

FALL 2020-WINTER 2021 - NO. 66

NEWSLETTER

GERTRUDE BEAL AND MARTHA DENTISTE, CO-EDITORS

ANNUAL MEETING ON PAUSE

Like so many organizations, the North Carolina Friends Historical Society's 2020 annual meeting has been impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. We were all set to have Calvin Dark join us. You will learn more about him in this newsletter and, once you've read the article he submitted, you will see why the Executive Board is so looking forward to hearing him. Luckily, Calvin has put us on his November 2021 calendar. Put this on yours also - it will be either the first Saturday or the second Saturday in November 2021 - whichever date fits Calvin's schedule best.

MEET CALVIN DARK



Calvin Dark is a proud native of Siler City, North Carolina, a graduate of the NC School of Science and Math and Duke University. He was a Fulbright Scholar to Morocco. Calvin is the author of the forthcoming memoir, *McMasters' Will: How We Survived A Scheme & Became Virtually Free*. Calvin lives in Washington, DC, where he is principal and co-founder of RC Communications and a regular political commentator on US & international news channels. For more than 10 years, he has advised US and international bodies and organizations, primarily focusing on political, economic and cultural relations with Latin America, Western Europe and the Middle East and North Africa.

You may Google "RC Communications and Calvin Dark" and there you will see at least three videos that have thousands of views. We are grateful for Calvin giving us a sample of his forthcoming book. We hope we will have his book for sale at the annual meeting in 2021 - and give him and it a proper North Carolina welcome home.

**“THE FRIENDS & FRIENDS OF
FRIENDS WHO CREATED A
SCHEME TO FREE US”
by Calvin Dark**

I’ve been obsessed with the last will and testament of Simeon McMasters (1767-1840) since I saw it at my Great-Aunt Eva’s house as a child. In the thirty years since, I’ve read, researched, and analyzed that will so much that I can recite its two pages from memory,

“In the name of God, Amen.

I, Simeon McMasters of the County of Randolph and State of North Carolina, being at this time of sound mind and memory, but considering the shortness of life and the uncertainty of this mortal state of existence – do now make and ordain this my Last Will and Testament.”

It wasn’t until two years ago when I started writing a book about the will that I realized that I hadn’t even began to really understand it. Simeon McMasters’ will was like a treasure chest with a false bottom. Just when I thought I knew all it contained, I saw, under a thin veneer, two things that changed its whole meaning: a scheme and Quakers.

There, hiding in plain sight in the last paragraph, Simeon called on his “trustworthy friends” to carry out his controversial last wish. “Trustworthy friends” was somewhat common legal boilerplate in the early 19th century to describe a will’s executors and administrators. But Simeon wasn’t merely referring to acquaintances and

assigns – he meant carefully chosen co-conspirators. But what was this scheme and who were these four trustworthy friends? Those questions made me even more obsessed about who Simeon McMasters was and why he wrote such a will.

Let me start by explaining what Simeon McMasters was *not*. He was not Quaker and there’s little evidence that he was any more than nominally Methodist. However, Simeon was a “friend of Friends” because he grew up surrounded by Quakers – from his childhood in Pennsylvania to Delaware then finally settling in Randolph County near the Chatham County line. (The area today known as Staley.) In fact, several of his close relatives were either Quakers or the *cause* of a few Quakers marrying out of unity. Simeon McMasters was also not an abolitionist nor did he take any public stands to end slavery. With the exception of the two slaves mentioned in the will, there’s no evidence that he made any efforts to ease the plight of the enslaved or end the institution.

Simeon McMasters *was* one of fourteen children born to immigrants from Northern Ireland. He did marry, though by the time the will was written in 1834, he was a widower whose wife bore him no children. Simeon was a wagon-maker with moderate wealth. (One hundred and fifty acres of land and a wagon shop were among his most valuable assets.) He was a slave owner who, around 1800, acquired a young slave woman named Crecy. By 1815 Simeon fathered a child by Crecy named Aaron who was born a slave per the doctrine of *partus sequitur ventrem*

which dictated that a mixed child's legal status "followed the condition of the mother."

