

MSS. Collection #84

Guilford Battle Ground Company Collection, 1857-1959 [bulk 1887-1916]. 1½ boxes (53 folders), ca. 110 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

This collection consists primarily of materials relating to David Schenck and the Guilford Battle Ground Company, an organization he helped organize and for which he served as the first president. Founded in 1887, the not-for-profit company was charged with the dual mission of trying to acquire the land on which the Battle of Guilford Courthouse was fought and establishing a park there to commemorate that Revolutionary War event and its participants.

Researchers will find the collection rich in materials relating to some of the activities of the Guilford Battle Ground Company, particularly the acquisition of land and the negotiations relating to the design and installation of the Nathanael Greene Memorial Monument in the park. Also of interest may be a small group of documents pertaining to David Schenck's personal affairs, which include items that trace the history of ownership of his "home lot" and early deeds for lots in Green Hill Cemetery.

Arrangement: The materials that compose the Guilford Battle Ground Collection are alphabetically arranged into the following seven series: **Correspondence**, 1898-1916; **Drawings**, 1902; **Financial**, 1891-1905; **Legal**, 1857-1895; **Miscellaneous**, 1898; **Printed**, 1887-1954; and **Watkins, Nancy Woodburn**, 1959.

Provenance: The Guilford Battle Ground Collection was donated to the Greensboro Historical Museum over the course of a number of years. Accession numbers assigned to materials in the collection include the following: 1950.9.1, 1956.3.1, 1965.27.21, 1967.181, 1969.1.1, 1970.20.2, 1973.51.3, 1973.143.92, 1974.87.1-2, 1976.83.1, 1980.28.12, 2020.57.1, 2020.68.1, and 2023.21.1. The Museum also possesses related materials that are not part of the collection, such as early images of the park and a copy of Schenck's book entitled *North Carolina, 1780-'81* (1950.9.1). Researchers interested in either Schenck or The Guilford Battle Ground Company may want to consult the [David Schenck Papers](#) (#652) held by the [Southern Historical Collection](#) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A copy of the inventory to the Schenck Papers is in the first folder of this collection.

Processing: This collection was organized and the finding aid prepared by Francis D. Pitts III in April 2000.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

In 1881 Judge David Schenck, presiding over the Ninth Judicial District in North Carolina, resigned his position with the court to become the general counsel for the Richmond and Danville Railroad, which at that time had its main legal offices in Greensboro.

Upon moving to Greensboro in 1882, Schenck actively embraced public service in his new community. As a town commissioner, he sought to modernize and expand the infrastructure of the city and to improve its public schools. During his tenure Schenck helped accomplish some of these goals, culminating with his giving the dedication speech when the cornerstone was laid for the new Lindsay Street School.

Of the personal projects he undertook while in Greensboro, perhaps none was more important to him than the one to save the site where the Battle of Guilford Courthouse took place. Largely through efforts on Schenck's part, the Guilford Battle Ground Company was organized in 1887 to help effect that objective. Its mission was to raise money to purchase as much of the former battlefield as possible and to establish a park there commemorating the battle and its participants. The Company succeeded in this mission, and in 1917 the site was deeded to the National Park Service. Today, the park, one of the best of its kind in North Carolina, is designated the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park.

Biographical Sources: The primary sources in the collection coupled with a number of secondary sources provided information that afforded thumbnail sketches of David Schenck and the activities of the Guilford Battle Ground Company. The most useful in the latter group include the following titles: *The Monuments at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park*, by Thomas E. Baker (Greensboro, NC, 1979); *Founders and Builders of Greensboro, 1808-1908*, compiled by Bettie D. Caldwell (Greensboro, NC: Jos. J. Stone & Co., 1925); *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, Vol. 5, P-S, edited by William S. Power (Chapel Hill, NC: The UNC Press, 1994); and *A Memorial Volume of the Guilford Battle Ground Company*, by David Schenck (Greensboro, NC: Reece & Elam, Printers, 1893).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

Types of materials in this collection include correspondence, drawings, financial and legal documents, and printed matter.

