

## **Creecy, Richard Benbury** <sup>[1]</sup>

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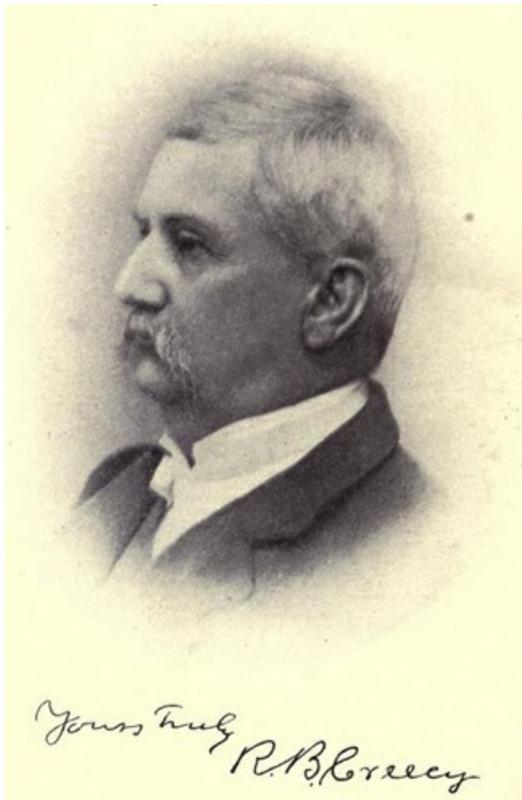


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## **Creecy, Richard Benbury**

by Betty Wales Silver, 1979

**19 Dec. 1813–22 Oct. 1908**



Richard Creecy. Image courtesy of

"Grandfather's tales of North Carolina history." <sup>[2]</sup>Richard Benbury Creecy, author and newspaper editor, was born at Greenfield Plantation near [Edenton](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, a son of Joshua S. and Mary Benbury Creecy. On his mother's side he was descended from [Thomas Benbury](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, a commissary general in the [American Revolution](#) <sup>[5]</sup> whom [President Washington](#) <sup>[6]</sup> later appointed first collector of revenue for the [Port](#) <sup>[7]</sup> of Edenton. His grandfather was Lemuel Creecy, a [Chowan County](#) <sup>[8]</sup> farmer and a member of the state senate for many years. There was a tradition that the Creecys were descendants of five brothers of [Huguenot](#) <sup>[9]</sup> origin who fled from France in the early 1600s, were shipwrecked on the [Outer Banks](#) <sup>[10]</sup>, and later settled along Albemarle Sound. Other antecedents were [Christopher Gale](#) <sup>[11]</sup>, first chief justice of North Carolina (1712), and General [William Skinner](#) <sup>[12]</sup> of the Revolution.

Creecy attended the Edenton Academy and was graduated from [The University of North Carolina](#) <sup>[13]</sup> in 1835. Receiving his license to practice law a year later, he moved to Elizabeth City, where he lived for the remainder of his life. On 7 Nov. 1844 he married Mary Brosher Perkins, daughter of Edmund Perkins, a [Pasquotank County](#) <sup>[14]</sup> farmer. She died in 1867, leaving ten children. Soon after his marriage, Creecy gave up his law practice and went to live on his father-in-law's plantation, Cloverdale, eight miles below Elizabeth City. There, until after the [Civil War](#) <sup>[15]</sup>, he devoted his entire time to farming, literature, philosophy, and the raising of his children. During this period he wrote and published *A Child's History for the Fireside*.

Impoverished by the aftermath of the war, he returned to Elizabeth City in 1870 and to his law practice. But like many other lawyers of his day, he was adept at doing other things and soon joined another attorney, E. F. Lamb, who did a large and profitable business in real estate. Financed by Lamb, with the backing of other prominent men in the Albemarle, he founded the *Economist*, a weekly newspaper, the first issue of which appeared on 14 Feb. 1872. Colonel Creecy (an honorary title bestowed on him later in life) had a way with words and was a relentless foe of [Republicans](#) <sup>[16]</sup> and the

corrupt northern carpetbaggers then infesting Elizabeth City. For more than thirty-five years he fought, through his newspaper, on the side of all those who favored better government and an end to northern tyranny over the prostrate South. He sought "to unite the opposition to the reckless tendency of the times," believing that the country's institutions were in dire peril and that the precious heritage of his forefathers was "in very grave danger of being swept away by the tide of corruption then sweeping the South."

