

Lake Crabtree County Park Cultural Resource Survey



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Introduction

Lake Crabtree County Park is a 215-acre park about 8 miles northwest of Raleigh. It is on the north banks of Lake Crabtree, a 520-acre reservoir created by a dam built in 1989 on Crabtree Creek. The park is part of the Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space system, offering hiking, biking, boating, and other public recreation opportunities to the residents of Wake County and the surrounding area. Park staff also provide environmental education programs.

This report explores one of two homesites originally on the property. One homesite was located on the western edge of the park, near the present-day park entrance. This report explores a second homesite, covering most of the central part of the park and located adjacent to the present-day park office building.

Lake Crabtree County Park staff have requested this cultural resource survey to serve as a foundation for expanded interpretation at the park. The immediate goal of this information is inclusion in the system-wide OnCell cell phone tours (now in use at Oak View County Park, Harris Lake County Park, and Yates Mill County Park), with the possibility of wayside markers and interpretive programs to be added in the future.

This report is based primarily on documentary evidence and is intended to be comprehensive in nature. It begins with a through history of the site, its inhabitants, and the use of the land. The first known owner was Williamson Page, a middle class farmer who passed the property to his brother-in-law, Asa Blake, in 1841. Asa Blake was also a middle class farmer who operated a subsistence farm with the assistance of enslaved laborers until his death, when the farm passed to his widow, Elizabeth. After Elizabeth's death, their son apparently continued to farm the land until 1883 when it was sold to Rufus Tucker. Tucker was a wealthy and influential businessman from Raleigh who almost certainly farmed cash crops on the property through a farm manager. In 1903, Tucker's widow sold the land to Charley and James Duke, who operated a sawmill there for a few years. In 1967, the property was sold to become part of the Raleigh-Durham Airport property, followed in 1989 by the damming of Crabtree Creek and the opening of Lake Crabtree County Park.

This history not only tells the stories of some of Wake County's most important and influential citizens, but it also serves as a tangible example of the African American experience - Page and Blake were both slaveowners, and members of the Blake family had to adjust to a new labor system after returning home from service in the Confederate Army. The site also exemplifies the evolution of agriculture in the county, including subsistence farming, tobacco farming, sawmill operations, slave labor, and tenant farming.

In spite of the information uncovered during the course of this project, the history of the site dates to at least the early 1800s leaving some questions difficult to answer. Therefore the report concludes with suggestions for additional research questions and recommendations for further research into the history of the park.

Front Cover: Lake Crabtree County Park, Then and Now. Left: UNC University Libraries, Geographic Information Systems Services, USDA Historical Aerial Photos, Wake County Map 2MM_136 (1971), http://www.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/wake_1971/index.html. Right: US Geological Survey, National Map Viewer, <http://viewer.nationalmap.gov/viewer> (viewed June 2013).

Cultural Significance

The part of Wake County now known as Lake Crabtree County Park is part of the Triassic Basin with red and gray sandstone and shale soils well adapted for cotton, tobacco, corn, sweet potatoes, and other crops. In the early nineteenth century, prior to railroads to carry goods to market, Wake County was primarily made up of scattered subsistence farms. Farmers typically raised a variety of livestock, including horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, and chickens. Indian corn was also common, feeding farm families as well as livestock. Sweet potatoes were also an especially popular crop in early Wake County.¹

In the early 1800s, Williamson Page (1797-1866) owned a portion of the property that is now Lake Crabtree County Park. Page lived on the property with his wife, Mary Polly Blake Page (1783-1880), whom he married on February 27, 1821. Page's mother Sarah gifted a slave girl named Nancy to the newlywed couple. They had four children by 1830, and another four by 1840 - four boys and four girls.²

Considered a middle class farm, Page's property was nearly 1000 acres. It is likely the farm consisted of a small, one- or two-room log home surrounded by log outbuildings. Although these small farm complexes were common in early Wake County, no extant examples remain. Page used slave labor to operate a subsistence farm with cows, sheep, pigs, wheat, corn, oats, and beans. In 1830, he had four slaves and one freedman working on the farm. This grew to twelve slaves and one freedman by 1840. "Free persons of colour" were a minority in Wake County prior to the Civil War, and most of them worked as farmhands, including the man employed by Page.³

In 1841, Page sold "one-fifth part of nine hundred + ninety acres" to his wife's brother Asa Blake (1795-1850). Page continued to live in the area, and his home on Page Street, just southwest of Lake Crabtree County Park, is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.⁴

¹ Kelly Lally and Todd Johnson, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (ca. 1770-1941)," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination, March 1993, 7-13.