The bulk of the collection focuses on the activities of the Guilford Battle Ground Company. Researchers will find the collection strong in materials relative to the establishment of a park dedicated to commemorating the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Of special note in this regard are the items highlighting the actions of the Guilford Battle Ground Company, especially the acquisition of land, as represented in deeds (4:3-12,14,16,18-23), on which the battle was fought. Also of note is correspondence relating to the design and installation of the Nathanael Green Memorial Monument at the park (1:2-7). Researchers may also find the financial documents of the Guilford Battle Ground Company useful, particularly a list of stockholders (3:1), a financial statement (3:4), and a copy of a stock certificate (3:5) that was originally issued in 1887, the year the company was organized.

The printed series contains materials that will afford researchers the opportunity to examine how the park developed and the types of items produced to commemorate the Battle of Guilford

Courthouse. Items that will be particularly useful include materials relating to the activities of the Guilford Battle Ground Company (6:1,3-4,6,10); pamphlets examining aspects of the history of the battle and the site (6:7-9,11); and sesquicentennial celebration materials from 1931 (6:5,13).

In addition, the collection contains materials related to the personal affairs of David Schenck, the first president of the Guilford Battle Ground Company. Although these items have no bearing on the activities of the Company or the development of the park, they will prove useful in illuminating aspects of local history. Of particular interest are the documents relating to what Schenck called his "home lot," which traces ownership of the property from 1857 to the time he purchased the land in 1882 (4:17). The "Greensboro High School" property, or "Academy Lot," as it was sometimes called, is mentioned in some of these documents. Also of interest in the Schenck materials are two early deeds for lots in Green Hill Cemetery (4:15).

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Correspondence. 8 folders (ca. 20 items). 1898-1916.

The bulk of the correspondence series pertains to the negotiations relating to the design and installation of the Nathanael Greene Memorial Monument in the park dedicated to the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. The earliest piece of correspondence in this series is from Philadelphia sculptor Otto J. Schweizer, who submitted a proposal in December 1911 in response to a "circular letter of invitation" from the U.S. Corps of Engineers (1:5). His proposal was not chosen, but it may prove helpful to researchers interested in gaining insight into the specifications required of those submitting bids. The other letters pertaining to this topic will help the researcher understand the process by which the monument took shape. In C. Alphonso Smith's letter, information relating to the appropriate wording for the monument is discussed (1:6). Correspondence from the office of Albert Randolph Ross, architect for the project, provides important information about how decisions were made and efforts coordinated between the principal parties involved in approving the design and producing the monument (1:3). Folders 1:2,4,7 augment the process by which the project finally came to fruition. Also in this series is a letter in which the celebrations of July 4, 1898, at the "Battle Ground" are discussed (1:8).

2. Drawings. 1 folder (1 item). 1902.

The one item in this series is a blueprint produced by W.B. Trogdon, which he titled "Property of the Guilford Battle Ground Association, Deed from D. Schenk [sic] Esq., Jany., 1902." A prominent feature of the drawing is Lake Wilfong.

3. Financial. 5 folders (5 items). 1891-1905.

The financial series consists of items relating to the business of the Guilford Battle Ground Company. Materials worthy of note include a list of stockholders (3:1); a financial statement (3:4); and a copy of a stock certificate that was originally issued in 1887, the year the company was organized (3:5).

4. Legal. 23 folders (ca. 60 items). 1857-1895.

The bulk of the legal series appears to consist of deeds associated with purchases made by the Guilford Battle Ground Company, which sought to acquire the land where the Battle of Guilford Courthouse was fought (4:3-12,14,16,18-21). The series also contains a number of deeds and legal documents not associated with the business of the company. All of these relate, either directly or indirectly, to the personal affairs of David Schenck. This grouping consists of two sets of items. The first folder contains two deeds for lots in Green Hill Cemetery (4:15); the second, both deeds and legal documents pertaining to the property Schenck called his "home lot" (4:17). An interesting aspect of the latter group of materials is that they trace ownership of the property from 1857 to the time of Schenck's purchase of the land in 1882. The "Greensboro High School" property, or "Academy Lot," as it was sometimes called, is mentioned in some of these documents. Folder 4:13 also contains a deed that may be associated with Schenck's property. Other noteworthy materials include contracts between the Guilford Battle Ground Company and contractors (4:1-2) and the articles of agreement to incorporate the "Battle Ground Park Company" (4:22).

