History in Every Direction: Tar Heel Junior Historian Association Discovery Gallery

Take a look at our History in Every Direction: THJHA Discovery Gallery on the third floor! This gallery, unique in the nation, showcases the most recent winners of THJHA Annual Contests, allowing junior historians to share what they have learned with thousands of annual visitors.

The gallery also features hands-on activities related to exploring history through five kinds of primary sources: artifacts, documents, photographs, oral history, and buildings and sites.

Below is additional information connecting History in Every Direction: THJHA Discovery Gallery to educational resources. For the richest student experience, complete the educational packet:

- Read “The Junior Historian Movement” article from the Spring 2003 Tar Heel Junior Historian Magazine.
- Read “The Birth of the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association” article from the Spring 2003 Tar Heel Junior Historian Magazine.
- Design a new Tar Heel Junior Historian Association logo!
- Read “Historians Piece It All Together” from the Spring 2009 Tar Heel Junior Historian Magazine to discover how Historians use documents and photographs to learn more about the past.
- Think like a Junior Historian and use those skills to analyze Mary Porter’s will.
The Legislative Bill That Established THJHA

taken from Session Laws of 1953

The front of the legislative bill (#207) that established the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association appears above. The back of the bill is to the right. Image courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

The Junior Historian Movement
by Rebecca Lewis

Junior historian organizations have arisen in many states at one time or another and have taken slightly different forms wherever they have emerged. But all junior historian societies have been remarkably alike in their purpose or intention. That is, all junior historian societies have taken as the root of their existence the idea that the events that happen at home are just as important and history-making as those that happen elsewhere.

This emphasis on local history can be seen in the mission statement of the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association, "to encourage the study of local and state history and to help young people better understand and appreciate their place in history." The formation of junior historian societies outside the school system was an important step in the study of local history and in the preservation of our heritage. And it seems to have started in two places almost simultaneously.

How the Junior Historian Movement Started

The first development of a statewide junior historical society took place in December 1938, when the Indiana Junior Historical Society was formed. This first junior historian program developed from a single club. The Marion High School History Club of Grant County, Indiana, attracted so many students with its theme "History Is Fun" that it had to limit the number of members during the second year of existence. Too many students wanted to join, and the club's officers were afraid that the club was getting out of control. The club was incredibly successful, sponsoring community events and even writing a book on Grant County history. Wanting to share their experiences with other schools, club members held a student-teacher convention in Marion to explore the possibility of starting a statewide society. Seventy teachers and students from twenty schools signed on at this convention. Sponsored by the Indiana Historical Society, the first statewide junior historian association became a reality.

Meanwhile, the Texas State Historical Association (TSHA), concerned about the lack of knowledge of state history among students, was also planning a "young people's branch" to work in conjunction with the senior organization. In 1939 the director of the North Carolina Genealogical Society and consists of a check for $25 and a certificate.

Fall 1976. It is announced that the Malcolm Blue Junior Historians of Aberdeen (advised by Martha Clayton and Doris Blue) have received a $100 grant from the America the Beautiful Fund, Washington, D.C., for an oral history project. It is also announced that the Skewanks of Bear Grass School in Williamson (advised by Elizabeth Robinson) have received a $3,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The money will be used for a research and film project.


1978-1979: The first Artifact Search Contest, sponsored by the North Carolina Museum of History Associates, is offered for this school year. Winning students will be honored at Awards Day 1979 in May.

November 1978: It is announced that the Marin "76ers (LeRoy Marin Junior High School, Raleigh, Anne Kennedy and Mary Evelyn Jackman, advisors) have received a Certificate of Commendation from AASH for their efforts to preserve the Pullen Park carousel. It is also announced that the Skewanks (Bear Grass School, Williamson.

Junior historians of the Title of Ted Wing are shown in front of the gold end of the Hall of States in Dallas, Texas. Members are named in eight southwestern Indian costumes, ca. 1955. Image courtesy of the Texas State Historical Association, Austin. All rights reserved.

by the North Carolina
Many clubs in the 1970s became actively involved with the nation’s bicentennial celebration and with genealogical projects inspired by the television magazines Roots. Membership in North Carolina’s Tar Heel Junior Historian Association grew from 1,261 members in 1958 to 19,515 in the 1984-1986 biennium (our largest membership total). Today, THJHA averages 6,000 to 7,000 members per year.