² Ellen Turco, "Williamson Page House," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, April 2012, 6-7; US Census Bureau, "Williamson Page," *1830 United States Federal Census* and *1840 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 15, 2013); Ancestry.com, "Williamson Page" and "Polly Blake," *North Carolina, Marriage Collection, 1741-2004*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 15, 2013); "Sarah Page to Williamson Page," Book 5, Page 208, July 31, 1822, Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh, NC.

³ US Census Bureau, "Williamson Page," *1830 United States Federal Census* and *1840 United States Federal Census*; Lally and Johnson, 8-11, 22, 109-110.

⁴ "Williamson Page and Mary Page to Asa Blake," May 21, 1841, Book 18, Page 498, Wake County Register of Deeds; Turco, "Williamson Page House," 6-7.

Asa Blake had married Charlotte Carpenter (1795-c.1812) on January 4, 1810. They probably had two children before her death, Susan (born c.1810/1811) and Dempsey (born c.1812). Blake remarried in 1814 to Elizabeth "Cidy" Hartsfield (1796-1861). They had seven children, Eleanor (born 1816), Eliza (born 1822), Albert (born 1825), Addison (born 1827), John (born 1831), Mary (born 1834), and Williamson (born 1836).⁵

By 1840, two-fifths of the Wake County population were enslaved African Americans, and by 1860 over one-quarter of the white population owned as many as twenty slaves. This middle class of slaveowners generally owned several hundred acres of land, some being agricultural complexes similar to those of large plantations, others smaller farms more similar to yeoman, and some with large labor forces for large-scale commercial production, and the rest with just a few laborers to maintain the farm's independence.⁶

By 1850, Blake's farm was over 700 acres and included cows, sheep, pigs, wheat, corn, oats, and sweet potatoes. He used slave labor to operate a subsistence farm, with twelve slaves and one freedman reported in the 1840 census, and twenty slaves in the 1850 census. Like Williamson Page, Blake was considered a typical Wake County middle class farmer. It is likely that his home was a bit grander than Page's, although it no longer remains; middle class farmers of mid-1800s Wake County typically lived in Greek Revival 1-houses surrounded by log outbuildings.⁷

Blake died in 1850, and in his will, he named eight of his enslaved laborers, including Jack, Yancy, Cealy, and Matilda, who were bequeathed to his wife; Nancy and her child Yancy, bequeathed to his son Addison with the option to hire or sell them to Blake's daughter Eleanor; Helen and her daughter Caroline, bequeathed to his son Addison with the option to the hire or sell them to Blake's daughter Eliza; and the "balance of my negro slaves," another twelve people, divided between his surviving children: Albert, Susan, Addison, Dempsey, John, Williamson, and Mary. In 1860, Mary provided additional names in a deed when she sold Jack, Yancy, Rufus, Henry, Sealy (Cealy), Matilda, and Matilda's son Jack to her brother, Dempsey.⁸

⁵ Asa Blake, Last Will & Testament, January 30, 1850, Book 27, Pages 65-69, Wake County Register of Deeds, Estates and Wills Office, Raleigh, NC; Elizabeth Blake, Last Will & Testament, May 1861, Book 31, Page 558; saradrumheller, "Blake Family Tree," www.ancestry.com (accessed April 15, 2013); Ancestry.com, "Asa Blake" and "Cidy Hartsfield," *North Carolina, Marriage Collection, 1741-2004*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 15, 2013).

⁶ Lally and Johnson, 15-23.

