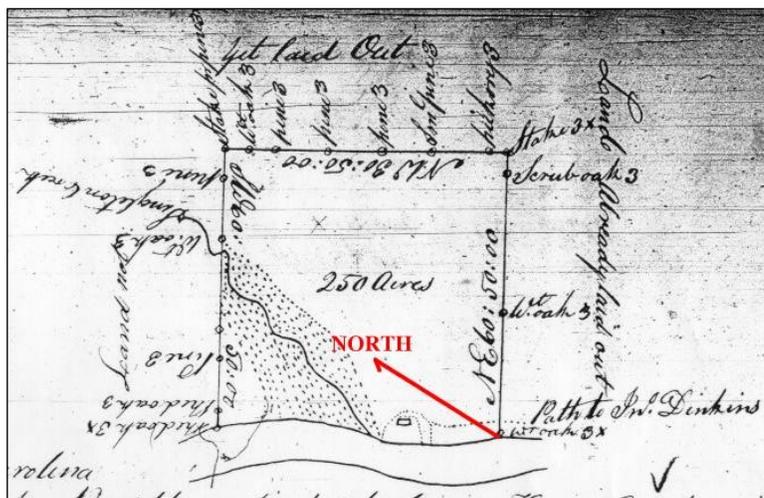


Benjamin Duke, Wateree River, Camden District, SC

Benjamin Duke was the first settler with the Duke surname to appear in the colonial records for the South Carolina region that became known as the Camden District. The land Benjamin Duke chose for his grant was located in the northwest corner of Kershaw County about twenty-five miles upriver from present-day town of Camden, SC. On 02MAY1749, Benjamin petitioned the South Carolina Colony Council for a tract of two hundred and fifty acres on the north side of the Wateree River.¹

From his petition we know that this was his first request for a land grant in South Carolina, and that he was married with at least three children. At fifty acres a head and five heads, Benjamin petitioned for the maximum number of acres his family was allowed with a headright land grant.

A warrant of survey was issued by George Hunter Esqr. on 04MAY1749, and the survey for his grant was certified by Jno. Pearson on 10OCT1749.²



The land grant was recorded on 15MAY1751.³ It was located on the northeast bank of the Wateree, or Catawba River, at the mouth of Singleton Creek. The plat depicts a building, perhaps a fence or clearing, and a path that goes downstream to a neighbor, Jno. Dinkins. This indicates that the site was inhabited prior to the time of the survey, perhaps for several years, if not by the Dukes, then by some earlier settler. John Dinkins' warrant of survey for 300 acres was issued 06MAR1749 and the survey was certified 13DEC1750; but he abandoned his land before getting a grant. On 04FEB1752, William Stewart, with a wife and seven children, petitioned for the three hundred acres due John Dinkins, plus an additional one hundred and fifty acres. William Stewart was issued a grant 12MAR1752.⁴ The Council record mentions an affidavit from John Dinkins, signed 10FEB1752, so the man was still living at that time.⁵

Another neighbor of the Duke family might have been James Lynah who, on 04JUN1759, was granted one headright or fifty acres of bounty [free] land on Singleton Creek northwest of Benjamin. The warrant of survey for Lynah's grant was issued 06APR1756, the same day he petitioned for it, and the survey was recorded by John Wade on 25DEC1756. The plat indicates the "... tract hath no good plantable lands thereon, but hath a gristmill on the same..."⁶ A grist mill, completed in seven months,

1 Holcomb, Brent H.; *Petitions for Land From South Carolina Journals, Volume II:1748-1752*, SMAR, Columbia, SC, 1996, page 41.

2 *SC Colonial Plats*, Volume 5, Page 27, Item 1, 10OCT1749

3 *SC Colonial Grants*, Volume 4, Page 367, Item 1, 15MAY1751

4 Holcomb, Brent H.; *Petitions for Land From South Carolina Journals, Volume III:1752-1753*, SMAR, Columbia, SC, 1996, page 5.

5 Holcomb, Brent H.; *Petitions for Land From South Carolina Journals, Volume III:1752-1753*, SMAR, Columbia, SC, 1996, page 19.

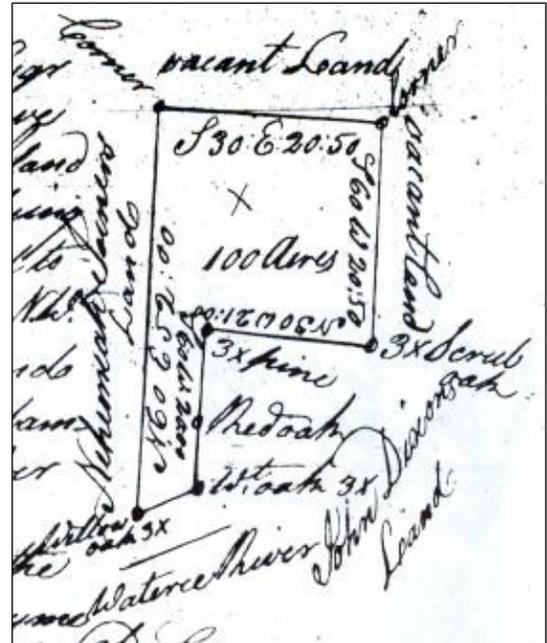
6 *SC Colonial Grants*, Volume 6, Page 258, Item 3, 25DEC1756