Keys to Success
Junior historians have undertaken many remarkable and noteworthy projects from the 1940s to the present. Since their earliest days, junior historians have been in the forefront of recording forgotten cemeteries, conducting architectural surveys and oral history projects, writing and publishing local histories, leading tours of historic structures, performing as living history interpreters and reenactors, lobbying for preservation of historic sites, and more. Often, junior historians have taken on the projects that were neglected by adult historical societies, thereby preserving a part of local or state history that otherwise would have been lost.

In 1966 one museum educator described the objectives of a successful junior historian program as:
1. Rousing the interest of young people in the history of their own hometown, county, or state
2. Bringing history to life outside of a textbook
3. Promoting good citizenship and pride in heritage
4. Giving youth a chance to evaluate present-day events in the light of the past, as well as the future

One thing that most people involved with junior historian programs seem to agree upon is this: “A junior historical society on any level must be designed for its members.” Adult historical groups that form junior societies must realize that young people are eager to participate and become avid historians on their own terms. When asked why she thought the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association continues to flourish while other societies have disappeared, former director of the North Carolina Museum of History Joyce Jordan said, “One thing—THJHA is run by the students, and they are interested in their own background. You can’t instill interest in somebody when it comes to family or community. They have to be interested in their own story.”

Junior History in 2003 and Beyond
In 2003 large, statewide junior historical societies are not as numerous as they once were. However, in addition to North Carolina, the states of Indiana, Texas, Kentucky, Michigan, and Idaho have active junior organizations through their state historical associations or museums. A search of the Internet reveals smaller, locally led junior historian societies in Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina. California, New Mexico, and Minnesota are using “junior historians” in specialized programs but have no organized societies. Some states, such as Florida and Georgia, indicate that they are planning for future junior historian societies. Running a junior historian society takes dedication and resources. It’s not an easy task for cultural institutions to undertake in uncertain economic times. But, this fact is certain: As long as there are young people who care about their communities and their heritage, there will be a place for junior historians and the work that they do.

The cover of the Copher Historian, Minnesota's magazine for junior historians, ca. 1951. Image courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.
The Birth of the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association

by Rebecca Lewis

Discovering the history of the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association, I felt very much like a detective on an investigation. I knew the "short version" of the story—the history that has been published in the THJHA Advisor Handbook. This information gave me the basic facts. But I wanted to know more. As THJHA turns fifty, I thought it was time to tell the whole story. So, armed with a few key names and some important dates, I headed to the State Archives to see what information I could find on the "birth" of the association. And what I found surprised me.

Charles F. Carroll, with the idea of establishing a junior historian organization in North Carolina. That is true. But it is a simplified version of what really happened. It took many years and much work to get this organization off the ground.

In my search at the archives, I found a letter dated November 26, 1946, from Henry Howard Eddy to Miss Mary Cunningham of the New York State Historical Association. It read:

We are trying with the possibility of starting, in a tentative and experimental manner, a junior historian movement in the state of North Carolina. From our chat at Washington last month and your conversations with Mrs. Jordan you will be able to recall what the situation is. What about sending us a file, or as much of a file as you can spare.

As with many historical facts that have been interpreted and then written down, the story of THJHA that I uncovered did not exactly match the story I had read. By looking at original, primary documents in the archives and by interviewing two of the surviving founders of THJHA, I was able to piece together a more complete history of the association. Here is what I found.

The Junior Historian Movement Comes to North Carolina

The "official" history says that THJHA originated when William H. Cartwright and Jonathan C. McLendon of the education department at Duke University approached the director of the State Department of Archives and History, Christopher Crittenden, and the state superintendent of public instruction.

Charles F. Carroll, with the idea of establishing a junior historian organization in North Carolina. That is true. But it is a simplified version of what really happened. It took many years and much work to get this organization off the ground.