And, yes, Simeon McMasters was my Great-Great-Great Grandfather through his son Aaron McMasters.



Aaron McMasters

As for Simeon's last will and testament, it had only one purpose: to legally emancipate Crecy and Aaron. The will would later be considered by some as compassionate and ahead of its time. Others would call it a scheme contrary to the law and policy of the state of North Carolina. I believe it was both.

But why would a slave owner need a scheme to free his own slaves? Because legally freeing slaves in North

Carolina (while the owner was living or through a will after death) was difficult for all and effectively impossible for most. Beginning in the colonial period through the end of the Civil War, North Carolina law required a bond with two securities each worth one thousand dollars for each slave — a prohibitive amount for most slave owners during that period. In Simeon's case, for example, his one hundred and fifty acres of land and his wagon shop were valued at less than seven hundred dollars — which wouldn't have even been enough to cover one of the bonds for just one of his slaves. The law further required a freed slave to leave the state within ninety days and never return. If the freed slave did return, he or she could be sold back into slavery and the former owner would lose the securities. So, even in cases where a slave owner's net worth could fulfill the bond requirement, what slave owner would risk that? These laws and requirements were intended to purge freed slaves from the state so they would not encourage other slaves to legally *or* illegally attempt to obtain their freedom.

These legal requirements for emancipation were enormous obstacles for slaves, but also for slave owners who wanted to free their slaves and anti-slavery advocates like Quakers. Unlike strict abolitionists who wanted slavery to end immediately, Quakers and other anti-slavery advocates fell along a spectrum ranging from gradual emancipation to an improvement of the way slavery was practiced. Regardless of where they fell on the spectrum, there was a pretty uniform consensus

among Quakers that slavery as it existed was incompatible with God's command to love thy neighbor as thyself – unlike Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Moravians and other denominations active in central North Carolina at the time who were split on the issue of slavery.

But Quakers knew that they could not fight slavery alone – they would need the support of non-Quakers, many of whom respected Quakers' faith but would never become a Friend because of ignorance and misperceptions about what such a conversion would entail. So, anti-slavery Quakers in the Piedmont created a more ecumenical (and less overtly Quaker) group called the North Carolina Manumission Society (NCMS.) The new group's first meeting took place on July 19, 1816, when twenty-three delegates convened at Centre Meetinghouse about ten miles south of Greensboro, NC. (Centre Meeting was chosen because it was at the halfway point between New Garden and Cane Creek Meetings where many of the delegates came from.) Those twenty-three delegates represented one hundred and forty-seven members in local chapters across central North Carolina.

The goal of the NCMS was to broaden its base of support for gradual emancipation to include diverse denominations and faith communities. The NCMS lobbied religious, private, and government stakeholders to ease the requirements for emancipation to allow those who wanted to free their slaves to be able to do so of their own

free will – including *through* wills. The NCMS, which ironically permitted slave owners to be members, published manifestos, send petitions to the state legislature and raised funds for the voluntary (and involuntary) relocation of freed slaves to free Western states, Liberia, and Haiti. Among its earliest members were Quakers who would later become well-known for their positions on slavery such as Levi and Vestal Coffin, Benjamin Lundy, Richard Mendenhall, and many others.

But, what does all this have to do with Simeon McMasters' will? As Simeon was nearing death, he realized that Aaron and Crecy would be divided among his nieces and nephews (which he did not want) or sold along with the rest of the estate to an unknown buyer who wouldn't likely treat them as well as he had (which he definitely did not want.) However, his net worth was not nearly enough to free them in life nor would his estate be enough to pay the bonds upon his death which was also required by the law.