In its early days, Creecy's *Economist* was printed by the editor of the rival weekly *North Carolinian*, which admitted strong northern ties and sympathies. Soon after July 1872 this disadvantage was eliminated, when an editorial committee made up of prominent men of the area decided to sponsor the *Economist*. They were all staunch Democrats who pledged themselves "to guarantee the integrity and success of the new enterprise"; Creecy set about "to administer to the literary tastes of his readers, to promote the agricultural, commercial, professional, mechanical and other industrial interests in Northeastern North Carolina with all the capacity, industry and zeal he could command."

By nature a quiet, conservative, and philosophic man, Creecy often found it necessary to comment caustically on political conditions as he saw them in North Carolina, especially in the 1870s, when a great battle for constitutional liberties was raging. "Let every man who is opposed to corruption, dishonest and bad government do what he can against the bayonet element in our elections," he urged in August 1872. He saw the Radical or Grant party paving the way "to bring Federal troops into North Carolina to carry the State election" and warned that, unless they were ousted from North Carolina politics, "our own and certainly our children's liberties will be crushed out forever."

Although he retired in 1904 at the age of ninety-one years, Creecy continued a frequent contributor to newspaper columns over the state. His book, *Grandfather's Tales of North Carolina History*<sup>[2]</sup>, was published in 1901, and his "Stray Leaves of Our History" appeared in the *University of North Carolina Magazine* in January 1906.

Upon his death in 1908, Creecy was the oldest alumnus of The University of North Carolina and was said to be the oldest newspaper editor in the United States. A lifelong Episcopalian, he was buried in Hollywood Cemetery from Christ Church, Elizabeth City.

#### References:

Samuel A. Ashe, ed., *Biographical History of North Carolina*<sup>[17]</sup>, vol. 4 (1906), and *Cyclopedia of Eminent and Representative Men of the Carolinas of the Nineteenth Century*,<sup>[18]</sup> vol. 2 (1892).

Scrapbook of newspaper clippings dating to 1870 (possession of Betty Wales Silver).

University of North Carolina, *University Magazine* 37 (Apr. 1907). 39 (Nov. 1908).

#### Additional Resources:

Creecy, Richard Benbury. *Grandfather's tales of North Carolina history*. Raleigh : Edwards & Broughton. 1901. <https://archive.org/details/grandfatherstale00creeuoft><sup>[2]</sup> (accessed June 12, 2013).

Under Both Flags | Richard Benbury Creecy: <http://underbothflags.ncdcr.gov/1861-1862characters/richard-benbury-creecy.html><sup>[19]</sup> (accessed November 12, 2014).

Creecy Family Papers, 1861-1865 (collection no. 03205-z). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. [http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/c/Creecy\\_Family.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/c/Creecy_Family.html)<sup>[20]</sup> (accessed June 12, 2013).

Richard Benbury Creecy in Worldcat: <https://www.worldcat.org/identities/lccn-no2009-95783><sup>[21]</sup>

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Creecy, Richard Benbury. *Grandfather's tales of North Carolina history*. Raleigh : Edwards & Broughton. 1901. <https://archive.org/details/grandfatherstale00creeuoft><sup>[2]</sup> (accessed June 10, 2013).

#### Subjects:

[Biography](#)<sup>[22]</sup>

[UNC Press](#)<sup>[23]</sup>

[Writers, journalists, and editors](#)<sup>[24]</sup>

#### Authors:

[Silver, Betty Wales](#)<sup>[25]</sup>

#### Origin - location:

[Chowan County](#)<sup>[26]</sup>

[University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)<sup>[27]</sup>

#### From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#).<sup>[28]</sup>

1 January 1979 | Silver, Betty Wales

## Links

- [1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/creecy-richard-benbury>
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- [3] <https://ncpedia.org/edenton>
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