

The Story of Lewis Case Laugenour and His House

Introduction

- Most of the information about the life of Lewis Laugenour has been taken from the Genealogical Record of the Lachenauer Family, written in 1908 by Philip Fletcher Laugenour and Andrew Dudley Laugenour, updated in 1989-90 by Corinne Brown with extensive research by Jewell, Philip, and Libby Brown.
- Philip F. Laugenour (1852-1916) was a dentist and local historian of some note in Statesville, NC. His brother, Andrew Dudley Laugenour (1872-?), was a dentist and lived in Dallas, Texas.
- We owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Philip Brown of Troutman, NC, and their daughter, Libby, who lives in Lewisville, for providing this history of the Laugenours. Grace Conrad and I went up to visit the Browns, Philip and Jewell, on Thursday, March 2, 2000, at their lovely home, and spent many hours talking with them and looking through family pictures and documents. They went the extra mile, and obtained the original photographs of Lewis Laugenour, the house, and Lewis's parents from a cousin, Margaret Neal, who "lives out east". They made wonderful enlargements of the photos and donated them to the Historical Society. Plus, they let us borrow many documents and original photos to make our own copies for our files. They have been so kind and generous in sharing their family records with us, so we can understand more fully our town's heritage.
- We are equally indebted to Ruth Reynolds Hartle, who knew of the Browns and whose letter requesting information back in the early 1990's provided the connection we needed to find this history. Before that time, all we knew were stories passed by word of mouth, and did not even know what Lewis's middle name was!

The Name

- The last name, originally spelled "Lachenauer", was pronounced in the German way: LAH-AH-KEN-OUR.
- Sometime after the family came to North Carolina, the spelling changed. Different branches of the family have different variations of the spelling. Lewis's family spelled it LAUGENOUR.
- The meaning of the name in German was "smiling or laughing meadow". In a broader sense, the meaning would be "inhabitants of the beautiful or lovely valley or meadow", which probably referred to the Rhine River valley in the southwestern part of Germany from where the family originally came.
- And aren't we glad he called the town after his first name, not his last!

How the Laugenours Came to North Carolina

- John George Lachenauer, a railsmith by trade, was born in Durlach, a town in the Grand Duchy of Baden, in Germany. On February 1, 1751, he married Sophia Solome Kastner (1734-1816).
- In 1753, with his wife Solome, and one son, Jacob Friedrich, they traveled to the British Colonies in America and, joining thirty other German families, settled in Broad Bay, Maine.
- In 1757, John George drowned in a river trying to ford it in a wagon or possibly a boat.
- He left a wife and three children: Jacob Friedrich, Augustina, and Georg Friedrich.
- On being left a widow, Sophia Solome married a second time to John Fredric Kunzel. Solome had four other children with her second husband.
- Being unsatisfied with their treatment in Broad Bay and having some difficulty with the title to their lands, several of the families, including Solome and John Kunzel, Jacob Frederic and George Frederic Lachenauer, with their half brothers and sisters, came south to the Wachovia Tract in North Carolina in 1770. Solome's daughter, Augustina, had died before this time.
- They had established a relationship with Rev. George Soelle, a Moravian minister. The Lauchenauer family was not Moravian, but they were Protestant. It was at the Rev. Soelle's suggestion that the families moved to Wachovia.
- They came by boat, got shipwrecked in Virginia, and finally arrived in North Carolina via Wilmington, many of them sick and weary.
- They were among the first families to establish the new settlement, Friedland, or "Land of Peace", in 1771, on the southeast corner of the Wachovia Tract.

Life in Friedland

- Georg Friedrich Lachenauer (1756-1831), the younger son of John Georg, was born in Broad Bay, Maine.
- He married Christena Hoens, later Hanes, (1756-1818), in 1781. Christena was born in York, Pennsylvania. Her family had come to North Carolina in 1774 and settled in Friedberg. She was the mother of all his children, even though he married again, after Christena's death.
- George Friedrich was well off for his time, owning lands and fine horses.
- He had 10 children.
- His ninth child was Philip Laugenour (1796-1869).
- Philip married Phebe Davis (1801-1865) on February 25, 1823.
- Philip was the only son of George Frederich Lagenauer who lived to raise a family.

- He owned a plantation in Friedland. He lived and raised his family there until 1857, when he sold it and moved to Yadkin County. There, he lived on a plantation, later owned by J.K. Turner, on the Yadkin River about two miles above the Shallow Ford. It had been owned by Philip's son, George, who died in 1855.
- Philip was a well-to-do farmer. He kept many fine horses, "in which he took much interest."
- In stature he was "more tall than stout". His wife was "low, heavy, round, full, and fleshy". Many of his children and grand children carried his wife's traits.
- Phebe Davis, whose mother died at her birth, was adopted and raised by Samuel and Nancy Davis.

