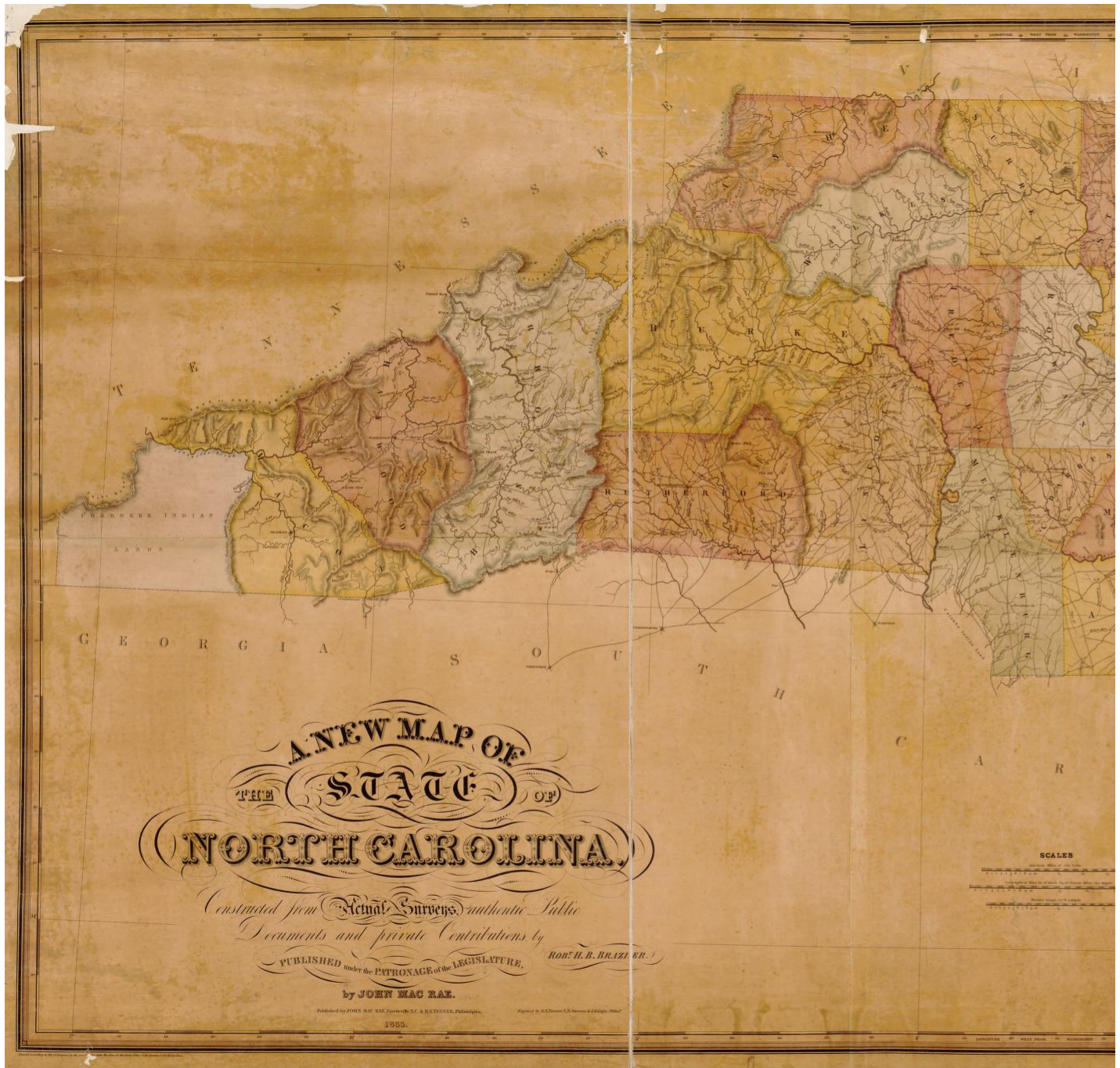


Brazier, Robert H. B. ^[1]

Brazier, Robert H. B.

by George Stevenson, 1979; Revised by Andrea Smythe, SLNC Government and Heritage Library, November 2023

d. January 5, 1837



John MacRae's 1833 map of North Carolina, done by Robert H. B. Brazier. Image from the Library of Congress.

^[2]Robert H. B. Brazier, cartographer and civil engineer, was born in Great Britain. His parents are unknown. In Britain, he received his professional training under [John Rennie \(1761–1821\)](#) ^[3]. Rennie was the Scottish civil engineer who designed the Southwark, Waterloo, and London bridges, as well as the London and East India docks and Plymouth breakwater. Brazier came to North Carolina with [Hamilton Fulton](#) ^[4] in July 1819, at the request of [Peter Browne](#) ^[5]. He entered into a contract with him as assistant to the principal engineer. His contract was confirmed by the board of internal improvements February 1820, though he had worked as an assistant to Fulton, the principal engineer, prior to that date. The continued existence of the board of internal improvements itself was precarious due to political disagreements between legislators from different parts of the state. When the principal engineer of the State of Virginia died in 1822, Brazier applied for the post. He did not get the job and continued to work as an assistant to Fulton in North Carolina.

