

Patrick, John Tyrant ^[1]

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by Charles H. Bowman, Jr., 1994

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John Tyrant Patrick, journalist and resort developer, was born in [Wadesboro](#) ^[2], the youngest of six children of William H. and Margaret A. Campbell Patrick. The Civil War interrupted his formal education, but he later commented that the printing office where he served an apprenticeship and the newspaper were important sources of training. At age seventeen he added to his family's income by traveling around the country as a retail confectioner and presenting magic lantern shows. In 1877, as a delegate and a reporter, he attended a meeting in Charleston of businessmen supporting the completion of the Cheraw and Salisbury Railroad between Wadesboro and [Cheraw](#) ^[3]. By 1878 he was proprietor and editor of the *Pee Dee Herald* in Wadesboro, as well as the owner of a general store and a captain in the State Guard. He also was selling building lots in Wadesboro and, as secretary of the Dixie Agricultural and Mechanical Association, he arranged the first annual fair in the town.

Recognizing the potentials of [Anson County](#) ^[4] to appeal to northern farmers, businessmen, and tourists, he began distributing publicity releases to northern newspapers pointing out the availability of inexpensive and fertile land. Governor [Thomas J. Jarvis](#) ^[5] learned of the enthusiasm being generated by Patrick's efforts and the matter of immigration began to be discussed. A group of around two hundred families organized to purchase 20,000 acres of land that Patrick consented to secure for them. The State Board of Agriculture, Immigration, and Statistics became interested, and the governor named Patrick to be North Carolina's first general immigration agent. In July 1883 he became head of the Department of Immigration.

Dr. George H. Sadelson, a physician from Lockport, N.Y., settled in [Moore County](#) ^[6] and began to praise the healthful qualities of the longleaf pine belt of the Sandhills. Patrick had relatives in the community and, in consultation with residents there, developed plans for a health resort. After conferring with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he learned that the climate and soil of the Sandhills were similar to those of France and Italy where grape- and peach-growing flourished. Public health officials in Washington also agreed with Dr. Sadelson that the area's climate and air were beneficial to persons suffering from pulmonary and other respiratory diseases. After carefully considering several sites and in consultation with the newly enlarged Seaboard Air-Line Railway, Patrick used his own resources in March 1884 to purchase 675 acres in Moore County. He organized the New England Manufacturing, Mining, and Estate Company and laid out a town first called Vineland but soon renamed Southern Pines. Securing the recommendation of physicians in New England and the Middle Atlantic states, he issued brochures and other material to attract newcomers.

With Edward G. Stevens and Company of Clinton, Mass., serving as real estate agent, the Southern Pines Resort Company was also formed. A hotel, the Patrick House, was opened and guests began arriving before the end of 1884. The railroad offered special fares to those who wanted to visit the site when considering a move. By 1910 Southern Pines had become one of the state's most popular recreation centers.

Even as Patrick launched one town, he took steps to start another. In March 1885 south of Southern Pines he bought 772 acres of land that at first was called Patrick Plantation but became the winter resort of Pinebluff. Here he built his own home and soon had a printing office where he issued newspapers, pamphlets, and brochures. His *Southern Home-Seekers' Guide* was widely circulated in the North. A similar publication was *Our Sunny Home*, but he also used the columns of the *Bulletin* of the Board of Agriculture to publicize the Sandhills. As the state's immigration agent, Patrick designated a number of subagents in several northern states and by 1886 was able to report that 125 northern newspapers and some 30 subagents were engaged. Each paid his own expenses but received a commission on the sale of land. The state sent exhibitions to ten fairs in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in 1885. Patrick also frequently toured the North himself, sometimes speaking at public meetings and enlivening the occasion with minstrel shows that accompanied him. It was observed that Patrick "was no verbal firebrand by Southern standards of the 1880s, but he spoke articulately and sensibly." In 1886 a Northern-Born Settlers' Convention was held in [Raleigh](#) ^[7] to enable newcomers to exchange views and to generate publicity to induce others to come.

In July 1887 Patrick reported to the Board of Agriculture that a new resort, Avoca in [Bertie County](#) ^[8], had been established, and the next year it was announced that two men from New Jersey had established a silk mill in Wadesboro. Due in large measure to Patrick's efforts, a few French grape growers settled in the region as well as a great number of Scottish crofters. But more notable were large numbers of visitors and settlers from the North, many of whom brought capital for investment. In 1887 it was estimated that more than \$500,000 from other states had been invested in farmland, manufacturing, mining, and town properties. This produced in excess of \$260,000 in revenue, largely from property taxes. The state of North Carolina spent less than \$3,000 in salaries for Patrick and his clerk, office expenses, travel, and printing.

When James W. Tufts of Boston arrived in the Sandhills in 1895, Patrick was on hand to guide him around so that Tufts might select the site of the future Pinehurst ^[9]. The success of his own ventures made Patrick a source of advice and guidance for others; he assisted in such town projects as Roseland in Moore County, Peachland in Anson County, Vaughn in Warren County ^[10], Southmont in Davidson County ^[11], and Patrick in South Carolina.

For his success Patrick was commended not only in the state but also by progressive leaders elsewhere. Newspapers in Virginia recommended that officials there seek his advice. In 1889 he was named chairman of the executive committee and special commissioner in charge of planning exhibitions for the Southern Inter-State Immigration Convention in Montgomery, Ala. The Winston-Salem Southbound Railroad ^[12] was largely the product of his genius for development and promotion.

Other interests also claimed Patrick's attention. He championed the cause of North Carolina's Confederate veterans, helping them secure the state's first substantial pension system for disabled and destitute veterans. Confederate President Jefferson Davis commended him for his work on behalf of the veterans. On several occasions Patrick served as manager of the state fair, and in 1892 he was in charge of the exposition marking Raleigh's centennial.

Poor health in the early 1890s caused Patrick to relinquish some of his work, but by 1896 he was fully recovered. For fifteen years he was industrial agent of the Seaboard Air-Line Railway, and for five years he held the same post with the Southern Pacific Railroad with headquarters in Houston, Tex. After returning from Texas he acquired and developed extensive property in the Chimney Rock area of Rutherford County ^[13] and was largely responsible for building the excellent highway from Asheville ^[14] to Charlotte ^[15] by way of Chimney Rock.

Although he became less active after the turn of the century, he made occasional trips to the North, especially to Maine where he served as president of the Southern Pines Maine Association. His interest in Southern Pines at home also continued—he brought Japanese merchants from San Francisco to establish a Japanese art store and a Belgian artist to do landscape and portrait painting. One of his last projects was a colonization and industrial scheme called "Hope Isle" to relocate a number of blacks on some sea islands between Savannah and Norfolk. He planned to raise \$1.5 million to purchase 4,000 acres for a new town with industries, churches, schools, and a civic center.

Temperate in his eating and drinking, Patrick was an early advocate of natural foods. He was a Democrat ^[16] and a member of the Methodist church and supported vocational education. In 1881 he married Hattie Elizabeth Patterson of Patterson Springs, Cleveland County ^[17], and they were the parents of two daughters and a son. Patrick died at the Southland Hotel in Southern Pines and was buried in the family plot at East View Cemetery, Wadesboro. An oil portrait of him hangs in the Pinebluff town hall. His papers and correspondence were stored for many years in Southern Pines but have now been lost or destroyed.

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