pennsylvania, shortly before the "Emigration," and that his surviving brothers brought his widow and children with them; and from that stock came most of the Charlotte Davidsons—and as I have said, the John of that family was, probably the "signer" of the Mecklenburg Declaration. There was a John Davidson also in the engagement at Cowan's Ford, where General Davidson fell, and in General Greene's retreat before Cornwallis, after Cowpens; I am inclined to the opinion he was the son of our great-grandfather William, and was "John Davidson (the third)" mentioned by Hugh

Davidson in "The Davidson Family of the Duck River Valley," hereinbefore referred to. It is stated in Wheeler's History, 3, 239, that Nancy Brevard married John Davidson and both were killed by Indians near the head of the Catawba. I have often heard of this event; it occurred near the present town of Old Fort, and the stream upon which the town is situated and in which I have been told the bodies of the victims were found, was for a long time known as "Davidson's Mill Creek," now simply "Mill Creek." This tragedy must have occurred before, or early in the Revolution; that John was probably a young man—about the same age of General Davidson. I do not know where to place him, unless as a son of our great-grandfather John or of Rowan George. It may be some of the Davidsons or Brevards, in Mecklenburg, can give more information on this subject.

John Davidson's wife was a widow, a Mrs. Morrison, of whose ancestry I know nothing—and the children of this marriage were: William, our great-grandfather, and his twin brother Samuel, George, Thomas, John ("One-eyed"), Rachel, Betty and Peggy; Rachel married John Alexander; Betty married Ephraim McLean, and settled on the Cumberland River near Nashville, Tenn., the locality still being known as "McLean's Bend." Their loyal grandson, W. W. McLean, Esq., of Fosterville, Tenn., has made a long journey to be with us today. We warmly welcome him to the home of our fathers. Peggy married James Smith; they emigrated to Middle Tennessee soon after the close of the Revolution and left, as I am told, descendants. George Davidson, son of John, also emigrated early in life to Tennessee, settled in the neighborhood of Shelbyville, and left descendants. Thomas settled in South Carolina; many of his descendants yet reside in that State, and many

others in Florida, Alabama, Texas and other Southwestern States. There is some confusion with respect to John. It has been said he was the John Davidson who was killed by the Indians, on Mill Creek, near Old Fort; and again, that he emigrated to Tennessee and settled near Columbia. There is evidence to support both statements.

Samuel was killed by Indians, as stated to you today by Doctor Sondley. His infant daughter, and so far as my information goes, his only child—and who escaped from the Indians and was carried by her mother to Old Fort, was named Ruth. She married James Wilson; they emigrated about the close of the eighteenth century to Tennessee and settled in what is now Obion County. They left numerous descendants, among them being some of the wealthiest and most highly respected of that country. Three of Ruth's daughters married respectively, Joseph, Charles and Samuel P. Carson, sons of Col. John Carson, of then Burke, now McDowell County. This Samuel P. Carson represented for many years this Congressional District in the Congress of the United States, and was the first Secretary of State for the Republic of Texas.

It was in a duel with him that Dr. Robert B. Vance, who preceded him as Representative in Congress, fell, in 1827.

William Davidson, son of John (of Rowan), our great-grandfather, married Margaret McConnell, and of that marriage there were the following children: John, Hugh, George, William Mitchell, Samuel; Mary, married Daniel Smith (2d), Betty married Thomas Alexander; Sallie, married Joshua Williams and Ruth married General Samuel Williams; of these Rachel, William Mitchell and Samuel remained in North Carolina; the others in early life removed to and settled in Tennessee, in the vicinity of Nash-

ville, Shelbyville and Columbia, where many of their descendants yet reside. This William Davidson, known in later life as Maj. Davidson, was active and prominent in the Revolutionary War, and subsequently. He was a captain in the military organization of Iredell county, and a member of its "Committee of Safety and Independence;" was lieutenant in Capt. Houston's company — mounted — which participated in the battles of Ramseur's Mill, Enoree, and in the military campaigns in N. C. 1780-1781, when Cornwallis invaded the State. It is probable he was in the battle of King's Mountain. Soon after the close of the war he removed from "The Glades," his home on the Catawba, not far from the present village of Old Fort, McDowell county, to the Swannanoa River, where he resided until his death, with the exception of two or three years, when his residence was at the south side of the Swannanoa, at the place long known as the "Gum Spring," a short distance west of the present village of Biltmore. There, at his house, the County of Buncombe was organized, April 16, 1792, near Asheville—supposed then to be in Rutherford county, which county he represented in the General Assembly of 1790-1791, and was active in securing the passage of the Act creating the County of Buncombe, and that county was organized at his house on the 16th of April, 1792. He died at his home on Swannanoa on the 16th day of May, 1814, in 78th year of his age; his wife died November 13, 1806, in her 58th year. In July, 1902, the Daughters of the Revolution erected a monument at his grave in commemoration of his life and services. By mistake the date of his death upon the monument is stated as 1810. The error should be corrected. These, in substance, are the facts I have been able to collect with respect

to the early history of our branch of the North Carolina Davidsons.