⁷ US Census Bureau, "Cidy Blake," *1850 United States Federal Census - Production in Agriculture*, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC; US Census Bureau, "Asa Blake," *1840 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 15, 2013); US Census Bureau, "Cidy Blake," *1850 United States Federal Census - Slave Schedule*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 15, 2013); Lally and Johnson, 17-18.

⁸ Ancestry.com, "Asa Blake," *US Federal Census Mortality Schedules, 1850-1880 [database online]*, www.ancestry.com (accessed July 1, 2013); Asa Blake, "Last Will & Testament"; "Mary W. Blake to D.H. Blake," March 7, 1860, Book 23, Page 365, Wake County Register of Deeds.

more fully appear by reference to the deed in my possession
and also the following negroes to wit a negro man
Jab & Ganey and also a negro woman Cady and
Matilda and three head of horses to wit a mare
called ...

for the purpose herein after excepted the following negro
slave and other property (to wit) one negro woman named
Nancy and her child Ganey and her future increase from the
date of this will also one hundred and twenty and a half
acres of land to ...

from the ...
worthy son Addison M Blake upon the trust and for the
purpose herein after declared the following negro slave
and other property (to wit) one negro woman Helen and
Chito Caroline and their future increase from the date
of this will also one hundred and twenty and a half

Excerpts from the Last Will & Testament of Asa Blake
(Courtesy of Wake County Register of Deeds)

Blake's wife, Cidy, became the lifelong tenant of the property and continued to operate the farm with her stepson Dempsey, daughter Mary, a 15-year-old white domestic servant named Susan Warren, and fifteen African American slaves.⁹

Dempsey Blake helped his stepmother run the family farm until the start of the Civil War. On May 11, 1862, he enlisted as a Sergeant in the 47th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. The unit fought at Fredericksburg and Gettysburg in 1863. After a promotion to 1st Sergeant in early 1864, Blake's unit went on to fight at the Wilderness, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg before surrendering at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. His sister Eliza's husband, William Warren, and his sister Eleanor's son, Sidney Sorrell, also served in the war. In July 1861, Warren and Sorrell enlisted in the 7th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. Sorrell was killed at Roanoke Island on January 9, 1862, and Warren mustered out on December 29, 1863.¹⁰

⁹ US Census Bureau, "Sidney Blake," 1860 United States Federal Census, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 22, 2013); US Census Bureau, "Lydia Blake," 1860 United States Federal Census - Slave Schedule, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 22, 2013).

¹⁰ US Census Bureau, "Sidney Blake," 1860 United States Federal Census, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 22, 2013); Ancestry.com, "Dempsey Blake," American Civil War Soldiers Database, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 22, 2013); Ancestry.com, American Civil War Regiments, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 22, 2013); National Park Service, Soldiers and Sailors Database, <http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers.htm> (accessed April 22, 2013); Ancestry.com, "William Warren" and "Sidney J. Sorrell," US Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865, www.ancestry.com (accessed July 1, 2013).



Battle Flags of the 47th NC Infantry

Right: Flag captured at Battle of Gettysburg in 1863

Left: Replacement Flag in Army of Northern Virginia Pattern captured at Hatcher's Run in 1864 and now restored and on display at the NC Museum of History

(Images courtesy of "NC Brantleys in the Civil War" and NC DENR Newsroom)

After the Civil War, the Blake family began to scatter across the country. In 1859, Addison and Williamson Blake sold their inherited land and most of their slaves to their sister Mary. Williamson and Albert Blake moved to Tennessee by 1860, where they worked as bookkeepers and clerks and owned two slaves each. The following year, Mary Blake sold "one-ninth part of five hundred and ninety-six acres of land, it being the dower land of Siddy [Cidy] Blake" to her brother Dempsey Blake, followed by another 121 acres in 1870 - the approximate equivalent of three inheritances. By then, Addison, John, and their mother had joined Williamson and Albert in Tennessee. By 1880, Mary had followed. Eleanor and Eliza both remained in Wake County with their families, while Susan eventually moved with her family to Pennsylvania."