In my search at the archives, I found a letter dated November 26, 1946, from Henry Howard Eddy to Miss Mary Cunningham of the New York State Historical Association. It read:

We are trying with the possibility of starting, in a tentative and experimental manner, a junior historian movement in the state of North Carolina. From our chat at Washington last month and your conversations with Mrs. Jordan you will be able to recall what the situation is. What about sending us a file, or as much of a file as you can spare.

As with many historical facts that have been interpreted and then written down, the story of THJHA that I uncovered did not exactly match the story I had read. By looking at original, primary documents in the archives and by interviewing two of the surviving founders of THJHA, I was able to piece together a more complete history of the association. Here is what I found.

The Junior Historian Movement Comes to North Carolina

The "official" history says that THJHA originated when William H. Cartwright and Jonathan C. McLendon of the education department at Duke University approached the director of the State Department of Archives and History, Christopher Crittenden, and the state superintendent of public instruction.
involved with it. In an interview in November 2002, Dr. Cartwright said he had been actively involved with the junior historian program in Minneola when he taught high school history in the 1940s. When he came to Duke in 1951, he wanted to make that university an important resource to the state’s schools. He regularly attended annual meetings of North Carolina’s school system superintendents and social studies teachers. “The junior historian movement,” he said, “was a natural extension of my outreach to the schools.”

In January 1953, Dr. Cartwright wrote to Dr. Crittenden saying that he and some of his colleagues were very interested in the junior historian movement and wanted to meet to talk about the possibility of starting an organization in North Carolina. Shortly thereafter, a bill authorizing a junior historian movement in North Carolina was drafted by the state Department of Archives and History and Department of Public Instruction. This bill was first introduced in the North Carolina Senate by Hamilton L. Hobgood of Franklin County. Edward F. Yarborough of Louisburg sponsored it in the North Carolina House of Representatives.

On April 22, 1953, the bill became law, and the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association was established. The resolution, known as Chapter 886 of the Session Laws and Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly at the Regular Session of 1953, is reprinted in its entirety on pages 751–752 of that publication.

The Bill Passed. Now What? Immediately, the founders of THJHA got busy organizing the association and seeking support. Eight days after passage of the bill, Dr. Crittenden wrote to Dr. Cartwright, “At long last the General Assembly has passed the bill . . . and Mrs. Jordan and I are ready to have a conference with you about this matter.” On May 20 the principal organizers met at the Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh to discuss how THJHA would be launched. When the General Assembly passed the resolution that established THJHA, it did not make any appropriation for administering the program. In other words, it approved the idea of having junior historians in North Carolina but did not give any money to support the program. This meant that the would attempt to get started with volunteer workers. At the same time, the organizers began working on ways to publicize the movement and to solicit membership from the public schools. Despite writing to many foundations, which were as far away as New York City and Battle Creek, Michigan, Dr. Crittenden could not get funding for THJHA. The organizers met again on August 20, 1953, and all three committees were set up. J. E. Miller of Public Instruction was in charge of a committee that came up with a list of schools that might want to participate. Dr. McLendon was chairman of a committee to disseminate information about, or publicize, the program. And Dr. Cartwright chaired a committee that selected and trained volunteers, mostly historians and college professors, to go to schools in their areas and help establish THJHA clubs. The last committee was critical. Nothing like THJHA had been tried in North Carolina before, so people who knew about the junior historian movement were needed to represent the association at the local level. With his experience in other state junior historian societies, Dr. Cartwright made an invaluable contribution to this effort.

As much as Cartwright, McLendon, Crittenden, and Carroll were THJHA’s fathers, Joye Jordan was its “founding mother.” It was Mrs. Jordan, as head of the Hall of History, who assumed much of the responsibility for getting THJHA going in the early years. She coordinated all three committees and then became the first program coordinator, known then as the executive secretary. In late January 1954, Mrs. Jordan and the three committee chairs held a meeting for eighth-grade North Carolina history educators at the Hall of History in Raleigh. Teachers and school administrators from around the state were invited to come learn more about the program. Mrs. Jordan recalled, “It [THJHA] took off like wildfire. I was surprised. I thought we would have to beg, but we didn’t.” On March 31, the Junior Historian Club of Roxboro, located at Earl Bradsher School in Roxboro, Person County, became the first club to complete the formal application process and receive a charter from THJHA. Hazel C. Breeze was the club’s adviser. Two years later, at the end of the 1955–1956 school year, THJHA had grown from an initial three clubs to forty-six clubs. The association was off and running!

