William and Margaret Moore Hill of Colonial Brunswick Town

Ann Moore Bacon

Mrs. Bacon is well known to Wilmington natives for she is the daughter of the late Louis T. Moore. Mrs. Bacon has inherited her father's interest in history and has prepared this article which adds to information already known about the Moore and Hill families. In the Colonial Period the Moores were simply designated "THE FAMILY" because of their extensive land holdings, influence, and importance. This article also makes reference to Josiah Quincy, Jr. of Massachusetts, Samuel Shoemaker of Philadelphia and Archibald MacLaaine.

William Hill, Brunswick Town colonial merchant, official and officer, was born in Boston April 15th, 1737, the eldest surviving son of John and Elizabeth Maxwell Hill. William's father, John, was baptized 11th of August 1700 at the Old North Church, made famous by Paul Revere's ride. There are some interesting facts about William's paternal grandfather, Henry Hill, who came to Boston in the latter part of the 1600's from the Isle of Thanet, County Kent, England: "Henry Hill of Boston, a Mariner, was so-styled as of 21 November 1715 when he received from the Selectmen of Boston a deed of conveyance of land for its Meeting House." The Meeting House became the New South Church. "The preceding year, when he reputedly founded the distillery that he passed on to his sons, his name stood 16th on a long list of INNHOOLDERS AND RETAILERS OF SPIRITS IN BOSTON 1714. When Henry Hill died in 1736, he left to his family large holdings of property, including the distilleries near Essex Street." These quotes are from the New England Historical and Genealogical Registry. It is interesting to note that Henry Hill's son, John, was baptized at the Old North Church and fifteen years later Henry was one of the founders of the New South Church. One wonders what circumstances caused Henry Hill to leave the Old North Church and help to found another one. Probably Boston was becoming large even in 1715, or possibly there was some disension among the members of the Old North Church.

William Hill and his brother, John, attended Harvard, graduating in the class of 1756, William being nineteen years of age. In their freshman year they boarded at the home of President Holyoke and were described as "quiet and orderly undergraduates". In 1756 William Hill went to Brunswick, North Carolina, a port town on the Cape Fear River below Wilmington founded by Colonel Maurice Moore of Charleston, South Carolina in 1725. I have two versions of how William happened to go to Brunswick, the first being from the New England Genealogical Registry: "He went as a schoolmaster, remained as a merchant and subsequently in 1764 became Receiver of the King's Duties". (Collector of duties on rum, wine and other distilled liquors for the port.) One source states he came to the schoolmaster or tutor to the Moore children (progeny of Colonel Moore, his two brothers and sisters). The second version, from North Carolina history, states "He came to Brunswick on the Lower Cape Fear in 1757 to attend the wedding of his Harvard classmate, Judge Maurice Moore, son of the founder of Brunswick". The second quote is also probably correct, as William soon married Colonel Moore's niece, Margaret Moore. "William Hill married Margaret Moore in 1757 at Orton, Brunswick County, North Carolina on the 18th of September at noon. The ceremony was performed by the Reverend John McDowell." This quote comes from the Proof of Genealogy section of the Colonial Dames papers of Ann Kidder Moore Bacon, a direct descendant of William Hill and his wife, Margaret. It may be interesting to the reader to know this particular quote is from a photostat of a page from the Hill family Bible which is in possession of one of the Hill descendants who resides in Charlotte, North Carolina; also, that any other names and dates of the immediate William Hill family (1759-1775) came from pages of the same source.

Margaret Moore Hill was born in December 1735 in or near Brunswick, as far as can be determined. Her father, Nathaniel Moore (brother of Colonel Maurice Moore) arrived at that port town from his home in Charleston, S.C. circa 1726-27 with his brother Roger (founder of Orton Plantation). The excavation of Nathaniel Moore's first home on the riverfront at Brunswick can be seen today. This type house is portrayed in fairly recent drawings as a two-story waterfront home with piazzas on three sides (the kind one would have found in the West Indies in that era). However, the marker in front of the excavation states that Nathaniel sold the house and lot in 1732, three years before his...
LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

BULLETIN

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Latimer House: Headquarters of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc., 126 S. Third Street, Wilmington, North Carolina 28401—Telephone: 762-0492. Due to the fire, the Latimer House is closed for remodeling and restoration. If there is an urgent need to use materials in the Archives, contact Mrs. John Cashman 343-1223.