It was Dempsey Blake who apparently remained on the family farm. As with most Civil War veterans, he returned to the family home after the war and continued to farm the land through the 1860s and 1870s. Emancipation had a profound effect on the labor system of the South, and farmers like Dempsey Blake quickly made the transition from slave to free labor. It is likely that Dempsey Blake constructed a tenant house on the

¹¹ "A.M. Blake to Mary W. Blake," Book 22, Page 442, March 2, 1859, Wake County Register of Deeds; "W.A. Blake to Mary W. Blake," Book 22, Page 443, March 2, 1859, Wake County Register of Deeds; US Census Bureau, "A.G. Blake" and "W.A. Blake," *1860 United States Federal Census* and *1860 United States Federal Census - Slave Schedule*, www.ancestry.com (accessed June 17, 2013); "Mary W. Blake to D.H. Blake," Book 23, Page 365, March 7, 1860, Wake County Register of Deeds; "Mary W. Blake to Dempsey H. Blake," Book 29, Page 448, January 7, 1870, Wake County Register of Deeds; US Census Bureau, "Siddy Blake," "A. Blake," "John Blake," "Eliza Warren," and "Ellen Sorrell," *1870 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed July 1, 2013). US Census Bureau, "John Blake," "Mary Blake," and "Addison Blake," *1880 US Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed June 17, 2013); Ancestry.com, "Susan B. Thompson" and "Watson Thompson," *US City Directories, 1821-1989*, www.ancestry.com (accessed July 1, 2013).

property during these years. The structure no longer remains, however there is still visible evidence of its foundation and parallel rows of daffodils bloom each year, marking the path to the front stoop. Adjacent to the site is a stone-lined well. Tenant houses were typically simple structures set away from the landowner's house, and were often built on the same location as former slave housing.¹²



Parallel rows of daffodils, remains of a foundation, and a stone-lined well suggest a tenant house was located on the property
(Images Courtesy of Cheri Szcodronski, 2013)

Elizabeth "Cidy" Blake, the lifelong tenant of the family farm in North Carolina, died in Tennessee in 1880. In 1883, Sidney Page, Asa Blake's nephew and administrator of his will, divided the property into five lots and sold them. Rufus S. Tucker (1829-1894) purchased Lot 1, which later became Lake Crabtree County Park.¹³

Tucker was born in Raleigh in 1829 to Ruffin and Lucinda Tucker, the youngest of three sons. He attended Raleigh Academy and then the University of North Carolina. He graduated in 1848 and went to work as a clerk in his family's mercantile store on Fayetteville Street, *R. Tucker & Son*. After his father's death in 1851, the three brothers, Joseph, William, and Rufus, ran the store together. They proved to be talented businessmen, and the business was extremely successful. In 1856, Tucker married

¹² Lally and Johnson, 33-34.

¹³ FindAGrave.com, "Siddy Blake," www.findagrave.com (accessed July 1, 2013); "Sidney F. Page to Rufus S. Tucker," Book 72, Pages 608-610, January 4, 1883, Wake County Register of Deeds.

Florence Perkins, and they had five daughters and a son, Lucinda (born 1861), Florence (born 1862), William (born 1866), Betsy (born 1871), Sarah (born 1872), and Mary (born 1875). An upper class businessman, Tucker's household also included one white servant and six African American servants.¹⁴



Portrait of Rufus Sylvester Tucker
(Image Courtesy of *Biographical History of North Carolina*)

When the Civil War began, Governor John Ellis asked Tucker to use his business skills in service as the quartermaster for the Raleigh post. He initially accepted, but soon resigned and by February 1862 had raised a company of cavalry known as the Wake Rangers. In 1863, he resigned his commission and took a position as the chief clerk of the House of Commons.¹⁵