Thank You As you can see, sometimes “history” is not always exactly what it seems to be. Our interpretations change over time. And, even in instances where the interpretation stays the same, there are usually details that make small differences—nuances—left out of the story. I hope this historical research helps to clarify the history of THJHA. I hope you realize now how many people were involved in founding our organization and what incredible effort they put forth. We owe a lot to Dr. Cartwright, Dr. McLendon, Dr. Crittenden, Mrs. Jordan, and others. They had a firm belief in youth and students’ abilities to contribute to their own heritage. They realized the importance of local history. And they established an association that has withstood the test of time and is now one of the strongest youth history organizations in the country. To all of these men and women, THJHA says “thank you.”
Our current logo pays homage to the Dogwood (North Carolina’s State Flower!). If you were to redesign a logo for THJHA, what would it look like? What North Carolina symbol would you pay homage to?

_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________
Historians Piece It All Together

By Debra A. Blake

From *Tar Heel Junior Historian* 48: 2 (spring 2009).

Images may differ from those in the original article.

It may seem impossible in 2009 to know much about North Carolinians who lived in the 1700s. It’s hard—but not impossible. Finding out small bits of information and putting them together to understand the past is what historians do. Reading and studying government documents—such as wills, marriage records, court minutes, and more—helps historians, students, and genealogists understand what life was like in the past. Each document gives clues about the person who created it. Through their research into such primary sources, historians follow clues to create a snapshot of past lives and places.

Detectives investigating a crime do the same thing when they follow clues until they form a picture of what happened.

Let’s look at an example of historical document research that we’ll call “the case of Mary Porter’s will.” A will is a document left by a person who has died that explains how he or she wants their property to be divided. Mary Porter lived in early northeastern North Carolina (in the Albemarle region). She was a fairly ordinary woman, but when she died in 1717, she left an extraordinary will. It is an extraordinary document for several reasons. For one thing, it is a will written by a woman, which was rare for the time period. Also, it is the will of a wealthy woman who carefully lists her various bequests, or gifts to other people. By studying this document, historians can learn about the lives of wealthy people in the early 1700s.

You can find wills and other government documents in places like the North Carolina State Archives. There are millions of documents in the archives, and historians often study them. They might have to analyze many different documents before any picture of the past becomes clear, since each document will give only a few clues.

The first step in our history detective work is to examine Mary Porter’s will itself carefully, to see what information can be learned from it. The document was written on November 12, 1717. Porter states that she is a widow of “sound and perfect memory.” She does not say that she is ill or old. In the body of the will, she mentions her children: sons, John, Edmund, and Joshua; and daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah. Sarah is married and has three daughters of her own: Elizabeth, Mary, and Sarah. At least one of the Porter sons is married and has a son, John, and another son has a daughter, Sarah. All of Porter’s listed grandchildren are younger than eighteen. It is interesting to note that this family has a habit of repeating names in each generation. This practice can often cause confusion as to which person is being referred to in a document! Mary Porter’s will was presented in court for probate—the process of making it legal—on January 21, 1718, which means that she died between November and January.
We can tell that Mary Porter was a slave owner with a great deal of personal property, which she carefully divides between her children. Personal property is everything that a person owned that was not land, which is real property. The will is very long and lists many interesting belongings that Mary felt were important enough to leave to someone—everything from chairs and spoons to pillowcases and shovels. She owned livestock and had crops in the field. She had some property in naval stores. The will mentions only one piece of real property, left to Mary’s son Joshua. From the will, we learn that her son Edmund was not in North Carolina at the time but might have been on his way back to the colony.

Where can the history detective go to get more information about Mary Porter? She died almost three hundred years ago, and there are no books on her life. But the Albemarle region of North Carolina was not heavily settled at the time. There should be secondary sources that mention the area’s wealthy or powerful people. In fact, numerous secondary sources do mention the Porter family, especially Mary’s husband, John. The Porters were a prominent family and connected themselves through marriages to other prominent families. Good secondary sources give citations in their notes and bibliographies that researchers can follow to more secondary and primary sources that those authors used in their own research. In this way, you can follow a trail to learn more and more.