The Ben Davidson mentioned in the grant was doubtless the same Ben who came across the mountains shortly after the close of the Revolution, and settled in the French Broad Valley on one of its tributaries, which to this day is known as Davidson's River. I am inclined to think he was a descendant of George (of Anson), or of Robert.

The people of North Carolina have not been unmindful of the Davidson name; there is Davidson county, Davidson River, Davidson College, the town or village of Davidson, Davidson street in Asheville, and I think one in Charlotte—and a monument to General Davidson on the Guilford battleground, near Greensboro—and the State of Tennessee, North Carolina's political daughter, named, in honor of our kinsman, General William Davidson, who fell at Cowan's Ford, the county, in which is their capital city, Davidson. "The past at least is secure."

Let me suggest that each of us give some attention to the collection and preservation of souvenirs and mementoes of the early times. In many families there are ancient deeds, letters, diaries, pictures, pieces of furniture, articles of clothing, etc., full of interest as illustrating the habits and customs of our ancestors—many of them having peculiar personal association.

I have here (exhibiting it) a stone that has rather a romantic history. For a while it was thought to be a whetstone, but a more careful examination shows it to be a "pelter," an instrument quite common among hunters, who used it on their hunting expeditions, to enable them to separate the skins from the flesh of their game without injuring the skins, peltries being in those times a most important source of revenue. Some twenty-five or thirty

years ago, Mack Gudger was plowing in his field near the spot where stood the cabin of our great uncle, Samuel Davidson, and where he was killed by Indians as described by Doctor Soudley, and found this stone. You will observe that on one side is carved in rude letters and figures, "D. S. 1775," and on the other side the letters "S. D." These are the initials of Daniel Smith and Samuel Davidson. Smith married Mary Davidson, a niece of Samuel, and he and Samuel were warm friends and constant companions in their frontier life. I have no doubt this stone was their common property; that the carving of letters and figures now on it was made by one of them, and that it was in Samuel's house at the time of the tragedy which ended his life. It was given by Mack Gudger to our cousin, Robert B. Davidson, Esq., of Shelbyville, Tenn., who was greatly interested in family history, and upon his death went into the possession of his son, Hugh, who gave it to me when on a visit to him last summer, saying that he thought it should be in the keeping of some of the Buncombe Davidsons.

Daniel Smith was a doughty frontiersman, resolute and brave. He was renowned for his skill as hunter, explorer and Indian fighter. He was the ancestor of the Smiths, McDowells, Spears, Shufords and Ripleys, who have maintained honorable and useful prominence in the settlement and development of the French Broad Valley. It is a great pleasure to see so many of his descendants here today. I am told some of the family, in Asheville, have Daniel's celebrated gun, which was used by him during the Revolution and to the time of his death. I hope necessary precautions will be taken for the preservation of this interesting relic.

I have here also the plaid, or "Tartan" of the "Clan Davidson,' which was brought to me several

years ago from Scotland. You will know that among other great virtues of our Scottish ancestors was the one that they never wore breeches. They covered their feet—when not barefoot, as was usually the case—with rough buskins or sandals, somewhat after the style of the Indian moccasin, made from the hides of deer and cattle, and wrapped the upper body in stout woolen plaids, or tartans woven by the women from the fleece of their own sheep, and doubtless often from the sheep of their "lowland" neighbors, whose flocks and pastures, I am inclined to think, our forefathers were rather given to raiding between suns. However, as in those days there was almost constant state of war between the "highlanders" and "lowlanders," those little excursions and reprisals must not be considered too critically. Observe the wonderful fineness of texture, the beautiful blending of colors and softness and flexibility of the entire work. Each clan—and there were many—had its own tartan, having distinct colors and arrangement of colors; and besides being an article of dress, it was the emblem and distinguishing mark of the clan in peace and war, as national flags now represent different people and governments.

I hold in my hand a book of extraordinary interest, not only to we Alexanders and Davidsons, but to all who are interested in the history of Buncombe county, and especially to those who are descended from the men who settled, organized and developed the county. It is the original record of the County Court of Buncombe, and contains the proceedings of the organization of the county. Permit me to read one or two paragraphs from this ancient record, which allude to our families, and are pertinent to this occasion:

"North Carolina—Buncombe County.

"April 16, 1792.

"Agreeably to a Commission to us directed. The County Court of said County was begun, opened and held at the house of Col. William Davidson, Esq.

"Present: James Davidson, David Vance, William Whitson, William Davidson, James Alexander, James Brittain, Phillip Hoodenpile."

"Silence being commanded and proclamation being made, the Court was opened in due and solemn form of law by John Patton, specially appointed for that purpose."