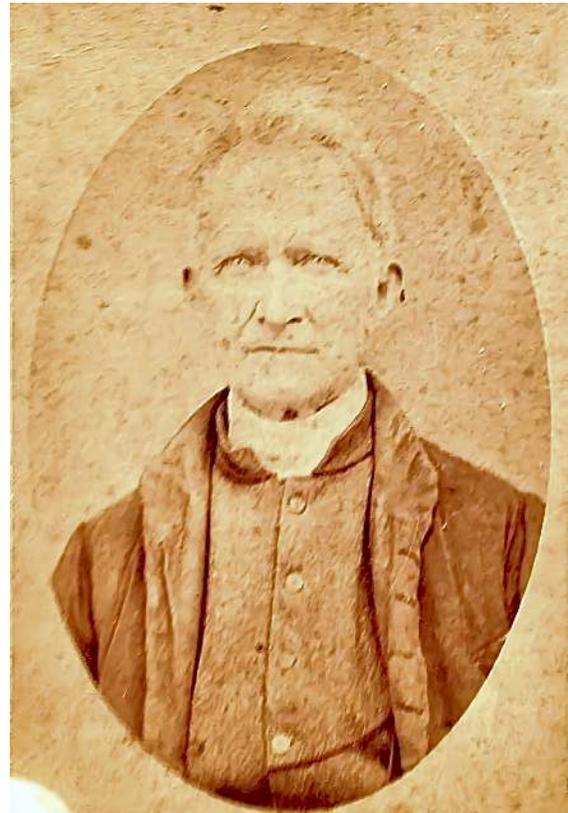
So, Simeon sought the help of the North Carolina Manumission Society to help figure out a way to evade the law and legally emancipate Aaron and Crecy. Now, it just so happens that in 1834, the year when Simeon McMasters sought this help, Benjamin Swaim, a New Salem attorney and newspaper editor known as the "Man of Business," was the president of the NCMS. Swaim's nickname came from his immensely popular series of articles and books called *The Man of Business; or, Every Man's Lawbook*, aimed at helping laymen carry out common tasks – such

as deeds, taxes and accounting and, of course, wills and testaments.

The will that Benjamin Swaim created for Simeon was complicated, but it essentially envisioned two possible outcomes. In the best, but most unlikely, scenario, the will would leave his entire estate to Aaron and Crecy who could use it to secure their freedom and start their own independent lives. (Simeon would just have to hope that the courts would make an exception to the prohibition on slaves from owning property and that, by the time he died, the restrictions on emancipation would be less strict or nonexistent.) The second, less desirable option, was that the will would leave Simeon's entire estate — including Aaron and Crecy — to four trustees (referred to in the will as the "trustworthy friends"). The trustees would then use "all necessary means to procure the liberation of Aaron and Crecy" and once they were freed, all of Simeon McMasters' estate would go to them. In this scenario, if the trustees were not able to legally free Aaron and Crecy then they would become their "masters" (for show purposes only) and would allow them to live as free and use the house, shop, and one hundred and fifty acres as if it were theirs. That was how the will scheme was supposed to work.

The Man of Business' next challenge would be to find four "trustworthy friends" to commit to carrying out Simeon McMasters' will scheme. He looked no further than the NCMS delegates and selected two Friends and two friends of Friends: Jesse Kemp

(Holly Springs Meeting), Henry Ellison (Methodist friend of Friends), Hezekiah Sanders Clark (Sandy Creek Meeting), and John Miller (unknown denomination, friend of Friends). Once the trustworthy friends joined in agreement, they were to go about their lives until Simeon McMasters died and they would be called into action.



Hezekiah Sanders Clark

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Sometime in the month of August of 1840, about six and a half years after the will scheme was hatched, Simeon McMasters died. During those years, so much changed! The North Carolina Manumission Society had disbanded after holding its final meeting in late 1834 at Marlborough Meetinghouse in Randolph County. Two of the trustworthy friends, Jesse Kemp and Hezekiah S. Clark, had left North

Carolina and settled in Indiana with many fellow Quakers during the great migration. Simeon's White extended family of heirs had become anxious because of the rumor that two slaves would get what should be rightfully theirs. On top of all this, Aaron, who was still a slave, had fathered a child with a White woman.

The cascade of events following the death of Simeon McMasters and the publication of his will would change the lives of Aaron and Crecy, the trusty friends, and even my own. Simeon McMasters' will scheme would also eventually involve several other prominent Friends and friends of Friends such as Joseph and John Newlin, James Moody, Jacob Hobson, and others whose names and roles aren't part of the surviving record.