Some primary sources also should be checked for information, although the fact that Mary Porter was a woman makes that search more difficult. During this period, women did not have strong voices in government. Their fathers and husbands usually managed their lives, especially money matters. Widows, or women whose husbands had died, were sometimes exceptions. Given the detail in Mary Porter’s will, an inventory or an account of an estate sale would be a wonderful discovery, since it would give us a more extensive list of her belongings and a sense of their worth. (In an estate sale, a deceased person’s property is sold, with the money received divided among their heirs or beneficiaries.) Other types of documents could offer the researcher a view into Mary Porter’s life. Deeds would tell about any land she owned. Tax records would reveal who and what she paid taxes on. Court records would show any time that she came before the legal court.

One original document that might provide more detail about Mary Porter is her husband’s will. Even though John Porter died before Mary did, his will indeed proves to be a great source of information about his wife. Reading both wills, written a few years apart, the historian realizes that John and Mary are married; they name each other as spouses, and they name the same children. John Porter names Mary as his executrix, along with his son John as executor. (These are the people who are supposed to make sure that the dead person’s wishes are carried out.) He states that he is a merchant, and sick and weak. He mentions all of his children, including a son named Mathew. Since Mary Porter’s will does not mention Mathew, the researcher faces a challenge. Did Mathew die between his father’s and mother’s wills? Was he John’s son but not Mary’s? Had Mary already settled a legacy, or inheritance, on Mathew, and therefore had no need to take care of him in her will? Clearly, Mathew Porter is a subject for future study.

John Porter mentions land that he owns, giving some of it to each of his male children, and he gives slaves to his female children. Another interesting piece of information that we gain from John Porter’s will is that he died in London, England. Even though he wrote the will in January
of 1710 in Albemarle County, it was probated in England in February of 1712. What he was
doing in England is another subject worth investigating. (Several secondary sources provide
information about this very subject.) Additional information learned from John Porter’s will is
that Joshua and Mathew were not yet twenty-one years old in 1710; daughter Sarah already was
married to John Lillington; and daughter Elizabeth was not yet eighteen.

Another primary source that Mary Porter’s will leads us to check involves the piece of real
property that she leaves to one son. In July 1717, a few months before she died, Mary received a
land grant—a deed for property bought from the government—for 264 acres. This is the same
property left in her will to Joshua. A look in the deed books shows more deeds in which Porter
sold slaves to her son in 1715. The will tells us other things, like the fact that Mary Porter had an
American Indian slave or servant woman named Judith. This raises questions, such as whether
enslavement of American Indians was common in that area at the time. Since John Porter did not
mention Judith in his will, it would be interesting to know how and when Mary Porter acquired
Judith.

The will tells us that Mary’s son Edmund was not “in this Government,” but it is not clear
whether this means North Carolina or the colonies in general. Where was he, and why? This
detail leads to a real story that you can learn about Edmund Porter, as well as his father, John,
and brother John. The three men were involved in Cary’s Rebellion and forced to leave the
colonies because of this involvement. (See what else you can find out!)

As you have seen through this study of the case of Mary Porter’s will, a researcher can discover
a lot from one primary source. But there is more work to do. One document will lead to more
documents. This slow gathering of information allows the historian to develop a picture of the
past that might not be seen otherwise. Primary documents are the direct connection to history.
Someday, historians will learn about life in 2009 in much the same way.