Despite salary reductions during the years 1820 through 1823, Brazier completed surveys and drew maps, plans, profiles, and transverse sections of the principal North Carolina watercourses from [Yadkin River](#) ^[6] east to Roanoke Inlet. In 1821 and 1822, he was appointed by the General Assembly to lay out and map the streets of [Fayetteville](#) ^[7]. It is probably during this time that he made the acquaintance of the legislator, newspaper publisher, and Fayetteville postmaster, [John MacRae](#), ^[8]. After a disagreement over his account of expenses, Brazier resigned his office as assistant engineer effective February 19, 1824. He wrote a letter demanding that his account be settled and the board of internal improvements viewed it as a "disrespectful" letter. Brazier filed a lawsuit against the board which was successfully concluded in Wake County Superior Court when he was awarded damages in 1825.

In the two years after his resignation Brazier made patent drawings and undertook private surveying, ^[9] including the survey of the Buncombe Turnpike. In 1827, Brazier entered a new contract with the board of internal improvements. He commenced a survey of the state's swamp lands in the spring of 1827 as the assistant engineer to the state. Brazier served under principal engineer Alanson Nash during this survey. Nash had replaced Hamilton Fulton. After presenting his report on the swamp lands to the General Assembly late in 1827, and his expense accounts to the board of internal improvements early in 1828, Brazier's connection with internal improvements in North Carolina came to an end.

For the next few years, Brazier supported his family by private surveying and by delineating survey plats for landowners in [Wake](#), ^[10] and surrounding counties. His map of the route from Raleigh to Cobb's Mill (1831), his survey plat of the 7,383-acre Jeffreys tract in Wake and [Franklin](#), ^[11] counties (1832), and his plan of the Rolesville tract in Wake County (1833) are examples of his work in the private sector. In 1831, Brazier again applied for the position of principal engineer to the State of Virginia. Governor [Montfort Stokes](#), ^[12] jurist and U.S. senator [James Iredell](#), ^[13] Attorney General [Romulus M. Saunders](#), ^[14] and others testified to his skill as a practical surveyor, stating that "as a Draughtsman, it is believed that [Brazier] has no superior in the country." Brazier did not receive the position, though he was given brief employment by the Virginia Board of Public Works. In 1831 he completed "A Plan of the Blackwater River from New South Quay to Rattlesnake Swamp" and "A Survey of a Proposed Line of Canal from Blackwater River to Pagan Creek Near Smithfield."

In July 1831, Brazier had completed most of the surveying required for a new map of the state of North Carolina, and his finished manuscript was ready for the engraver in 1832. John MacRae had conceived of the idea for the map in 1825 and it was approved by the General Assembly in 1826. Despite securing the services of Lieutenant William Henry Harford of the U.S. Corps of Engineers to produce the map, MacRae had not had success creating the map until asking Brazier to help. The responsibility for engraving the map was entrusted to Henry Schenck Tanner of Philadelphia, and the finished prints were published jointly by MacRae in Fayetteville and Tanner in Philadelphia in 1833. Published under the title "A New Map of the State of North Carolina Constructed from Actual Surveys, Authentic Public Documents and Private Contributions." This map was the first authoritative work of its kind since the 1808 map published by [Jonathan Price](#)^[15] and [John Strother](#)^[16]. Brazier's map of North Carolina remained the standard authority for cartographers until 1857, when it was superseded by the compilation of [William D. Cooke](#)^[17] and [Samuel Pearce](#)^[18].

Shortly before working for McRae, Brazier began suffering from financial hardship. In May 1830 the mortgage on his Raleigh property had been foreclosed, and both real and personal property had been lost. In 1833 the charitable fund of Christ Church in Raleigh came to the aid of Brazier's family. In an attempt to restore his finances, Brazier joined eleven associates in a speculative venture involving some Campbellton lots in Fayetteville in 1834, but this speculation failed to recoup his fortunes. In 1836 he again asked for assistance from Christ Church. After Raleigh had a severe ice storm in 1836, Brazier "fell from a pair of high steps, and fractured his leg so badly, that he died of the effects." He was survived by his wife, Rachel, and his young son, James Henderson. Considering the help from Christ church and that his wife and son were both members of the [Episcopal church](#)^[19] it is likely that Brazier was [Anglican](#)^[20]. Brazier's death was recorded in the records for Christ Episcopal Church. This record stated he was "a most excellent draftsman, and otherwise accomplished in his profession, but with the talents of an angel a man may become a fool. He came to his death by his own folly and wickedness."