The Court then proceeded to eletcion of officers and the drawing of jurors, and among the names of officers chosen and jurors drawn you will recognize many names now borne by their descendants who yet dwell in the lands "their fathers gave unto them."

It is interesting to note in the subsequent proceedings of this court the rapid growth in the population and development of the country, and the temptation to make further extracts is very great, but the purpose of this occasion being only to direct the attention of my kinsmen to facts connected with the lives of their forefathers, I shall leave its later history to more competent hands. Let me, however, give two further quaint extracts which may illustrate the simple and grave manners of the men and women of those times:

"Minutes of July Court, 1792.

"A bill of divorce from Ruth Edwards to her husband John Edwards was proved in open Court by Philip Hoodenpile, Esq., a subscribing witness therefore ordered to be registered."

While this homely method of untying the inconvenient matrimonial knot does not begin to compare with the modern solemn performances to accomplish the same end, it has the merit of being far more honest and direct—and doubtless was as effectual. Perhaps the parties, in the absence of any other known

provisions of law or precedents, recalled the old Mosaic statute, that when a man desires to get rid of an undesirable wife, "let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand and send her out of his house."

"Minutes of October Court, 1793. Ordered by the Court that Thomas Hopper upon his own motion, have a certificate from the clerk, certifying that his right ear was bit off by Philip Williams in a fight between said Hopper and Williams. Certificate issued."

When we recall that in those days and for many years afterwards the punishment for certain crimes —perjury, forgery and perhaps some others—was by cutting off a portion of the ear of the offender, commonly called "cropping," we can well understand why the "said Hopper" was so anxious that the truth of his misfortune should be preserved in some authentic way. Evidently the court being plain, sensible and just men, saw nothing unreasonable in the matter and gave a place on their records for the fact.

I have looked in vain through these records for evidence of any criminal prosecution of the "said Hopper and Williams" for this fight, but as good old fashioned fighting, without rocks, knives, pistols or "brass-knucks" was one of the most common and popular amusements of those days, and there seems to have been no more serious injury than the loss of an ear, and doubtless the fight being a fair one, the conservators of law and order did not feel called upon to take official notice of it. Now-a-days such an occurrence would furnish us with a sensational two-days' trial, and fees galore!

Dr. Sondley's address and my contribution today bring the history and genealogy of the Buncombe Alexanders and Davidsons down to the period of the settlement and organization of society in that county

—about the beginning of the nineteenth century. The continuance of the work must be committed to other hands. You have among you a number of persons who are abundantly capable of this worthy undertaking. It is not difficult. Let each branch of the Alexander and Davidson families now in Western North Carolina, descendants of the John Alexander and John Davidson to whom we have referred, and who may be accepted as the founders of those families, respectively, in Buncombe and adjoining territory, compile genealogical and chronological records of births, marriages, deaths, removals and other matters of family interest, and report them, from time to time, to future reunions of the two families, such as we have today, or to reunions of separate branches, as the convenience of the circumstances may dictate; and then you will be able to collect and perpetuate the family names. We owe this much to our ancestors and to our common country.

And now, in conclusion, I want to express my thanks and feelings of admiration to our Swannanoa kinsmen for their hospitable and gracious entertainment arranged for us today; and I make a suggestion, which I am sure will meet with the unanimous and enthusiastic approval of this meeting: Let us adjourn to the groaning tables I see under those noble trees, and assail with family pride and appetite those "heaps of good things" which the kind hearts and fair hands of our kinswomen have prepared for us. The Alexanders and Davidsons have ever been renowned as good feeders. Dugald Dalgetty should be our patron saint.

The quartette then gave, "Blest be the Tie That Binds."

After the benediction by Rev. Clarence Reynolds, of Oakland Heights Presbyterian church, an adjournment was taken for dinner and the opportunity was presented to those who desired to visit the old homesteads and cemeteries.

Just prior to adjournment, Mr. Pless, of Marion, N. C., suggested the importance of taking some steps to perpetuate the objects of the reunion, and moved the appointment of a committee to devise plans and arrange for further meetings, etc., etc. Dr. F. A. Sondley, Hon. Theo. F. Davidson and Mr. Charles H. Alexander were appointed on that committee.

Following the ajournment a registration of those members and representatives of the two families was made and a grouping of the connection as a whole and the arranging into smaller numbers and individuals, for photographing, C. F. Ray, of Asheville, being on the grounds with cameras, large and small, suitable for such work. The registration showed between four and five hundred members of the two families actually present. Singularly enough, every one taking an active part in the program, with two exceptions—Rev. Clarence Reynolds and one of the quartette—were connected with one or the other families in some way.

There were representatives of six generations in attendance and four generations upon the grounds.

To the excellence and good taste exhibited in the arrangements which contributed so greatly to the enjoyment of a most delightful occasion, the large meeting was indebted to the hospitality and forethought of the Swannanoa Alexanders and Davidsons.