*At the time of this article’s publication, Debra A. Blake was the manager of the Public Services
Branch at the State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History. She has written
numerous articles and given many lectures on using the primary sources available at the State
Archives.*
The first part of Mary Porter’s will

“In the Name of God Amen, this 12th day of November, 1717 I Mary Porter of Chowan precinct in the County of Albemarle, in the province of North Carolina Widow being of sound and perfect memory, doe make Constitute and ordaine Declare and apoint this to be my last Will and Testament Revoking and annuling by these presents all former and other Will and Wills heretofore by me made in manner and form following Impts, I recomend my Soul into the hands of allmighty God who gave it and my body I comit to the earth to be Decently buried at the discretion of my Exors hereinafter named, Item I give and bequeath unto my well beloved Son John Porter my Negroe man knowne by the Name of Sandy half a dozen Rousia leather Chairs my oval Table large one midle Sized pewter dish, 2 large pewter basons and a Shovel and tongs tiped with Brass Item I give and bequeath unto my well beloved Son Edmund Porter my Negroe man knowne by the name of Oliver one large plank chest one Silver Drinking cup with 2 handles half a dosen Silver Spoons one large China bason already in his possession the large pair of Tongs and Shovel one bedstead one wooden couch the largest of the Small looking glasses the large Cedar table half a dosen painted Chairs and my whole Stock of hoggs that I shall leave at my decease After my Debts and legacys paid and one pair of Iron Doggs, 50 # weight of feathers and all the money due to me lying in the hands of Mr. Welstead and Oliver, Merchts, in Boston he paying out of the sd. money within Six Months After the receiving it unto my beloved Daughter, Eliz. Porter Six Silver Spoons each weighing Ten Shillings Sterling at least, and one Iron pot & pot hooks and 12 Soup plates But it is my Will and pleasure that if the sd Edmund shall not be in this Government at my decease that then and in Such Case all and every of the Legacys here left to the sd. Edmund shall remain in the Exors hands hereafter Named until his arrival here or until he shall impower any person After my Decease to take and receive the Same and if it shall happen that the sd. Edmund Shall never arrive here nor Impower any person as Afrsd. after my Decease then all & every of the Legacys Afrsd. I give and bequeath to my Sons John Porter and Joshua Porter and to my Daughter Eliz: Porter to be equally divided amongst them, Item I give and bequeath unto my Wel beloved Son Joshua Porter a tract of Land lyeing in Yawpim . . . “

--Transcription courtesy of Debra A. Blake. For a full transcription, access www.greatdreams.com/henry/porter-wills.htm.
Mary Porter’s Will

Think like a Junior Historian and use those skills to analyze Mary Porter’s will! Try to decipher what she left behind and to who using her will as a primary source. We included a transcription too in case you get stuck.
Mary Porter’s Will

[Document text]
Mary Porter’s Will

[Handwritten document with multiple paragraphs and signatures]
Mary Porter’s Will Transcription

North Carolina, SS.
In the Name of God Amen, this 12th day of November, 1717 I Mary Porter of Chowan precinct in the County of Albemarle, in the province of North Carolina Widow being of sound and perfect memory, doe make Constitute and ordaine Declare and apoint this to be my last Will and Testament Revoking and annuling by these presents all former and other Will and Wills heretofore by me made in manner and form following Impts, I recomend my Soul into the hands of allmighty God who gave it and my body I comit to the earth to be Decently buried at the discretion of my Exors hereinafter named.