ANNUAL MEETING AND CLARENDON CUP PRESENTATION

Date: Sunday, May 17, 1981

Time: 5:00 P.M.

Topic: The Battle at Widow Moore's Creek and the role of the Moore's Creek National Battlefield

Speaker: Terry Mitchell, National Park Service

Mr. Mitchell holds a degree in history from UNC-W. His hobby is the study of the American Revolution. He will discuss the actual battle at the Widow Moore's Creek and its historical significance as well as explain the programs available through the National Park Service and future plans for the park.

Following the slide illustrated talk there will be a brief business meeting and the presentation of the Clarendon Cup Award. A reception will follow at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Landon Anderson, 520 Orange Street.

TO THE MEMBERSHIP

The third week of March 1981 was one of significant loss to the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc. Mrs. Ida Brooks Kellam, Incorporator of the Society and Archivist for a quarter century died March 14. On March 18, the Latimer House suffered extensive damage from fire. As desperate as these events sound it is good to know that the Society's Board has manifested strength and resilience which provides the leadership to move forward with optimism.

Mrs. John Cashman has agreed to serve as Acting Archivist. Mrs. Kellam has left her collection to the Society and it is hoped that the Memorials in her name which come to the Society can be used to house the Ida Brooks Kellam Collection in the manner it deserves.

The Society is deeply grateful to the fireman of the Dock Street Fire Company for their fast and efficient extinguishing of a fire that could easily have destroyed the Latimer House. The firemen showed great sensitivity in their careful handling of the historic building and its valuable contents. The Archives were saved in their entirety although some of the pictures in the Board Room were lost. Unfortunately there was smoke damage to the Colonial Dames of the 17th Century's records and the Cape Fear Garden Club materials, which were in a wooden file, were destroyed. A volunteer task force has addressed itself to the job of repairing, refurbishing, and replacing damaged items. The building can be repaired and most of the furnishings can be cleaned. Insurance will cover the majority of the costs but upgrading of the electrical system, replacement of the heating system, and other items will not be covered by the policy. This is a time to send a contribution to the Society so that the Latimer House can soon be reopened to the public. We need your help.

The events of the past days have convinced me that those of the Society such as Mrs. Kellam who had the vision to believe a vigorous Society should and could exist have been proved right. The Society has existed for twenty-five years. It has been my pleasure to serve as President for a portion of that time and I am convinced that the loyal members of the Society will press forward into the next quarter century with renewed strength. It has been an honor to work with such a dedicated group.

Sincerely,
Landon B. Anderson, M.D., President

In Memoriam
Ida Brooks Kellam
Jane MacMillan Wright

IDA BROOKS KELLAM

Ida Brooks Kellam died March 14, 1981. On March 25th, she would have been eighty-six years old. Until the very last hours of her life, Mrs. Kellam lived in the house that she loved at 219 South Third in the city which she had adopted. Despite failing health, faithful friends and a devoted Elder Care attendant had made it possible for her to remain at home surrounded by the records, files, and books which she had accumulated over the years. Until recent months Mrs. Kellam had been able to vigorously pursue the work that had begun as an avocation but had evolved into a vocation: historian. Leora McEachern wrote Mrs. Kellam's Stor-News obituary which was a thoughtful tribute enumerating the many awards, books, contributions, offices in historical and ancestral organizations which had been a part of "Miss" Ida's life. The article also captured the qualities of character which were special: the zeal in which she approached her
work, the gentle hospitality, the generosity of spirit which always shared knowledge of genealogy or local history. Most of the historic house plaques or historical writings of recent years are indebted to Mrs. Kellam's careful research. The Reverend Robert Cook brieflly eulogized Mrs. Kellam at her funeral service. He emphasized her modesty and her sense of humor and paid special tribute to her personal and professional integrity which were hallmarks of her work and personality.