After the war, Tucker and his brother William turned their focus again to the business, and in 1866 they built a new store on Fayetteville Street. They achieved great success and became two of the wealthiest and most influential men in Raleigh. Together they built the first entertainment venue in the city, Tucker Hall. Tucker was also a director of the North Carolina Railroad Company, the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad, the Seaboard Air Line System, and the Institute for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind at Raleigh. He invested in a streetcar system with the Raleigh Street Railway Company, was one of the first Raleigh residents to have a telephone in his home, and helped bring electricity to Raleigh as a Director of the Raleigh branch of the Thompson-Houston Light Company of Boston.¹⁶

¹⁴ Samuel A. Ashe et al, eds., "Rufus Sylvester Tucker," *Biographical History of North Carolina from Colonial Times to the Present* (Greensboro, NC: Charles L. Van Noppen, 1908), 453-455, 460-461; US Census Bureau, "Rufus S. Tucker," *1880 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed May 6, 2013); Rachel Stenbuck, "Tucker Farm," Meredith College Archives, http://www.meredith.edu/library/archives/tucker_farm.html (accessed May 17, 2013).

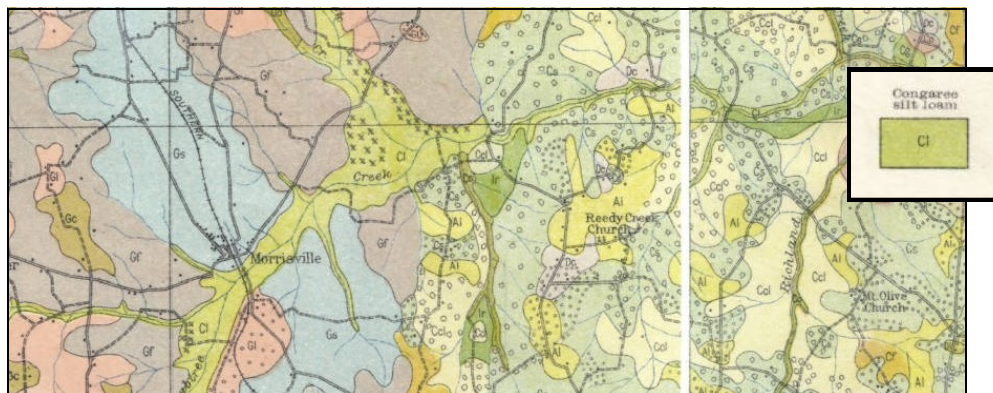
¹⁵ Ashe, "Rufus Sylvester Tucker," 455-457.

¹⁶ Ashe, "Rufus Sylvester Tucker," 457-458; K. Todd Johnson and Elizabeth Reid Murray, *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina, Volume II: Reconstruction to 1920* (Raleigh, NC: Wake County, 2008), 216, 224, 518, 525-526; Stenbuck, "Tucker Farm."

Tucker was also a director of the State National Bank of Raleigh. During the 1880s, the bank failed, resulting in an economic downturn impacting local businessmen. Tucker observed, “The trades, manufactures and business generally seemed dull and without energy... Business men and traders were somewhat disheartened.” A movement started to develop an organization of businessmen, the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Tucker was elected the first President.¹⁷

Not only talented in business, Tucker was also an excellent farmer. The Tucker Farm was part of the land that is now Meredith College, where Tucker raised Jersey cows, Oxforddown sheep, and cotton. His farm was known as one of the best in Wake County. He acquired thousands of acres of land in Wake and other counties, including the property that is Lake Crabtree County Park today.¹⁸

In the 1880s, bright leaf tobacco became a popular farm product in Wake County. The Civil War had changed the tobacco industry when soldiers passing through the region first tasted bright leaf tobacco. They preferred the North Carolina crop and soon the demand for bright leaf increased dramatically. Compared the darker, coarser variety, bright leaf tobacco is a delicate, sweet-scented, fine leaf. The bright leaf variation requires light, infertile, siliceous (gravelly and sandy) soil. Although most of Wake County did not have the right types of soils, parts of Wake County were excellent for tobacco cultivation. Lake Crabtree County Park has congaree silt loam soils, which are composed of sand, silt, and clay and are very well drained. The remains of an ordering pit and irrigation pond remain visible at Lake Crabtree County Park today. They are likely the remains of tobacco cultivation by tenant farmers, probably at the direction of a farm manager, and for the benefit of Tucker.¹⁹



“Soil Map, North Carolina, Wake County sheet,” c.1914
(Map Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives)

¹⁷ Ashe, “Rufus Sylvester Tucker,” 458-459; Johnson and Murray, *Wake: Capital County* 174.