Lewis Laugenour—Early Days

- Lewis Case Laugenour was the third child and the third son of Philip and Phebe Laugenour. He was born in Friedland on May 12, 1826.
- Lewis worked for a time as a young man, for John Philip Nissen, who owned a wagon manufacturing company, one of the first of its kind in North Carolina.
- In the fall of 1849, young Lewis, and two of his brothers—John and George—left to join another brother, Thomas, and traveled west to Missouri. On their way, they caught "gold rush fever" and decided to seek their fortune in California instead.
- They started out from Missouri early in 1850, with a Nissen wagon from North Carolina and "five yoke of oxen". They joined a wagon train and took six months to get to California. They had many adventures, dealing with dangers of hostile Indians and robbers, and lack of water, along the way. The trip was especially hard on the oxen. All of them died, but one! So the four brothers had to walk the last 300 miles to their destination with their packs on their backs! They arrived in Hangtown, now Placerville, California, "on the south fork of the American River, September 7, 1850".
- The brothers eventually set up a store at Indian Diggins, or "Yankee Jim's" in Shirt Tail Canyon, and did a good business with the miners.
- In 1857, Lewis returned to North Carolina with his part of the gain, \$10,000, a small fortune in those times.
- His brothers, John and Thomas, remained in California. Lewis's brother, George, had returned to North Carolina in 1851 after his health failed.
- Both Philip and Phebe Laugenour died in Yadkin County and were buried at New Friendship Baptist Church, "five miles southeast from Salem".

Lewis Laugenour and Lewisville

- In 1857, Lewis began building a "fine residence" on the Great Wagon Road and located in what is now central Lewisville town. Historians now believe that the land he built on was Nissen land, acquired from his future in-laws.

- The house, built in the Greek Revival style, all of brick, with 14 inch outside walls, and 12 inch inner walls, was probably finished in 1860. The chimney on the west side bears the date “1860”.
- Lewis married Mary Elizabeth “Bettie” Nissen (b. April 4, 1843; d. April 16, 1933) on April 26, probably in 1860 also. Local legend has it that he “rocked her in the cradle” before he left for California, and promised he would come back and marry her. When he worked for Mr. Nissen, he would sometimes be asked to babysit the children, including Mary Elizabeth, which was the inspiration for the legend.
- On their wedding day, Lewis was soon to be 34 and Bettie had just turned 17.
- Bettie was the daughter of John Philip and Mary Elizabeth Vawters Nissen. She was born on April 4, 1843, and died on April 16, 1933.
- Lewis was so pleased with his house, and its location that he wanted to start a town. He took \$2,800 of his money and bought 750 acres of land from John J. Conrad, son of John Jacob “River John” Conrad. The deed is dated November 1, 1860. Lewis spread the word that he would sell land cheaply to anyone who would come out to Lewisville, settle, and raise corn and tobacco.
- Some of the first settlers in Lewisville were Bill Stipes, Sam Jenkins, and Isaiah Bodenhamer.
- During the Civil War, Lewis was a Justice of the Peace, which exempted him from service in the army. However, he did get drafted into the Home Guard and served on the coast of North Carolina for a few months.
- According to Civil War Records, Lewis Case Laugenour signed up for and served in the 71st Regiment from Forsyth County on April 15, 1862 as a 2nd Lieutenant.
- The Lewisville Baptist, Methodist, and New Hope AME Zion Churches were established on land that was Lewis Laugenour’s. He also made available the land for the Lewisville Academy, established in 1901, the first high school in Forsyth County.
- The earliest use of the name “Lewisville” that has been found so far, occurs on a deed, dated November 4, 1859. This deed establishes the sale of a tract of land “in the Town of Lewisville” by L.C. Laugenour to an S.D. Davis for the sum of \$2.00.
- Lewis was well-to-do, and not much is known about any vocation that he may have had. Some local historians maintain that he owned a sawmill in Lewisville, that used to stand on the land where the Town Square is now located. When he sold the land for the Baptist and Methodist churches, local historians say that he had the lumber sawn to erect the buildings free of charge.
- Lewis Laugenour is described by his nephew, Philip Fletcher Laugenour, who authored the family history, and knew Lewis personally, having spent many hours listening to his Uncle Lewis’s stories. In 1885, Philip and Lewis spent a day visiting graveyards in the area, which helped Philip write the family history.
- Lewis was about 5 ft., 6 in. tall and weighed 300 lbs.
- Philip says he was “a prominent, influential, and leading citizen of his community”. He was known for his hospitality, and never tired of entertaining guests and friends at his spacious home. Although he and Bettie never had children, “his kind heartedness