Mrs. Kellam was an Incorporator of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. She had served as Secretary of the Society but was best known for her service as Archivist. She loved the Archives and made it her business to assure that all records were properly catalogued and well preserved. In life Mrs. Kellam presided over the Archives with dedication and authority. In death she willed her extensive Lower Cape Fear records to the Historical Society. Her family made the generous suggestion that memorials to Mrs. Kellam take the form of contributions to the Society. It is hoped that the Ida Brooks Memorial Fund will be substantial enough to finance an upgrading of the Archives Room.

An editorial in the Star-News stated that any future history of the Lower Cape Fear will be indebted to the research of Ida Brooks Kellam. Any history of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society must include a recognition of the value contributions of its dedicated Archivist. Ida Brooks Kellam served the Society and her community well.

THE HILLS—Continued from Page 1

daughter Margaret was born. She was probably born at YORK just below Brunswick Town, the plantation her father owned by transfer of 640 acres from his brother, Colonel Maurice Moore. My father, the late Wilmington historian, Louis T. Moore, stated in a resume entitled COLONIAL PLANTATIONS OF THE LOWER CAPE FEAR: "YORK belonged to Nathaniel Moore. . . . He owned several plantations up the river and does not seem to have lived at YORK. There is a steamboat landing and once a post-office about forty miles up the river. For more than one-hundred fifty years it has borne the name of 'Nat Moore', but generally spelled 'Natmore'." Margaret Moore's mother remarried in 1748 after Nathaniel Moore died and moved to Charleston so possibly Margaret spent some of her youth there. However, she had two uncles and aunts in or near Brunswick so she may have been visiting there when she met William Hill. In any case, she lived all her married life in Brunswick (according to the pages from the Hill family Bible) until, due to war's approach the Hills went upriver to Wilmington in 1775 as many of the Brunswick population did. Twenty years ago I saw in the Museum at Brunswick Town a silver teaspoon inscribed "M. Hill" and I have wondered ever since if this artifact belonged to her. My thought was recently confirmed by a Wilmington native, Dr. Lawrence Lee, Professor, College of Charleston, who sent me a copy of the BRUNSWICK COUNTY Newsletter, February 1964, entitled THE HILLS OF BRUNSWICK. For those who are familiar with the Brunswick Town the quote from this paper will be of interest. "During the excavation of the Public House-Tailor Shop on Lot 27 in Brunswick Town, a small silver spoon was found with the stamp of the Boston silversmith Daniel Boyer, and the name of the owner 'M. Hill' engraved on the handle. This was probably Margaret Moore Hill, wife of William Hill and daughter of Nathaniel Moore. The presence of the spoon in the ruin on Lot 27 indicates that she had probably acquired the lot from her father, Nathaniel, whom the records indicate owned the lot, and that she was living there with her husband." Also, the aforementioned Genealogical Registry states: "In the ruins of his home were found several chards, plus a number of pewter and sterling spoons, engraved 'M. Hill. . . . These are now among the artifacts in the recently opened Museum on the site of Brunswick." Probably William and Margaret lived in a house on Lot 27 until 1775 before the British burned Brunswick; or, in the space of eighteen years they may have moved to another house in Brunswick. My sister, Margaret Moore Perdue of Wilmington, and I each have a copy of a portrait of Margaret Hill and a small piece of beautifully embroidered fabric from a dress which belonged to her.

Margaret and William Hill had nine children. The first child and only daughter, Margaret Anna, was born in Charleston in December 1759 and died within a month. One wonders why this child was born in Charleston rather than Brunswick since travel was so difficult during those years. Possibly Margaret wanted to be near her mother for the birth of her first child. Four sons of eight lived to maturity.