¹⁸ Ashe, “Rufus Sylvester Tucker,” 458-459; Stenbuck, “Tucker Farm.”

¹⁹ Nannie May Tilley, *The Bright Tobacco Industry: 1860-1829* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 3-4, 386, 547; Johnson and Murray, *Wake, Volume II*, 129.



Remains of a tobacco ordering pit, likely an investment for Tucker in the 1880s
(Image Courtesy of Cheri Szczodronski, 2013)

Tucker's brother William died in 1882, and in 1883 Tucker closed his business on Fayetteville Street.¹⁸ Tucker died in 1894, and his son, William, and his wife continued to manage his estate. They oversaw the construction of the Tucker Building, a five-story office building on the corner of Fayetteville and Martin Streets. Unfortunately, William Tucker died before the building was completed, so his mother oversaw the final stages of construction and the building opened later that year.²⁰



Tucker Building c.1899
(Image Courtesy of the Raleigh City Museum)

²⁰ Ashe, "Rufus Sylvester Tucker," 460; Raleigh City Museum, "Tucker Building," *Historic Downtown Raleigh*, Google Map Tour (accessed May 17, 2013).

Florence Tucker was known for her business sense and good management of her late husband's estate, and in 1903, she sold the Lake Crabtree Park property to Charley Duke (1867-1935) and his brother James (1868-1954).²¹

Charles Lee Duke was born in 1867 to Robert Austin Duke (1839-?) and Margaret Crawford Duke (1840-1920). His brother, James Addison Duke, was born the following year, and his sister Mary in 1871. He was born in Alamance County but soon moved to Orange County.²²

He and his brother James were business partners, "C.L. Duke & Bro.". In 1900, they were operating a sawmill in Oak Grove with the help of five African American laborers. By 1910, James and his family had moved to a farm in Chapel Hill. Meanwhile, Charley had relocated to the Lake Crabtree County Park property in Cedar Fork, where he operated a sawmill with the help of one African American and five white workers. A sawdust pile is all that remains of the mill today. The sawmill closed around 1917, when Charley and James Duke sold the property to John Taylor. Taylor immediately sold the property back to the Dukes for an unexplained loss of \$400. The sale may have been some type of loan or mortgage, but it is unclear from the deed records. By 1920, Charley moved to a Raleigh boardinghouse and took a job as a salesman. He later moved back to Cedar Fork township and farmed until his death in 1935.²³



A sawdust pile near Lake Crabtree is the only remains of the Dukes' sawmill.
(Image Courtesy of Cheri Szczodronski, 2013)

²¹ Ashe, "Rufus Sylvester Tucker," 460-461; "Florence Tucker to C.L. Duke and J.A. Duke," March 3, 1903, Book 173, Pages 537-539, Wake County Register of Deeds.

²² United States Census Bureau, "Charley Duke" and "James Duke," *1880 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 1, 2013.)

²³ Johnson and Murray, *Wake: Capital County*, 607; US Census Bureau, "Charlie L. Duke" and "James W. Duke," *1900 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 1, 2013); US Census Bureau, "Charlie L Duke" and Adson J Duke," *1910 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 1,

It is unclear how the property was used after the Dukes' sawmill until it was sold again in 1967. It appears that in 1928, a portion of the land, including the acreage to become Lake Crabtree County Park, was put in the control of a trustee to be used as collateral in a business deal with M.C. Jones and J.P. Jones. A few months before his death in 1935, having defaulted on this deal, Duke's land was sold at auction to J.P. Jones. In 1967, Clyde Lewis Duke, Charley Duke's grand-nephew, sold the same parcels of land again, but it is unclear how the property changed hands from Jones to Duke. It is possible that Clyde Lewis Duke paid Charley Duke's debts so that J.P. Jones turned the property over to him. However, this is speculation and the deed records for any such transaction have not been located.²⁴

