



Waxhaw Presbyterian Church

John Lawson (1674–1711), Surveyor-General of North Carolina, began a trip through South Carolina and North Carolina about 1700. During his trip he passed through or near where Union County now is, visiting the Waxhaw Indians. Lawson described the land of the Waxhaws as being so fertile “that no labor of man in one or two ages could make it poor.” In 1741, an epidemic of smallpox seriously diminished the tribe, with most of the survivors leaving to join other tribes. As a result, land agents began advertising for colonists to settle the vast area of fertile land.

Around 1750, settlers began arriving in the Waxhaws from Pennsylvania as well as Germany, England, Wales, and Scotland. The land was ideally suited for farming, and new communities began to grow and prosper.

Originally known as ‘the Waxhaw Settlement,’ the region encompassed an area just south of Charlotte, North Carolina, to Lancaster, South Carolina, and from the Catawba River in the west to Monroe, North Carolina, in the east. The area was named for its first inhabitants, the ‘Waxhaw Indians’. The Waxhaws straddled what would become the two Carolinas, but at the time of Andrew Pickens' move, the state line had not been set.

Having been born in 1739, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, **General Andrew Pickens** was a mere lad when his family arrived at the Waxhaw Settlement in Lancaster County, South Carolina. The record shows that six or seven families settled there early in 1751. More families joined them in 1752. Among the names that figured prominently in the early history of that community are those of Barnett, Caldwell, Crawford, Crockett, Latta, Neely, Pickens, Massey, McElhenny, Miller, Thompson, and White.

They were sparsely settled over a considerable area, but must have had quite early some common place for burial. The Waxhaw graveyard is almost certainly older than the first organized church, the **Waxhaw Presbyterian Church**. “The original North Carolina colonial plat documents John Barnet's 599 acres surveyed in 1754. In 1757, Barnet deeded the land to Robert Miller, minister of Waxhaw Church, and his wife, Jean Pickens. On March 9, 1758, Miller conveyed from his 599 acre holdings the 4½ acres tract of land on which the Presbyterian Meeting House stood to the trustees of the Congregation of the Waxhaws ‘for the good will and affection ... and every of their greater advantages and convenience in attending upon divine worship at all stated or occasional times ... conform[able] to the practice of the Church of Scotland.’ The original Anson County, North Carolina, deed was signed by [Captain] Andrew Pickens as one of the witnesses (*filed as P – B John Barnet – 1754*). While not the first church in the state, the Waxhaw Church is the cradle of Presbyterianism in the Piedmont section of the Carolinas and is reputed to be the oldest Presbyterian Church in upper South Carolina, having a meeting house as early as 1755. The diary of an itinerant preacher recorded that date, and then Thomas Sumter's correspondence later documented that in 1781 the British army burned the original building.” (SCGenWeb/WaxhawPresbyterianChurch)