

Preface to the First Edition

AMONG NORTH CAROLINA'S ONE HUNDRED COUNTIES, Durham is a Johnny-come-lately. Established in 1881, it takes its name from the City of Durham, which became the county seat. Over the century since the county's birth, during which the town repeatedly outgrew its original boundaries and asserted a robust and headstrong individuality, the young county has taken on its own character and almost obliterated the memory of its long minority as a part of the large and venerable old Orange County.

From its own establishment in the mid-eighteenth century, the County of Orange played an important role in the shaping and working out of the state's destiny. A forcing ground for such leaders as Archibald D. Murphey, Willie P. Mangum, William A. Graham, Josiah Turner, Jr., and Thomas Ruffin in its political heyday, the county produced a different kind of talent in the New South era. The new leaders—Robert F. Morris, John Ruffin Green, William T. Blackwell, Julian S. Carr, Washington Duke and his sons James, Benjamin, and Brodie, Richard H. Wright, George Watts, and Eugene Morehead—created in the eastern half of the almost entirely agricultural county a hustling tobacco industry with all its satellite trades. Soon secure in its own wealth and identity, with peculiar needs and aspirations, eastern Orange wrested autonomy from the legislature and in 1881 began an independent life under its own name—Durham County.

A very long chronicle of events preceded that independence, however, and belongs to the full story of Durham County. The history recounted in this volume begins, therefore, with the land and its first inhabitants, the Native Americans, and runs through the decades of early exploration and settlement into the vigorous antebellum period. It records the ending of that civilization in the Civil War and the evolution of a way of life based on a new economy that precipitated the change of a rural and agricultural society into an urban and industrial one. The history ends with the celebration of the county centennial in 1981. Two earlier

histories—Hiram Paul's *History of Durham* (1883) and William K. Boyd's *Story of Durham* (1925)—centered on the town of Durham. *Durham County* is the first history of the whole county. It therefore offers much new material, based heavily on primary sources. Besides Paul's and Boyd's histories and many recent monographs on aspects of the county's social and political history, it also draws upon the work of dozens of Durhamites who have taken the trouble to gather and record historical facts about their families, churches, schools, organizations, and communities. Newspapers from 1820 to the present have provided contemporary windows through which to view the everyday life of the county. For recent times, personal memoirs, interviews, and oral histories have augmented the chronicle of facts. Details of all these source materials may be found in the notes and bibliography.

The aim of this history is comprehensive, but a single volume cannot possibly record every person, event, date, and name found in a county's annals. Despite its length, therefore, the present volume comprises only a selection from a much larger array of facts. Responsibility for what has been included must rest in part with the author, but frequently the availability or lack of materials rather than actual choice has determined the contents. Few families saved their papers and donated them to a public repository; few early churches documented their origins in written histories; few civic and social organizations left formal archives. Much of the county's earliest history is to be found only in public records: wills and estates, deeds, marriage bonds, tax lists, census records, and court and legislative papers. Even the public records are not complete. The surviving Durham Council minutes lack some early years and certain municipal records either did not survive or were never generated in the first place. Early Orange County deeds and county court minutes are also missing. This history is shaped, therefore, by the public documents that chanced to survive and by private papers in public repositories.

The general contours of one county history are much like another's; only in their particularities do they differ. What distinguishes one from another is the unique and fortuitous conjunction of time, place, and persons. Not every North Carolina town has had its Southern Conservatory or Trinity College, and though many have had tobacco and cotton mills, only one had simultaneously the Dukes and Julian Carr. Thus in tracing the development of Durham County, even while outlining the common pattern and placing it in a larger context, I have tried to highlight the exceptional detail, the departure from the typical that is the essence of the place. In treating the most recent decades, many of whose players are still alive, I have omitted much civic history because distance has not yet supplied the proper perspective from which to view it; time has not yet sifted the lasting from the ephemeral, the important from the trivial.

The impetus for this county history came entirely from the Historic Preservation Society of Durham. Without the society's commitment to the project, propelled in the undertaking by Margaret Haywood, Durham County would still lack a written history. Once the project was under way, both the city and county of Durham also contributed generous support.

NOW SOME PERSONAL NOTES. In writing the history I have benefited from the resources of several local institutions and the expert and gracious assistance of their staffs: the North Carolina Archives in Raleigh; the North Carolina Collection and the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the Manuscript, Reference, and Newspaper Departments as well as the general collection of the William R. Perkins Library of Duke University; and the North Carolina Room of the Durham County Library. Without them the project would have been impossible. I have also had the help of dozens of generous and patient individuals. Holding them all blameless for whatever errors this history may contain, I must express my thanks to all on whom I called for help. A few consistently encouraged me by their interest and voluntary involvement; they suggested sources of information, supplied new materials, obtained elusive facts, and generally repaired my ignorance. I am especially indebted to the late Mattie Russell, who strongly supported the project and blindly affirmed her faith in my attempting it; to the late Mildred Mangum Harris for her intimate knowledge of northern Durham County and identification of its material past; to Curtis Booker, who generously shared his encyclopedic knowledge and family papers concerning southern Durham County; to Rudolph and Edna Baker, who educated me in the families and communities of Oak Grove Township; to Mayme Harris Perry for the many oral histories she collected on my behalf and for acquainting me with Hayti's landmarks; to George and Mary Pyne, sources of all kinds of wisdom about the city and its past; to Dorothy Newsom Rankin for valuable information of many sorts; to Duncan Heron for sharing his geological expertise; to Marian O'Keefe for her help in rounding up photographs; to Anne Berkley of Durham County Library for all kinds of favors; to William E. King, who fostered this undertaking as both Duke University Archivist and head of the publications committee of the Historic Preservation Society; to William R. Erwin, Jr., who kept an eagle eye out for relevant new source materials and anything I might have overlooked in the extensive Duke University Manuscript Department collections; to Robert F. Durden and Carl L. Anderson, whose painstaking reading of the entire manuscript added immeasurably to its accuracy and readability. All of them have my profound gratitude.

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In accepting the task of writing a county history I had rather special motivation. When I first lived in Durham, I longed to know the past of the place I was discovering. Those I questioned assured me that Durham had no history before the Civil War. Graveyards on vacant lots, not completely overgrown, and here and there an antebellum farmhouse in the landscape told me otherwise. Paul's and Boyd's histories only whetted my appetite. My compelling desire to know the history of Durham, city and county, must be my excuse for saying "yes" when asked to do the job.

I offer the result diffidently, for I am keenly aware of its deficiencies and my own audacity as a native of neither Durham nor the South. Perhaps the love I have for both will excuse my presumption. If further justification be needed, let it be the conviction I share with Shirley Abbott, who so eloquently voiced it in *Womenfolks*, that "the past matters, that history weighs on us and refuses to be forgotten by us, and that the worst poverty women—or men—can suffer is to be bereft of their past."