5. Miscellaneous. 1 folder (1 item). 1898.

The miscellaneous series contains a Richmond & Danville Railroad business envelope, ca. 1898 (5:1).

6. Printed. 14 folders (21 items). 1887-1954.

The printed series contains a number of items of note. Researchers interested in the development of the park and some of the materials produced to commemorate the Battle of Guilford Courthouse will find a variety of items. The 1887 circular (6:3), 1888 invitation (6:4), 1907 annual report (6:1) and pamphlets in folders 6:6,10 afford a glimpse into the activities of the Guilford Battle Ground Company. Additional pamphlets examine other aspects of the history of the battle and the site (6:7-9,11-12).

Other noteworthy items include a 1947 Guilford Courthouse National Military Park brochure (6:2); sesquicentennial celebration materials (6:5,13); and one page of the instructions in the "Programme of Competition for the Memorial Monument" (the other pages are missing) from the Corps of Engineers (6:14).

7. Watkins, Nancy Woodburn. 1 folder (4 items). 1959.

This series contains exposition and maps produced by Nancy Woodburn Watkins. According to her, the materials pertain to "Rockingham County's part in the Battle of Guilford Court House."

FOLDER LISTING

| Series | Folder | Contents | |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|--|
| 1 | 1 | Correspondence | -- Coble, H.L. (1916) |
| | 2 | “ | -- Merritt, Robert C. (1914) |
| | 3 | “ | -- Ross, Albert Randolph (1914) |
| | 4 | “ | -- Schenck, Paul W. (1914-1918) |
| | 5 | “ | -- Schweizer, J. Otto (1911) |
| | 6 | “ | -- Smith, C. Alphonso (1914) |
| | 7 | “ | -- Stickle, H.W. (1914) |
| | 8 | “ | -- West, J.H. (1898) |
| 2 | 1 | Drawings (1902) | |
| 3 | 1 | Financial | -- List of stockholders in GBG Company (1887) |
| | 2 | “ | -- Receipt -- Sikes, Emsley (1895) |
| | 3 | “ | -- Receipt -- Vanstory, C.M. (1905) |
| | 4 | “ | -- Statement (1891) |
| | 5 | “ | -- Stock certificate (copy of 1887 document) |
| 4 | 1 | Legal | -- Contract -- Norwood, Henry (n.d) |
| | 2 | “ | -- Contract -- West, J.H. (1892) |
| | 3 | “ | -- Deed -- Barringer, John A. (1890) |
| | 4 | “ | -- Deed -- Blair, F. S. (1886) |
| | 5 | “ | -- Deed -- Dennis, James (1887) |
| | 6 | “ | -- Deed -- Dennis, Robert (1893) |
| | 7 | “ | -- Deed -- Dennis heirs (1887-1888) |
| | 8 | “ | -- Deed -- Elias, Kope (1893) |
| | 9 | “ | -- Deed -- Hall, Miriam C. (1892) |
| | 10 | “ | -- Deed -- Hoskins, Charles (1890) |
| | 11 | “ | -- Deed -- Hoskins, Theodosia (1888-1894) |
| | 12 | “ | -- Deed -- Lane, George T. (1890) |
| | 13 | “ | -- Deed -- Mendenhall, Delphina E. (1867) |
| | 14 | “ | -- Deed -- Ross, Phoebe (1890) |
| | 15 | “ | -- Deed -- Schenck, David -- Green Hill Cemetery (1886-1889) |
| | 16 | “ | -- Deed -- Schenck, David -- GBG Company (1891-1893) |
| | 17 | “ | -- Deed -- Schenck, David -- Home lot (1857-1895) |
| | 18 | “ | -- Deed -- Schenck, David, Jr. (1892) |
| | 19 | “ | -- Deed -- Sikes, Emsley (1887-1892) |
| | 20 | “ | -- Deed -- Ward, Naomi (1887-1891) |
| | 21 | “ | -- Deed -- Wilborn, Jesse (1887-1889) |
| | 22 | “ | -- Incorporation (1891) |
| | 23 | “ | -- Miscellaneous notes (ca. 1873) |
| 5 | 1 | Miscellaneous | -- Covers (1898) |
| 6 | 1 | Printed | -- Annual Report (1907) |
| | 2 | “ | -- Brochure (1947) |
| | 3 | “ | -- Circular (1887) |