It is probable that tobacco farming continued through Charley Duke's ownership and afterward. Aerial photos show the tenant house and outbuildings are present in 1938, and a pond appears in the 1959 photo. It is possible this pond is either an irrigation pond or a tobacco float bed, which became a popular method of seeding tobacco in the mid to late twentieth century.²⁵

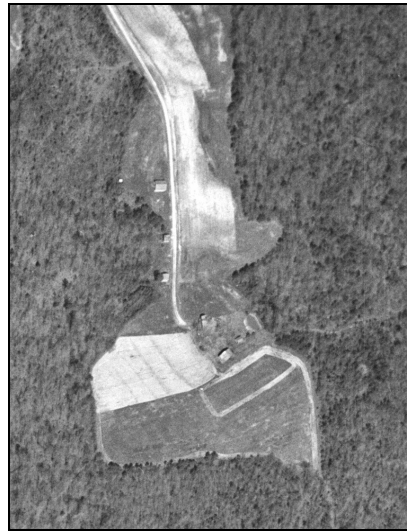
Business partners E.N. Richards and Raymond A. Bryan, Jr. bought the property from Clyde Lewis Duke in 1967, and they immediately sold it to the City of Raleigh, City of Durham, County of Wake, and County of Durham as part of the Raleigh-Durham International Airport property. During this time, all remaining structures were demolished.²⁶

2013); "C.L. Duke and J.A. Duke to John M. Taylor," Book 307, Page 578, January 19, 1917, Wake County Register of Deeds; "John M. Taylor and wife, Ema, to C.L. Duke and J.A. Duke, co-partners," Book 309, Page 299, February 12, 1917, Wake County Register of Deeds; US Census Bureau, "Charles L Duke" and "JA Duke," *1920 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 1, 2013); US Census Bureau, "Charles L Duke," *1930 United States Federal Census*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 1, 2013); Ancestry.com, "Charlie Lee Duke," *North Carolina Death Certificates, 1909-1975*, www.ancestry.com (accessed April 1, 2013).

²⁴ "C.L. Duke to D.W. Sorrell, Trustee," Book 540, Page 583, March 28, 1928, Wake County Register of Deeds; "D.W. Sorrell, Trustee, to J.P. Jones," Book 700, Page 406, July 23, 1935, Wake County Register of Deeds; "Clyde Lewis Duke to E.N. Richards and R.A. Bryan, Jr.," Book 1768, Page 689, June 12, 1967, Wake County Register of Deeds; Edward W. Clarke, phone interview by Cheri Szcodronski, June 3, 2013. Note: Interviews by the author with surviving relatives of Clyde Lewis Duke revealed no information about how he obtained the property or his genealogy.

²⁵ UNC University Libraries, Geographic Information Systems Services, *USDA Historical Aerial Photos*, "Wake County Map BOP_14_163 (1938)" and "Wake County Map 7W_188 (1959)," <http://www.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/wake.html> (accessed June 24, 2013); Jeffrey A. Duvall, "Burley Paid the Bills," Ph.D. Thesis, Purdue University, 2007.

²⁶ "R.A. Bryan, Jr. et al to City of Raleigh et al," Book 1771, Page 404, June 19, 1967, Wake County Register of Deeds, Raleigh, NC; UNC University Libraries, Geographic Information Systems Services, *USDA Historical Aerial Photos*, "Wake County Map 2MM_136 (1971)," <http://www.lib.unc.edu/reference/gis/USDA/wake.html> (accessed June 24, 2013).