and interest in children made many of them feel that he was their warm-hearted friend.” “He was distinguished for his large heart and kindness to the poor for whom he did many kind acts.” Though not a member, he gave generously to the Lewisville Baptist Church and other churches in the area. Lewis’s obituary says that he had connections with the Missionary Baptist Church.

The Death of Lewis Laugenour

- Philip describes his uncle’s death as “sudden”.
- On Friday, April 28, 1893, being in apparent good health, he had eaten a hearty breakfast. He was “lively and cheerful, conversing with friends and relatives.” He had gone to the front door to speak to someone about some business.
- He complained of feeling tired or “indisposed”, “passed back into his room, fell on his bedside where he expired in a few moments.”
- He was 66 years old.
- His obituary, which appeared in the Union Republic, May 4, 1893, describes him as having “an extended acquaintance was well and favorably known as a kind neighbor and friend and a good citizen”.
- His funeral took place at the Lewisville Baptist Church on Sunday, April 30, 1893, where he was buried. According to the obituary, “A large concourse of people attended the funeral services at Lewisville last Sunday”.
- Presiding at the funeral were Elder Carraway of the Methodist Church and Rev. S.A. Conrad of the Baptist Church.

Lewis Laugenour’s House

- The house is of the Greek Revival style of architecture, popular in those times. It is designated as a Forsyth County historic landmark, and is one of the best examples of this type of architecture in the county.
- The original house had a double porch in the front, with white lattice work.
- There were 10 rooms: 6 bedrooms, a living room, sitting room, and a kitchen. There were originally no bathrooms or closets.
- The brick house features outer walls 14 inches thick and inner walls 12 inches thick.
- In 1921, Mr. C.O. Sprinkle added a wraparound porch to the house. He was in a wheel chair in his later years and liked to wheel around on the porch and talk to his neighbors.
- A door was cut between the dining room and the sitting room around 1945.
- A bath was added to the rear of the house around 1950.
- The house sat on one acre of land and was surrounded by a hedge, many flower gardens and large shade trees.
- A two story frame house was located to the rear of the home. This was used by Mr. Laugenour while he waited for the house to be finished. It was torn down in

- approximately 1960. One of the mantle pieces from this house is currently in the home of Mr. Charles S. Hauser, grandson of C.O. Sprinkle.
- There was a large log barn located where the library is now.
 - A well house was located in back of the house and a granary was to the right of the house. The granary was used as a garage by the Sprinkles, when they lived in the house.

Ownership of the House

- The house was sold by Mrs. Laugenour to D.P. Mast in 1905.
- It was bought in 1914 by Charles Oliver (C.O.) Sprinkle who owned the Lewisville Roller Mill.
- One of the daughters of C.O. Sprinkle, Nell, ran the home as a boarding house for teachers who taught at the Lewisville School, after it was rebuilt in 1948.
- In 1968 or 1969, after the death of Nell Sprinkle, the house was sold to Mr. C.D. Holbrook. He converted the house to 4 apartments, 2 upstairs and 2 downstairs. He rented these out. He also enclosed the back porch area.
- In 1974, the house was purchased by Lanier Williams Realty, with Ferrell Realty. The outbuildings were torn down in 1975 to make way for a shopping center. About 1977, the wrap around porch was removed, as it had become a hangout for loiterers, and was not deemed architecturally consistent with the Greek Revival design of the house.
- Since 1974, the house has been the location of several retail establishments, offering many items, including crafts, antiques, women's wear, pets, and videos. It has been occupied by offices for many things, including a lawyer, a realty company, and a ski supply company.
- On September 1, 1992, the house was rented to American Image, a company that produces its photography magazine, Today's Photography International, from this location. At that time, considerable renovations were done to the house, including the addition of central heat and air. The house was remodeled to restore the inside more to its original configuration.
- In November of 1994, the Lewisville Historical Society erected an historic marker in front of the house.

Information about the history of the house was provided by Fred Moser, Charles and Darriell Hauser, J. Lanier Williams, Vonda Blackburn, and Mrs. Lela F. Burke.

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March 2000
Updated 5/9/2016
Lewisville Historical Society
Lewisville, NC