Item I give and bequeath unto my well beloved Son John Porter my Negroe man knowne by the Name of Sandy half a dozen Rousia leather Chairs my oval Table large one midle Sized pewter dish, 2 large pewter basons and a Shovel and tongs tiped with Brass Item I give and bequeath unto my well beloved Son Edmund Porter my Negroe man knowne by the name of Oliver one large plank chest one Silver Drinking cup with 2 handles half a dosen Silver Spoons one large China bason already in his possession the large pair of Tongs and Shovel one bedstead one wooden couch the largest of the Small looking glasses the large Cedar table half a dosen painted Chairs and my whole Stock of hoggs that I shall leave at my decease After my Debts and legacys paid and one pair of Iron Doggs, 50 # weight of feathers and all the money due to me lying in the hands of Mr. Welstead and Oliver, Merchts, in Boston he paying out of the sd. money within Six Months After the receiving it unto my beloved Daughter, Eliz. Porter Six Silver Spoons each weighing Ten Shillings Sterling at least, and one Iron pot & pot hooks and 12 Soup plates But it is my Will and pleasure that if the sd. Edmund shall not be in this Government at my decease that then and in Such Case all and every of the Legacys here left to the sd. Edmund shall remain in the Exors hands hereafter Named until his arrival here or until he shall impower any person After my Decease to take and receive the Same and if it shall happen that the sd. Edmund Shall never arrive here nor Impower any person as Aforsd. after my Decease then all & every of the Legacys Afrs. I give and bequeath to my Sons John Porter and Joshua Porter and to my Daughter Eliz: Porter to be equaly divided amongst them, Item I give and bequeath unto my Wel beloved Son Joshua Porter a tract of Land lyeing in Yawpim, bounded by Mr. Clayton’s & Mr. Clarks lines to him the sd. Joshua and his heirs forever my Negroe woman knowne by the Name of Edy one ticken Feather bed and bolster and Two Pillows one feather bed covered with Canvas and bolster and one Pillow three pillow cases Suitable Two pair fine Sheets 2 p’ of Coarse Sheets one Set of red watered Curtains and Wallons one Spotted worsted Rugg, 1 Red Rugg 2 p’ good Blankets 1 flowered Bed Coverled 1 Bedstead that Stood in the hall Chamber Six Rousia leather chairs one of the large looking glasses and my largest and one middling Iron pot the large andirons a large brass Skillet and Trivet and one brass Candlestick one pair brass Scales and weights 1 pair of Shillifards two Drapier towells a pewter mustard pott the Coarsest of brass ridles my Dantzick lock Chest a lime Sifter a Case of Knives and forks, a Cross cut Saw a writeing Desk four Pewter Porringer, 1 earthen Poringers, 10 pewter plates 1 Iron pestle 1 Ash Table 1 large Soup Pewter dish one large Shallow Dito one midle Sized D° 1
large 1 Small Pewter bason 2 Earthen basons and 2 plates Do 1 set of Wedges and Six wooden Chairs 2 Joint Stooles 2 wooden turned chairs 2 Iron Tramels 1 brass butter ladle 1 small brass Kettle 1 pewter chamber pot a hand Mill peckers 1 glass salt 1 Iron chafing dish a pair bellows all my reap Books a Square cloak brush anfaro and Currying Knife and the half of my Sheep and Cattle and the half of a Tarr Kilne now on foot and the half of all my Crop now in the ground with a pottle pewter pot and a pint pewter pot 1 Glass Gall: Bottle and a broad Axe my Debts first to be deducted Item, I give and bequeath unto my beloved Daughter Sarah Lilington my Negroe woman called Maria 1 Chest of Drawers six painted chairs now in her possession one pair of Iron fire dogs 1 small Cedar table 1 pair of fine Sheets 2 pair coarse Sheets 2 pillow cases Two drapier towels, my larges quilt one lignum Vitae Spice Morter one large Soup dish 1 midle Sized dish 1 Small pewter bason 1 brass Skimer 1 Small Iron kettle the least of my painted Trunks 2 earthen basons and plates 1 English Flasket 1 large Glass bottle one Stone Jugg 1 pewter Chamber pot 1 bed pann, three of my others which she likes best and the full third part of the cotton and Wooll that shall belong to me at my decease, Item I give and bequeath unto my beloved daughter Elizabeth Porter my Indian woman called Judith and her daughter Named Sukey 1 chest of Drawers one oval Table my best Set of red Curtains & Valens belonging to my lodging room one Ticken Feather bed and bolster 4 pillows one bedstead belonging also to my lodging room, three pair of fine Sheets 2 pair Coarse sheets 4 pillow Cases my Green Rugg made of worsted 1 pair of the best rose blankets the least of my quilts my Calico counterpaine and Tester cloath, my bible my Spice box 1 warming pan 1 p’ Chamber doggs with brass 1 Black Trunk and one painted trunk a large brass Kettle and Two Skimeters, a Brass Shie and 2 Iron potts one linked Tramel a brass Flam one Copper Chocolat pot 1 white rug 1 Gridiron four matted Chairs my Silver Salt Marked I PM, and a Silver peper box with the Same marke large pewter Soup dish 1 Shallow D° 2 midling pewter dishes 1 large and 1 Small pewter bason 10 pewter plates, 6 painted chairs 5 pewter porringers 1 p’ brass Candlesticks and snufeters and Snuff dish my Smoothing Iron heaters and Frame 1 Gall Stone Jugg 1 Glass Crut Two glass cups one mustard pott 2 pewter Chamber 3 earthen basons 1 large dish and 2 plates 1 Tin pudding pan 1 Spit 1 leaden pan and 2 painted brushes a brass shovel and tongs 1 large looking Glass the best of the bed pans, 1 pewter Salt 1 Glass Decanter 2 tin dish Covers 1 brass Ridle a large turned Elbow chair 1 Dripen pan 1 Case of bottles, one half of my Sheep and Cattle that shall remain after my Debts and legacy paid and half of the Tarr Kiln now on foot and half the Crop now in the ground, 12 drapier napkins one drapier Table Cloath, Two drapier Towells and one Bell skillet, Item, I give and bequeath unto my Grandson John Porter, 1 Young Cowe and 1 Young Ewe, to run for his Benefit at my decrease to be delivered to him with the increase at the age of one and twenty or day of Marriage which shall first happen and also my Silver tankard marked IPM to be delivered at the same time Item I give and bequeath unto my Grand daughter Sarah Porter one young Cowe and one young Ewe at my decease to run for her benefit and also Six Silver Spoons Marked IPM to be delivered to her with the increase at the age of eighteen years or day of Marriage which Shall first happen Item I give and bequeath unto my Granddaughter Elizabeth Lilington one Young Cowe and one Young Ewe and my Smallest looking Glass to be delivered with the encrease at the age of eighteen years or day of Marriage Item I give and bequeath unto my
Grandaughter Mary Lilington one young Cowe and one Young Ewe and my Silver Dram Cup Marked IPM, to be delivered to her with their encrease at the age of eighteen Years, or day of Marriage which shall first happen, Item I give and bequeath unto my granddaughter Sarah Lilington one Young Cowe and one young Ewe to be delivered to her with their encrease at the age of eighteen years or day of Marriage, which shall first happen, Item I give and bequeath unto Robert Herrick if alive and in this Government at my decease, the Sum of five pounds to be paid out of my Estate Item, all the rest and residue of Estate not herein and hereby disposed of debts being thereout first Deducted I give and bequeath unto my son Joshua Porter, and my Daughter Eliz: Porter to be equally Divided between them and lastly I doe hereby nominate and appoint my said Sonns, John Porter and Joshua to be Exors Jointly and Seperatly of this my s’d last Will and Testament but it is my Will and pleasure and I doe hereby nominate and appoint my Son Edmund upon his Arrival in this Government After my Decease Joint Exor with his Two Brothers.