| Series | Folder | Contents | |
|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 6 | 4 | Printed | -- Invitation, 1888 |
| | 5 | “ | -- Invitation, 1931 |
| | 6 | “ | -- Pamphlet -- “An Address on the Life of Judge David Schenck” (1904) |
| | 7 | “ | -- Pamphlet -- “The Battle Field of Guilford Court House” (1915) |
| | 8 | “ | -- Pamphlet -- “The Battle of Guilford Court House” (1908) |
| | 9 | “ | -- Pamphlet -- “The Battle-Ground Oak” (1903) |
| | 10 | “ | -- Pamphlet -- “Guilford Battle Ground Company Report of the President” (1887-1888) |
| | 11 | “ | -- Pamphlet -- “The Guilford Battle Ground Gavel” (1954) |
| | 12 | “ | -- Pamphlet -- “Nathaniel Macon” (1902) |
| | 13 | “ | -- Program -- Sesquicentennial Celebration (1931) |
| | 14 | “ | -- Programme of Competition for the Memorial Monument (1911) |
| 7 | 1 | Watkins, Nancy Woodburn (1959) | |

Index to the Guilford Battle Ground Company Collection (ca. 1857-1959)

Note: The numbers following the name/subject entry – e.g. 1:1 – indicate in which Series#:Folder# (or, if no “:”, Series only) that name/topic can be found. Dates of the items are given in parentheses for an individual Series/Folder or, if at the end, for the entire subject/name entry. The abbreviation GSO indicates a Greensboro association.

Barringer, John A.: deed, 4:3 (1890)
Blair, F.S.: deed, 4:4 (1886)

Coble, H.L.: 1:1 (1916)

Dennis, James: deed, 4:5 (1887)
Dennis, Robert: deed, 4:6 (1893)
Dennis heirs: deed, 4:7 (1887-1888)

Elias, Kope: deed, 4:8 (1893)

Green Hill Cemetery (GSO): 4:15 (1883-1889)
Greene, Nathanael Memorial Monument: 1:2-7 (1911-1915); 6:14 (1911)
Guilford Battle Ground Co.: 1 (1898-1918); map, 2 (1902); 3 (1887-1905); 4:1-12,14,16,18-23 (1886-1894); 6:1,3-4,6-10,14 (1887-1915)
“Guilford Battle Ground Gavel, The”: pamphlet, 6:11 (1954)
Guilford Battle Sesquicentennial: 6:5,13 (1931)
Guilford Courthouse National Military Park: 6:2,5,13 (1931-1947)

Hall, Miriam C.: deed, 4:9 (1892)
Hoskins, Charles: deed, 4-10 (1890)
Hoskins, Theodosia: deed, 4:11 (1888-1894)

Lane, George T.: deed, 4:12 (1890)

Macon, Nathaniel: 6:12 (1902)
Mendenhall, Delphina E.: deed, 4:13 (1867)
Merritt, Robert C.: 1:2 (1914)

Norwood, Henry: 4:1 (nd)

Richmond & Danville Railroad: cover, 4:2,15 and 5:1 (ca. 1898)
Rockingham County (NC): Rev. War contributions, 7 (1959)
Ross, Albert Randolph: 1:3 (1914)
Ross, Phoebe: deed, 4:14 (1890)

Schenck, David: deed, 4:15-17 (1857-1893); 6:3-4,6 (1887-1904)
Schenck, David, Jr.: deed, 4:18 (1892)
Schenck, Paul W.: 1:4 (1914-1915)

Schweizer, J. Otto: 1:5 (1911)
Sikes, Emsley: 3:2 (1895); deed, 4:19 (1887-1892)
Smith, C. Alphonso: 1:6 (1914)
Stickle, H.W.: 1:7 (1914)

Vanstory, C.M.: 3:3 (1905)

Ward, Naomi: deed, 4:20 (1887-1891)
Watkins, Nancy Woodburn: 7:1 (1959)
West, J.H.: 1:8 (1898); 4:2 (1892)
Wilborn, Jesse: deed, 4:21 (1887-1889)