

Maddock, Joseph ^[1]

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by Mary Claire Engstrom, 1991

1722–96

Joseph Maddock, pioneer [Quaker](#) ^[2] leader in colonial [Orange County](#) ^[3], N.C., and Columbia County, Ga., founder of Wrightsborough, Ga., miller, and horticulturist, was born in the Newcastle, Del., area, the son of tailor Nathan Maddock. His father was the grandson of English linendraper Abel Maddock (b. 1668) of Cheshire, England, who had settled on Brandywine Creek, Del., and a descendant of Thomas Maddock (1615–90) of the city of Chester, England.

In 1739 Joseph Maddock married Rachel Dennis (b. 1718), the daughter of Samuel (b. 1680) and Ruth Tindall Dennis of the Haddonfield, N.J., Monthly Meeting of Friends. The Maddocks lived for about fifteen years in Chester County, Pa., where they joined the Newark, Pa., Monthly Meeting and where Joseph operated a mill and for a time served as magistrate. They had eight children.

In August 1754 they migrated southwards to the Eno River Valley in Orange County, N.C., bringing with them Joseph's apprentice, John Frasier. All three certificates of dismissal from the Newark Monthly Meeting are dated 3 Aug. 1754, and all three certificates of acceptance by the [Cane Creek](#) ^[4], N.C., Monthly Meeting are dated 2 Nov. 1754. The Maddocks joined a sizable colony of Irish and English Friends already settled along the Eno River, a number of whom were their relatives by marriage.

Maddock immediately entered for a land grant of 507 acres on both banks of the Eno River a short distance west of the new county seat of Corbinton; in 1758 he purchased an additional 360 acres. He and Frasier dammed the river a short distance below the mouth of McGowan's Creek and were operating a water gristmill on the west bank of the Eno by August 1755. Maddock's Mill, which became a historic landmark during the [Regulator disturbance](#) ^[5], was one of the earliest mills in the region and the nearest gristmill to the county seat until 1768, when Francis Nash's mill began operating in Hillsborough.

Maddock, still in his mid-thirties, also built the first prison for Orange County before 1757 on a 25' × 25' plot at the northwestern corner of Lot 6 in Corbinton ([Hillsborough](#) ^[6]), and he probably assisted in building the first primitive courthouse on Lot 1. In 1756 he was appointed one of the twenty-four commissioners of roads, possibly because he had the year before, by permission, cleared and opened a new road westward to his mill.

Both Maddock and his wife Rachel were of prominent Quaker ancestry, and Maddock quickly assumed a position of leadership among both the Eno Valley Quakers and those of Cane Creek. In 1759 he was made a trustee of a five-acre plot of land northeast of Corbinton to be used as a Quaker burying ground and on which a meetinghouse (in use by 1761 and probably before) and a schoolhouse were built. (The old burying ground, surrounded by a rough stone wall, today survives intact on Highway 57.) In 1760 Maddock was a representative at the Yearly Meeting of North Carolina Friends at Old Neck in [Perquimans County](#) ^[7], and by 1762 he had successfully petitioned the Cane Creek Friends to establish a preparative meeting at Eno for the Eno Valley Friends. Maddock and the miller John Embree were appointed overseers of the new meeting.

Maddock, however, unfortunately became embroiled in what came to be known as "the Cane Creek Commotion," an internal disagreement among the Cane Creek Friends that united in protest [Herman Husband](#) ^[8], Joseph Maddock, and a number of like-minded Quakers, all of whom were disowned for their activities. All except Husband were eventually reinstated at Cane Creek, but the affair resulted in a deep-rooted disaffection that may have persuaded some Quakers to assist the Regulators and driven others to migrate to Georgia.

In 1766 Husband announced in an open court session in Hillsborough that Maddock's Mill, "where there is no Liquor," had been selected as a gathering place for Regulators to discuss their grievances on 10 October with county officials. Although no county officials ever appeared (except the former clerk of court, James Watson, who merely acted as a messenger) and no joint meeting was ever held, the essential damage was done so far as Maddock was concerned. He had been publicly linked with the firebrand Herman Husband not once but twice. (According to Maddock family tradition, Joseph Maddock was not actually consulted about the choice of his mill as a meeting place and afterwards constantly feared confiscation of his mill and mill property by Governor [William Tryon](#) ^[9].)

Maddock quickly made contact with a Georgia land agent, Leroy Hammond, and on 1 Sept. 1767 a vanguard of Orange County Quakers, led by Joseph Stubbs, Maddock's son-in-law, petitioned the royal governor of Georgia, Sir Joseph Wright, to reserve 12,000 acres for them on Sweetwater Creek, St. Paul's Parish, in Columbia County. Later, the reserve was enlarged to 40,000 acres. Maddock himself sold his mill and 20 acres of surrounding "Mill Lands" to Colonel Thomas Hart in November 1767. The twelve-year-old gristmill was thereafter known as "Hart's Mill" and became the nucleus of the

sprawling Hartford Plantation. On 1 July 1768 Maddock returned from Georgia and formally deeded 434 acres of his former plantation to Governor William Tryon, with Edmund Fanning ^[10] as the subscribing witness.

At least 132 families, and possibly more, followed Maddock to take up residence on the reserved lands in eastern Georgia. There, new homes, mills, and cowpens were built, and a new town, Wrightsborough, was laid out on Town Creek, similar to Hillsborough but rather more spacious in conception. Once again, as in the Eno River Valley, Joseph Maddock occupied the position of leader—as justice of the peace, trustee of the cowpens, clerk of the Wrightsborough Monthly Meeting, governor's deputy, head of the land grant office, and representative to the colonial Assembly of Georgia. A notable event in the early days of the Georgia colony was a visit in 1773 by naturalist William Bartram, who much admired Maddock's skill in propagating apples and grapes.

The migrant Quakers, however, had failed to take the Creek Indians into account, and continued Indian attacks on their settlement and crushing losses of their cattle and horses as well as violent guerrilla raids finally forced them to abandon Wrightsborough and their great reserve and to search for peaceable homes in Indiana. Maddock himself, who had apparently married Mary Watson as a second wife in 1784 or 1785, remained in Georgia and died in 1796, according to the *Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle & Gazette*. The site of his grave is unknown.

In the 1970s the Wrightsboro Restoration Foundation began assembling records of the Wrightsborough Quakers, originally the Orange County Quakers. The Eno Meeting of Friends, weakened by disownment and migration, was, after ninety-three years, officially "laid down" in November 1847. A Stubbs-Maddock family museum has been assembled in Long Lake, Minn., by the family genealogist, Roger Avery Stubbs.

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Additional Resources:

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