Did the will scheme work like Simeon McMasters planned?

No. Not at all.

BOOK REVIEWS

For years I have had the pleasure of having as a Guilford colleague Richie Zweigenhaft, Charles A. Dana Professor of Psychology, Emeritus. He has recently published two slim works. These are *Jews, Palestinians, and Friends: 45 Years of a Quaker College (Sort of a Memoir)* (2020) and *Geezerball: North Carolina Basketball at its Eldest (Sort of a Memoir)* (2019). Both are the products of Half Court Press in cooperation with Scuppernong Books (304 S. Elm Street, Greensboro, NC 27401; 336-763-1919;

www.scuppernongbooks.com). Richie arrived at Guilford College in the fall of 1974 and just retired at the end of the spring semester 2020. I came in 1979 and retired in 2017. Save for the few years on either side of my time at the college, I pretty much knew the stories - and this is what made reading of the two volumes such fun. I told Richie that I even enjoyed the footnotes - as these contained extra goodies! Additionally, the books' arrival coincided with the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Proud of her heritage, she had said, "The Jewish religion is an ethical religion. That is, we are taught to do right, to love mercy, do justice." As a lifelong Quaker, I don't claim to know very much about Judaism but I can say that I have worked with many who identify as Jews and I count them among my dearest friends, including Richie.

M. Gertrude Beal

Jews, Palestinians, and Friends: 45 Years of a Quaker College (Sort of a Memoir)

Richie's stated purpose was: "The first is to explore the dramatic transition Guilford made from an all-white conservative school to one that diversified its faculty, its student body, and its Board of Trustees, and became known as a liberal and progressive college. The second examines how the increased attention on the campus to Middle East politics, especially the conflicts between Israel and Palestine, led to some divisions on the campus, but, much more problematically, to a major chasm between the college and the local Jewish community."

The author was among the first Jews to be hired on the Guilford College faculty (save for some persons early on who were of Jewish heritage). He terms himself an assimilated and unobservant Jew. In the space of two years, at least three more Jews would be hired as tenure-track faculty, among these Jonathan Malino, an ordained rabbi. Additionally, about a dozen other Jewish faculty were hired up to the present day. The then-President Grimsley Hobbs did a lot to diversify the college's faculty. Those he hired served to change the college in Richie's words "from a conservative and quite regional college to the progressive institution with a national reputation it has become." I would agree with this assessment - remembering back to the early 1970s when we called Guilford "a suitcase college." These years also brought diversity to the Board of Trustees with among the new faces that of Stanley Frank, a Jew, who would serve 36 years. In the early 1980s, a Jewish Academic Dean, Samuel Schuman, was hired. Following Richie's retirement, four Jewish faculty remained to begin the Fall Semester 2020.

The next chapter is considerably shorter as it focuses on the Palestinian faculty. These were Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Diya Abdo. Their tenures were short but impactful. At Guilford for only four years, Mohammed, a member of Guilford's Sociology/ Anthropology Department, became the Coordinator of the Peace and Conflict Studies program and the Director of the Conflict Resolution Resource Center.

He is now a tenured professor at American University and the author of numerous books. Diya joined the English faculty in 2008. She started the program "Every Campus a Refuge" (ECAR) wherein the college provides temporary housing for newly-arrived immigrants. The program won wide acclaim from both the White House and the United Nations and is replicated on other campuses. In Fall 2020 she left Guilford College to become the Director of UNCG's Center for New North Carolinians.

Richie next covers Jews and Politics commenting that Jews tend to be liberal in their voting patterns. Of course, he backs this up with research as well as a table on Jewish voting in US Presidential races. He commends the work of the late Landrum Bolling, a convinced Friend and former Earlham College president. He was well-known for his book. *Search for Peace in the Middle East*, wherein he recognized Israel and called for a two-state solution.

