

Gheen, James ^[1]

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fl. 1778–96

James Gheen, cabinetmaker, may have moved to Rowan County ^[2] from Chester County, Pa., in the late 1770s. The Rowan County tax list for 1778 shows that he resided in "Capt. Craige's District." Nothing of Gheen's parentage is presently known. It is believed that he was married and had several children when he arrived in Rowan County. The 1790 census lists James Gheen, Jr., and James Gheen, Sr., in the county with families composed of four and ten persons, respectively. In addition, Thomas Gheen is listed with a family of four. None of them were recorded as enslavers of other people.

Two land transactions for Gheen are recorded in Deed Book 14 of Rowan County, 1778–92. In 1780 he purchased 270 acres on the north side of the Yadkin River, and in 1792 he bought 500 acres on Second Creek. Like other cabinetmakers in the Piedmont ^[3] area, Gheen probably supplemented his income by farming. Although he acquired two acres and four lots in the town of Salisbury, he did not establish a shop there. His will, written in 1796, bequeathed the land on Second Creek and the house, shop, and shop tools to his youngest son, Joseph.

Thirteen pieces of furniture have been attributed to Gheen. One piece—a combination desk and bookcase—was made in 1794 for the Reverend Samuel E. McCorkle ^[4], pastor of Thyatira Presbyterian Church and a founder of The University of North Carolina ^[5]. A signed and dated bill of sale for the piece survives. The other pieces are nine desks-and-bookcases, two chests of drawers, and a desk. All of the items are similar in design vocabulary and distinctive construction techniques. In addition to his cabinetmaking business, Gheen was a constable for his district in 1782–83.

The name of his wife is not known, but there were at least seven children. The date of his death and place of burial are also unknown.

References:

Archives, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (Winston-Salem), for information on James Gheen.

Carolyn Weekly, "James Gheen, Piedmont North Carolina Cabinetmaker," *Antiques Magazine* 103 (May 1973).

Subjects:

Artisans ^[6]

Biographies ^[7]

Authors:

Batson, Whaley W. ^[8]

Origin - location:

Rowan County ^[9]

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