Mary M Porter (Seal)

Signed, Sealed and Delivered
in the presence of:

   JLovick  Chowan SS
   Mary  X Henry

Jany 21st, 1717
proved in open Court by the oath of John Lovick.

Letters Granted to the Exors Decemb’ 12th 1718

Transcription of the will of Mary Porter provided by the North Carolina State Archives.
Mary Porter’s Will Worksheet

How many children did Mary Porter have? ____ Name them.
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Why do you think some children received more things than others?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

What does Mary Porter mean by the phrase “in this Government” when referring to her son Edmund?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

At what age might a girl get married?
____________________________________________________________________________

The will is dated 1717. Who was governor of North Carolina at that time?
____________________________________________________________________________

Was North Carolina a state in 1717?
____________________________________________________________________________

Where is Chowan County located in North Carolina?
____________________________________________________________________________
What is an ewe?

What is a looking glass?

What is a ticked bed?

What does Mary Porter mean by the phrases “my Negroe man” and “my Negroe woman”?

Can you own another person today?

Were American Indians enslaved during the colonial period?

Based on the items listed in the will, do you think the Porter family was wealthy, poor, or middle class? Why?

Is there anything not listed in the will that you think Mary Porter would also have owned?

What can you tell about North Carolina society in the early 1700s based on the items listed in the will? What types of things were valued at that time?
Make an inventory list of items in your bedroom on another sheet of paper. Can you list everything?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How does the number of items in your room compare to the number of items Mary Porter owned?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

How do the types of items you own differ from those Mary Porter owned?
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________