seems ambitious for a single man, poor enough to qualify for bounty land. The Lynah land was sold by Anthony Gillmore to Robert Harrison, mariner, both of Charleston on 27AUG1767.⁷ On 02FEB1770, Robert Harrison of Charlestown, Berkley County, SC sold the Lynah land to Benjamin Farar of St. Mathews Parish. The latter deed was recorded 26MAR1778.⁸

On 09MAY1778, John Chesnut sold the Benjamin Duke land to James Perry. The James Perry deed was recorded circa 22APR1789.⁹ The lease and release land conveyance indicates Benjamin's wife was named Mary. Chesnut obtained the land from Nehemiah Joiner, Junior who, in turn, had received it from Robert Humpheries. Unfortunately, the dates and details for the latter two transactions were not noted, nor were they found in the colonial records.

Nehemiah Joiner is listed as a bounding neighbor on a one hundred acre land grant to John Dixon. The precept was dated 03OCT1769 and the grant was registered 15JAN1770. This tract of land is situated on the northeast bank of the Wateree River and the starting point at the river, the surveyed angle and length of the northwest side of the Dixon tract is identical to that of the southeast side of the Benjamin Duke land.¹⁰ It is likely that Joiner owned the Duke land by 1770.

Robert Humphries was in the area as early as 10NOV1752 when he witnessed the lease and release land conveyance of John Todd, Junior to William Harrison.¹¹ Additional witnesses were Richard and Moses Kirkland. Robert Humphreys, along with Richard and Joseph Kirkland, also witnessed the 23-24SEP1753 lease and release of William Harrison and wife Ann [alternately identified as Nancy] to John Dukes, a tract of one hundred and fifty acres.¹² This tract of land was situated about five miles northwest of Benjamin Duke's land and on the same side of the Wateree River . Robert Humpheries is the only commonality found in the records between Benjamin Duke and John Duke. Only two other South Carolina records concerning Humpheries have been found. In January 1769, R. Humpherys surveyed a two hundred acre land grant for Frances Phillips on Beaver Dam Branch.¹³ In 1776, a Robert Humphreys enlisted in the Third Continental Regiment from South Carolina.¹⁴



7 Langley, Clara A.; *South Carolina Deed Abstracts 1719-1772, Volume III*, Southern Historical Press, 1984, page 362 [H-3, page 48]

8 Holcomb, Brent H.; *South Carolina Deed Abstracts 1773-1778*, page 225 [W-4, page 313-315]

9 *Lancaster Co., SC Deed Book B*, page 71 [John Chesnut to James Perry, 250 A., May 9, 1778]

10 *SC Colonial Plats*, Volume 11, page 273, Item 1

11 Clara A. Langley, *South Carolina Deed Abstracts 1719-1772*, Volume II, Southern Historical Press, 1984, page 320 [O-O, page 299]

12 *Charleston Deeds*, Volume 3E, pages 1-6 [Harrison to Duke]

13 *SC Colonial Plats*, Volume 11, page 40, Item 2

14 Moss, Bobby Gilmer: *Roster of South Carolina Patriots in the American Revolution*, Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore, MD, 1983

The records don't tell us the fate of Benjamin Duke on the Wateree River. The fifteen years from 1750 to 1765 were difficult for the back country pioneers in the South Carolina Colony. The multitude of people moving into the region included many outlaws who took advantage of the lack of local civil authority. The great and rapid increase in population and their attitudes caused the already strained relationship with the western Indians to worsen, and around 1760 a few of the Indian raids actually reached the Wateree River watershed. Outlaws and Indians weren't the only hardships the pioneers endured. On 15SEP1752, a large hurricane and devastating flood struck Charleston causing much damage.¹⁵ Doubtless, the storm caused great flooding further inland and destroyed many riverbank homesteads. Benjamin's neighbor, John Dinkins, abandoned his claim soon after it was surveyed. Likewise, after 10NOV1752, William Harrison moved away from his grant on the banks of the Wateree to higher ground on Dutchman's Creek.¹⁶ For unknown reasons, moved or deceased, Benjamin Duke was absent from the Camden District by 1770.

15 Ramsay, David, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, reprint, complete in one volume, Walker, Evans & Co., 1858

16 Clara A. Langley, *South Carolina Deed Abstracts 1719-1772*, Volume II, Southern Historical Press, 1984, page 320 [O-O, page 299]