Images: USDA Historical Aerial Photos

Left: A 1938 photo shows the house and outbuildings but no pond

Middle: A 1959 photos shows the house, outbuildings, and pond

Right: A 1971 photo shows all buildings removed from the property

The 1980 Wake County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan was the first developed to guide the efforts of the department. It formally established the County's role in providing parks and recreation for the citizens of Wake County, and as a result ensured adequate financial resources would be dedicated to that purpose. The plan also divided the county into quadrants with the goal of establishing a park in each quadrant, which resulted in the addition of Lake Crabtree County Park.²⁷

In 1985, as a result of the master plan, the first Wake County bonds were issued in the amount of \$4.0 million, in part to fund the development of Lake Crabtree County Park. In 1989, to help control flooding, Crabtree Creek was dammed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a branch of the US Department of Agriculture tasked with watershed management and flood mitigation. The dam formed a 520-acre reservoir, Lake Crabtree. Lake Crabtree County Park is 215 acres of land leased from the Raleigh-Durham Airport to offer hiking, biking, and lake recreation. The park features a three-story observation tower, popular with birders, as well as boat rentals and boat launch, picnic facilities, and sixteen miles of hiking and mountain biking trails. In addition to self-guided recreation activities, park staff offer public programs in environmental education, sailing lessons, special events, and scouting service projects.²⁸

²⁷ Bucher, Willis, and Ratliff Corporation, *Final Report: Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan*, February 2008, 1-1 - 1-3.

²⁸ Bucher, Willis, and Ratliff Corporation, *Final Report*, 1-3; Wake County, "Lake Crabtree," www.wake.gov/parks/lakecrabtree/Pages/default.aspx (accessed June 24, 2013).

Further Research

Although this report is comprehensive in nature, there are still a number of unanswered questions about the history of Lake Crabtree County Park and its inhabitants. While the information contained here is adequate to expand the cultural interpretation at the park, answering the questions posed in this section could further enrich these storylines.

The earliest information about the park dates to the early 1800s and Williamson Page. This time period generally has few and incomplete documentary records, but additional research may provide more information about this family, where they came from, and how they obtained the property. The information about their life on their second farm is fairly well-known, since the property is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. However, the story of their previous farm at Lake Crabtree is much less understood. Questions still remain about what they grew, what structures were on the land when they bought it, and what structures they built themselves.

The story of Asa Blake is documented fairly well, although additional research on his children's lives may reveal a clearer picture of what occurred on the property following his wife Elizabeth's death. It is apparent that their son Dempsey remained on the farm for many years, but it is unclear who else lived or worked there, or what they were producing. Additional research may also reveal much about the lives of the enslaved workers, both before and after emancipation.

Rufus Tucker was a wealthy and influential member of Raleigh society, so his life is well-documented. Still, additional research may uncover his use for the Lake Crabtree property and the names of those who worked the land on his behalf.

Of all the owners of the land, Charley Duke is the greatest mystery. Although it is apparent that he and his brother James operated a sawmill on the property, many questions still remain about their business, their relationship to the famous tobacco family of Durham County, their use of the Lake Crabtree property, and the chain of title from Charley Duke to Clyde Duke.

An oral history project might uncover more information about the lives of the inhabitants on the Lake Crabtree land, as well as giving the public a sense of ownership over this project and their community park. Interviews could include not only the property described in this report, but also the homestead located at the front entrance of the park and those now beneath Lake Crabtree itself. Returning these stories to the community could build a strong relationship between the park, the surrounding neighborhoods, and those displaced by the dam's construction.

In addition to research on the history of the property, archaeological research would be a valuable tool for uncovering more of the Lake Crabtree story. Using the aerial maps as a guide, it may be possible to discover more of the remains of the original structures, and possibly also artifacts useful for public interpretation. It is speculation that the house foundation still visible at the park today was once a tenant house, based on the likelihood that the Blakes lived in a typical two-story I-house in the mid-1800s. However, it is possible that they lived in an earlier, smaller house form, and that this house remained through the Blakes' ownership and during the spotty residency of later owners and tenants.

It is also possible there was a cemetery on the property, and quite probably a slave cemetery since the Pages and Blakes were both slaveowners. These cemeteries would be difficult to locate without some direction from documentary evidence, however it would certainly be worthwhile to explore these ideas.

This report serves as a foundation of research for future interpretation of cultural resources at Lake Crabtree County Park. However, historical research is an ongoing process, and additional research should be completed and added to this report in the future.

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