Not long after settling in Brunswick William Hill gave up teaching to enter the mercantile business with Parker Quince as his partner, shipping tar, turpentine and rice from Brunswick until 1775. He was successful in this business. He seems to have been respected and liked in the Lower Cape Fear section where he was commonly referred to as "the elegant gentleman from Boston". He held his position as Receiver of the King's Duties until the end of the colonial period and at the same time continued his mercantile business. Governor Dobbs appointed him Justice of the Peace, a position he held for five years—1764-1769. Hill was Captain of Provincial Troops in 1775.

While the approaching break with the British government seriously affected his business, Hill was sympathetic towards the grievances of his fellow colonists. On a visit to North Carolina in March, 1773 Josiah Quincy, Jr. of Massachusetts wrote: "Lodged last night in Brunswick, N.C. at the House of William Hill, Esquire, a most sensible, polite gentleman, and though a crown officer, a man replete with sentiments of general liberty and warmly attached to the cause of American freedom".

On 25 July 1774 Hill wrote the English firm of Kelly and Company that the tea he had repeatedly ordered had not arrived but that he did not complain since "the flame into which this whole continent is thrown by the operation of the Boston Port Bill will presently show itself in an universal stop to all intercourse between Great Britain and the Colonies. My little connection in trade must cease with the rest". Three months later Hill wrote Kelly that he had received a shipment of tea which he was returning in the same vessel, remarking that even if he was disposed to accept it "the people here would not suffer it to be landed. Poison would now be more acceptable". He pointed out that the British were greatly mistaken in their belief in a "disunion among American Provinces, and I can venture to assure that North Carolina will not be behind any of her sister Colonies in virtue. . . . In this same letter he refused to "accept the agency for supplying his Majesty's ships" and declined further commercial intercourse until "the present difficulties are happily over, which as a warm friend of Great Britain and her Colonies I sincerely wish may be speedily accomplished".

I have a copy of two pages from William Hill's Letter Book which dates from 1771-1775 detailing correspondence with
English and Philadelphia firms about the delayed and then final arrival of tea and exportation of tar before the American Ports “are shut”, date May 16th 1775. In one letter he thanks Samuel Shoemaker of Philadelphia for “the newspapers” and, “we are awaiting the deliberations of the Congress which the province of North Carolina will religiously adhere to”. From these quotes from Hill’s letters and his Letter Book one can glean he was becoming increasingly irritated over the complications of shipping with England, deeply concerned over the situation in the Colonies and in one letter states “I hate politics”. Reading his words stirs the imagination as to what terrible difficulties, both physical and emotional, our forbears suffered during and before the long years of the Revolution.

Evidently, William was quite a religious person and “conducted services in the homes of Brunswick; he was a Lay Reader in the Episcopal Church there. The services were poorly attended”. In 1752 funds were collected to begin a Church to be called St. Philips. The Church was almost completed around 1759. In the meantime services were also held in a chapel which the Church building eventually encompassed. Then, before completion, the roof of the Church was struck by lightning and collapsed. This occurred in 1760. St. Philips was finally completed in 1768 and burned in 1776, probably when the British destroyed Brunswick. William Hill was a vestryman. The thick brick walls of the Church are still standing, the interior and exterior have been cleared and there are quite a few two-hundred year old gravestones on the grounds, William Hill and family being among them. I think how sad for Hill and others to see their dream of a Church finally fulfilled, only to have it shattered within seven years.

In November 1775, there being no longer any commerce out of the port of Brunswick, William Hill gave up his position as Naval Officer and shortly afterwards moved to Wilmington, as previously stated. Evidently that is why the last child of nine was born there and not in Brunswick. In 1780 he was elected to the House of Commons from New Hanover County, but was declared ineligible to hold a seat since he already held a County office, Commissioner of Forfeitures. Remarkable on his election, Hill said that the “choice was made without my Privity or Consent, and I knew not that any person had set me up as a Candidate till near the close of the Poll . . .” Following this reversal he was placed in charge of administering the law relative to encouraging the importation of arms and ammunition into the port of Brunswick. When commerce on the Cape Fear was resumed, Hill was appointed one of the commissioners to regulate pilotage on that river.