Brazier's principal surviving maps and surveys also include: "Plan of Croatan and Roanoke Sounds Shewing the Proposed Situations of the Embankments and Inlet" (1820); "Plan and Sections of a Line of Canal From the Tar River to the Tossnot Creek and a Survey of that Creek to its Junction with the Contentney" (1820); "Plan and Sections of Part of Crab Tree and Walnut Creeks" (1820); "Plan of the Tar River from Louisburg to the Little Falls Showing the Proposed Situation of the Locks and Dams" (1821); "Longitudinal Section of the Tar River from Louisburg to the Great Falls" (1821); "Transverse Sections of the Tar River Between Louisburg and the Great Falls" (1821); "Transverse Sections of the [Cape Fear River](#)^[21] Between Buckhorn Falls and Campbellton" (1821); "Plan of the Cape Fear River Between Haywood and Campbellton And of a Proposed Line of Canal Between Foxes Islands and Campbellton" (1822); "Survey of the Cape Fear River from the Upper to the Lower Flats" (1823); "Plan of the Catawba River from the Devils Shoals to Near Sherill's Ford" (1824); "Longitudinal Section of the Catawba River from the Devils Shoals to the Mouth of Little Catawba River^[22]" (1824); "Plan of that Part of the Big Swamp Lying Between Sullivan's Mills & Lumber River in the County of Robeson" (1827); "Survey of the Great Swamp, Columbus County" (1827); "Plan of that Part of Uhara Swamp Lying Between the Road Leading from Jackson to Bryan's Cross Roads and Pottocasy Creek in the County of Northampton" (1827); "Plan of Part of Holly Shelter Swamp" (1827); "Plan of the Swamp Lands Between Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds" (1828); "Plan of the State Road from Fayetteville, Raleigh, Louisburg, Warrenton and Robinson's Ferry to the Virginia Line" (from H. Fulton's survey; 1822); and "Plan of the Road from Salem to Fayetteville by Randolph and Moore Court Houses" (from H. Fulton's survey, 1823). Works of Brazier not known to have survived, or yet to be discovered, are a survey of the Roundabout on [Neuse River](#)^[23], [Wayne County](#)^[24] (1820); a survey of Tar River from the Great Falls to the Small Falls below Battle's Mills (1820); and a survey of at least a portion of Yadkin River (1820).

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Additional Resources:

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Brazier, Robert H. B. *A New Map of the State of North Carolina* Fayetteville, N.C.: John MacRae; Philadelphia: H.S. Tanner, 1833. Map. From Library of Congress. Accessed Oct. 23, 2023. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3900.ct001873>^[34]

Subjects:

[Biographies](#)^[35]

[Cartographers and surveyors](#)^[36]

Authors:

[Stevenson, George, Jr.](#)^[37]

Origin - location:

[Franklin County](#)^[38]

[Wake County](#)^[39]

[Raleigh](#)^[40]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#)^[41]

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Links

^[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/brazier-robert-h-b> ^[2] <https://lccn.loc.gov/2006459002> ^[3] http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/rennie_john.shtml ^[4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/fulton-hamilton> ^[5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/browne-peter> ^[6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/rivers/yadkin-pee-dee> ^[7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/fayetteville> ^[8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/macrae-john> ^[9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/surveyors> ^[10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/wake> ^[11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/franklin> ^[12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/stokes-montfort> ^[13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/iredell-james-sr> ^[14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/saunders-romulus-mitchell> ^[15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/price-jonathan> ^[16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/strother-john> ^[17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/cooke-william-dewey> ^[18] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/pearce-samuel> ^[19] <https://www.ncpedia.org/episcopal-church> ^[20] <https://www.ncpedia.org/church-england> ^[21] <https://www.ncpedia.org/rivers/cape-fear> ^[22] <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ncomaps/id/1244> ^[23] <https://www.ncpedia.org/rivers/neuse> ^[24] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/wayne> ^[25] https://axaem.archives.ncdcr.gov/solrDetailPages/series/NCA/Series_detail.html?fq=seriesId:1096211 ^[26] https://axaem.archives.ncdcr.gov/solrDetailPages/series/NCA/Series_detail.html?fq=seriesId:738620 ^[27] https://axaem.archives.ncdcr.gov/solrDetailPages/series/NCA/Series_detail.html?fq=seriesLevelId:recordgrp-100331 ^[28] https://axaem.archives.ncdcr.gov/solrDetailPages/series/NCA/Series_detail.html?fq=seriesId:736173 ^[29] <http://www.profsurv.com/magazine/article.aspx?i=1157#sthash.AJZbE1ls.dpuf> ^[30] <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/16998918> ^[31] <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3900.ct001873> ^[32] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> ^[33] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/cartographers-surveyors> ^[34] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/stevenson-george> ^[35] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-i> ^[36] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-w> ^[37] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-w> ^[38] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-w> ^[39] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-w> ^[40] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-w> ^[41] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>