Next comes chapters on the 1980s and the 1990s. These focus on the variety of campus events including invited panelists and speakers dedicated to introducing our students to Jewish-Palestinian dialogue. It is here that Richie lists Quaker faculty. There is one error that resulted from his being given an inaccurate name. It should be noted that Joyce Clark (Sport Studies) was *not* a Quaker but Gwen Reddeck (Education Studies) was a Friend. [Richie tells me that a second printing is already in the works and this correction will be made along with the

inclusion of a few other omissions. I'm sure it is difficult to accurately remember 45 years!] Throughout the book, Richie terms generational Quakers as birthright Quakers. A preferred term is lifelong Quaker or lifelong Friend to distinguish from convinced Quaker or convinced Friend (those who come to Quakerism later in life). He lists 20 Quakers who have been full-time faculty through the 1980s and 1990s. Now, sadly, the number of Quaker faculty has declined to only three. Following is a short but important chapter concerning the Palestinian formation of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and its effect on academia including that of Guilford College.

A chapter titled "Hillel, Open Hillel, and Chavurah" was most helpful in an explanation of these terms. Of course, Hillel International provides support for Jewish students worldwide. He explained that Hillel at Guilford serves a wide range of Jewish students – "Zionists, anti-Zionists, and everything in between." Guilford went from having a Hillel to an Open Hillel – the Open Hillel dedicated to be an accepting place for all. And, finally, the Guilford association came to be called Guilford Chavurah – meaning "group of friends" in Hebrew. The debate of students concerning the three types of organizations spilled over into the next section. Richie discussed here his personal upbringing; that of being reared in a family which was strongly supportive of Israel.

The next chapter brings us almost to present-day Guilford College.

A lot of ink was devoted to a controversial speaker, Steven Salaita, brought to campus by Diya Abdo and endorsed by several academic departments. Those of us who were at Guilford remember the "uproar" of this, including the demand to have the venue changed such that the lecture was not presented in the building named for the Frank family. I was happy to see how Richie portrayed Max Carter, Guilford's campus minister for 25 years. Richie said that Max "has been unfairly vilified in the Greensboro Jewish community." I have observed this myself. Max is a lifelong Friend and taught in the Ramallah Friends School early in his career so you could expect Max to have a bias toward Palestinians. The truth of the matter is that Max welcomes both Palestinians and Jews to participate in panels and discussions. And he and Jonathan Malino have conducted tours of the Middle East together giving equal time to the study of Israel and Palestine.

After a couple more chapters focused on a complaint made by Palestinian alumni and another about Riche's receipt of the Charlie Hendricks Award in 2019 (well-deserved) and his service on the Awards Committee in the following year, we find ourselves at present-day Guilford College in the age of Coronavirus. Richie recalls a few instances that might someday become part of an "underground history" of the college. That made me smile because, of course, I remembered all of these incidents well – they were the news of the day! Richie concludes, if Guilford College is to remain true to its heritage, that it must have Quaker faculty and

students. He also expressed a hope that there will also continue to be both Palestinian and Jewish faculty and students.

Geezerball: North Carolina Basketball at its Eldest (Sort of a Memoir)

And now to Richie's alter ego. He is known as the "Commissioner," often shortened to the "Commish," the organizer of a pickup basketball game which began in 1976! It is thought to be the longest running pickup game in North Carolina and perhaps anywhere. He probably should be contacting the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Current players range in age from their 30s to their 70s. The game is open to students, professors, college staff, and members of the Greensboro community. Those not part of the college came when Guilford College and the YMCA had a shared fieldhouse and they have continued to play even though the Guilford/Y relationship ended in 2002. While most of the geezers are men, Professor of Psychology Claire Morse played for years and it is to she that Richie dedicates the book. I knew quite a few of the faculty who played through the years - and I remember that these faculty used to mark it on their schedules as a "committee meeting." And I was fortunate to have been included in the celebration of Richie's 70th birthday when the geezers and their friends raised enough money to name one of the courts in Ragan-Brown Fieldhouse for Richie. It reads: "Richie's Court: Richie 'The Commish' Zweigenhaft." Some of the volume is a bit "tongue in cheek" including several of the cover blurbs which Richie admits

are fake. Above all, what comes through the entire volume is the pure enjoyment of the game. Readers will find themselves caught up in this friendly competition and probably will wonder why they haven't joined in.