William Hill died in 1783, age 46, and his wife in 1787, age 52. Referring to Hill’s death in a letter to a friend, Archibald Maclaine said “Mr. Hill died of obstinate quackery, not calling in a physician until about four days before his death”. William Hill’s Last Will and Testament, which is short and beautiful, is one of the earlier Wills on file at the New Hanover County Courthouse. Margaret was made Executrix and duly qualified as same in October 1783. Margaret and William were buried in the graveyard of St. Philips, Brunswick, beside their five infant children. There is a very large, flat marble tombstone over the graves, the beautiful inscriptions thereon being somewhat readable at the present but not so easily as twenty years ago when all the tombstones had been repaired and cleaned. The inscription states “Here are deposited the remains of William Hill Esq. obit Aug 23 1783 age 46 and of Margaret his Wife obit Nov 13 1778 age 52. He was possessed of every virtue which adorns the man and she of all that could endear the wife, cause the mother to be revered and loved. They lived eminently reflected and revered by all who knew them and so esteemed, died. Their infant children ‘Anna’, Henry, William, Maurice and Maurice Moore are here buried.” I assume this memorial was placed there by the four surviving sons—a difficult task I am sure in the post-Revolutionary War years, for by then Brunswick was a deserted wilderness.

William and Margaret Hill left quite a heritage through their four sons: John (1761-1813); William Henry (1767-1808); Nathaniel Moore (1769-1842); Thomas (1770-1818). The eldest son, John, served in the Revolution from 1781-1783. He fought with General Greene at Eutaw Springs: “Captain John Hill won laurels at the bloody battle at Eutaw Springs.” The second son, William Henry, named for his father and his Boston great-grandfather, was a Representative to Congress from 1799 until 1803. There is an engraving of him today in the Corcoran Gallery, a copy of the same being presented to the Brunswick Museum in the early 1960’s. The third son, Dr. Nathaniel Moore, named for his maternal grandfather, attended Edinburgh University and received his degree in 1789, age twenty. The fourth son, Colonel Thomas Hill, probably received this military rank in the War of 1812. He was always referred to as “Colonel Thomas Hill”, and was a member of the House of Commons in the State Legislature from Chatham County.

The four Hill brothers had plantations near Wilmington and summer homes in Pittsboro, North Carolina. There is a story that the four summer homes were built on hills near the four corners of the town and that when one of the brothers planned to entertain the family a large fire would be made outside so that the smoke would alert the other brothers of the occasion. Eventually, John and Thomas, the eldest and the youngest of the Hill brothers, made their permanent homes in Pittsboro and Thomas is buried on the site of his plantation, Hallibrn, [now extinct] although his Will was probated in Wilmington. I assume that John was also buried in Pittsboro even though the Wills of all four brothers are on file at New Hanover County Courthouse.

Dr. Nathaniel Hill and John’s son, Dr. Fred Hill, gave the land on which St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church, Pittsboro, was built in 1842. In the chancel of this church is a lovely stained-glass window in memory of Thomas Hill’s son, Thomas II, Thomas II’s daughter [d. 1863] and son, Joseph, the only Confederate soldier killed in the Battle of New Bern (1862), age eighteen. This window was given by the wife and mother, Eliza Yeamans Toomer Hill.

In 1899, Mrs. Eva Hill Smith of Texas, a descendant of Thomas Hill, had a large granite stone erected near the front door of St. Bartholomews in commemoration of the four Hill brothers and their wives, noting their long years of service to Pittsboro and particularly to the Church and stating the fact that Dr. Nathaniel and Dr. Fred Hill had given the land on which the church was built. Ending with this recent gift of a Hill descendant, I have endeavored to trace the accomplishments, benevolence and interesting facts concerning various members of the Hill family covering a period of two-hundred and fifty years—1715 through 1969.
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