

Christopher Barbee - Land Donation to University of Chapel Hill



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Christopher Barbee (d. 1832), known in his later years as "Old Kit," was born in Essex County, Virginia, sometime between 1738 and 1742. The son of William and Raichel Barbee, Christopher and his two brothers, Francis and John, moved to Orange County, North Carolina, in the early 1750s. In 1753, William Barbee obtained a grant for 585 acres of land and continued to add to his land holdings until his death in 1758. After his death, his sons continued to buy land. Christopher returned to Essex County sometime between 1766 and 1777 to wed his wife, Mary. Together they had five children: Francis, William, Elizabeth, Nancy, and Susanna. Christopher sat on juries during the trials of the Regulators in 1768, and later fought with the Americans under Captain Allen's command during the Revolutionary War. One of the largest landowners in Orange County, "Old Kit" and his family lived on "The Mountain" three miles east of the village of Chapel Hill. In 1792, when he was asked for a donation of land for the site of the university, Christopher purchased 225 acres from Hardy Morgan and donated the 221-acre "Old Chapel Tract" to the trustees. This tract includes present-day Polk Place, McCorkle Place, the area north to Cobb Terrace, and land west along Cameron Avenue. "Old Kit" was present at the 1793 auction of village lots, and purchased the original Lot No. 2, a four acre lot now the site of the Carolina Inn. Christopher owned and operated a blacksmith shop on Franklin Street, and did smith's work for several university construction projects in the early 1820s. He died in 1832 at approximately ninety years of age.

Works Consulted: Battle, Kemp P., *History of the University of North Carolina*, Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1974; Vickers, James, *Chapel Hill: An Illustrated History*, Chapel Hill, NC: Barclay Publishers, 1985.

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