

Henry Brevard: From Enslaved Ironworker to Landowner and Brevard Chapel Church Founder

Henry Brevard was born sometime between 1837 and 1843, probably in Lincoln County, North Carolina, during the final generation of American slavery. A marriage record for him identifies his parents as Ephraim Davidson and Nancy Brevard, a pairing that, by naming convention and regional context, strongly suggests both were enslaved within the interconnected Davidson and Brevard households in Lincoln County's iron-manufacturing district.¹

Number 512.—MARRIAGE LICENSE AND CERTIFICATE FOR THE USE OF MINISTERS OR J. P.'s.—Loose, 43 cts. per 100. Put up in pads, 60 cts. per 100.—Cash with order.—Printed and for sale at Harrell's Printing House, Weldon, N. C.—6-22-93-6000.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, } Office REGISTER OF DEEDS.
Lincoln COUNTY. } *Dec. 26* 189*4*

To any Ordained Minister of any Religious Denomination, or any Justice of the Peace of said County

having applied to me for a LICENSE for the Marriage

of *Henry Brevard* of *Lincoln* Co.
 age *51* years, color *col*, the son of *Ephraim Davidson*
 and *Nancy Brevard* the father now *dead*, the mother *dead*
dead resident of *Lincoln* and *Eliza Seear*
 of *Lincoln* age *25* years, color *col*
col daughter of *Solomon Seear* and *Vicie Seear*
 the father *living* the mother *dead*, resident of *Lincoln*

*And the written consent of _____ the _____ of the said _____ to the proposed marriage having been filed with me. And there being no legal impediment to such marriage known to me, you are hereby authorized at any time within one year from the date hereof, to celebrate the proposed marriage at any place within the said County.

You are required, within two months after you shall have celebrated such marriage, to return this License to me, at my office, with your signature subscribed to the certificate under this License and with blanks therein filled according to the facts, under penalty of forfeiting two hundred dollars to the use of any person who shall sue for the same.

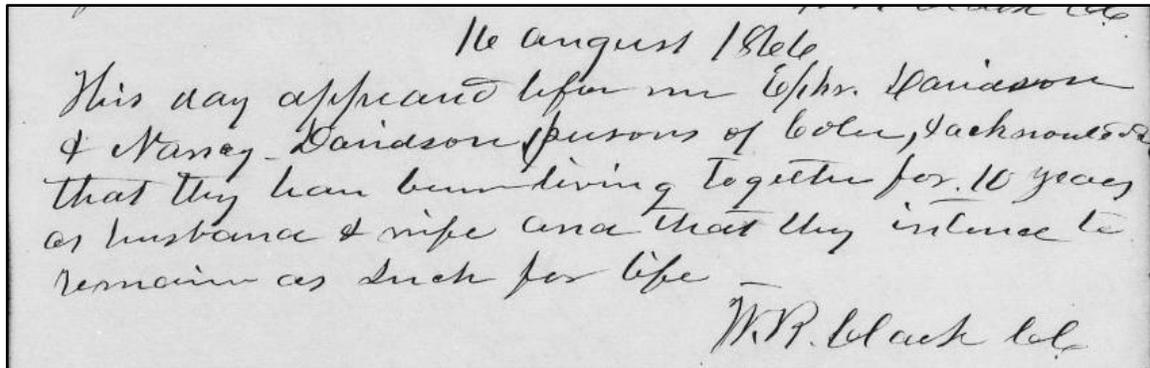
J. F. William
 Register of Deeds.

1 Name of person applying for license.	7 Mother of man to be married.	1 Residence.	13 Living or dead.
2 Name of man to be married, in full.	8 Living or dead.	13 Age.	13 Residence, if known, if not, state unknown.
3 Residence.	9 Living or dead.	14 White or colored.	* If both parties are over 18 years of age, strike out.
4 Age.	10 Residence if known, if not, state unknown.	15 Father's name.	
5 White or colored.	11 Name of woman to be married, in full.	16 Mother's name.	
6 Father of man to be married.		17 Living or dead.	

An 1866 Freedmen's Bureau cohabitation record for Ephraim Davidson and Nancy Brevard, however, raises questions about Henry's paternity. The

¹ Lincoln County, North Carolina, 1894 marriage record for Henry Brevard and Elizabeth Derr, identifying parents Ephraim Davidson and Nancy Brevard; image, *Family Search* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP9F-BZJZ>).

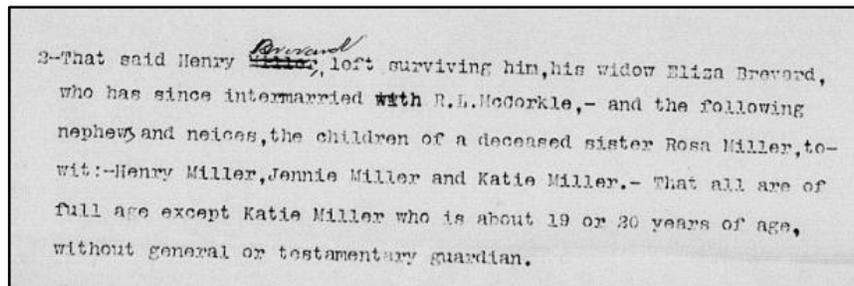
record reports that the couple had been living together as husband and wife since approximately 1856, between thirteen and nineteen years after Henry's estimated birth.



16 August 1866
This day appeared before me Ephraim Davidson
& Nancy Davidson persons of color, Jackson
that they have been living together for 10 years
as husband & wife and that they intend to
remain as such for life —
W.P. Black

This timing discrepancy suggests that Ephraim Davidson may have been Henry Brevard's stepfather rather than his biological father, a pattern in enslaved families cruelly reshaped by sale, family separation, and forced remarriage². Henry's use of his mother's surname, Brevard, rather than Davidson, further supports this interpretation.

A 1901 probate record for Henry's estate provides an additional insight into Henry's immediate family, identifying a deceased sister, Rosa Miller, confirming that Henry was part of a sibling group that survived slavery into the post-emancipation period³.



3-That said Henry ^{Brevard} ~~Davidson~~, left surviving him, his widow Eliza Brevard, who has since intermarried with R.L. McDorkle, - and the following nephews and nieces, the children of a deceased sister Rosa Miller, to-wit: - Henry Miller, Jennie Miller and Katie Miller. - That all are of full age except Katie Miller who is about 19 or 20 years of age, without general or testamentary guardian.

² Freedmen's Bureau, Records of Cohabitation, Lincoln County, North Carolina, 1866; Ephraim Davidson and Nancy Brevard; image, *Family Search* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP9F-LGRX>).

³ Lincoln County, North Carolina, probate records, estate of Henry Brevard, 1901, identifying deceased sister Rosa Miller; image 1692, *Family Search* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6X-5LF>)

Rosa, recorded as Rosanah Brevard in the 1870 census of Ironton Township, appears at age thirteen in a household with her inferred mother, Nancy Brevard⁴.

Miller Jackson S	7	F	B	At Home
— Hannah	4	F	B	At Home
— Rufus	20	M	B	
— Viry	12	F	B	
Brevard Nancy	40	F	B	Spool, Labour
— Rosannah	13	F	B	At Home
Harris James	20	M	B	Spool, Labour
Miller George	22	M	B	Spool, Labour

Notably, she resided only three households away from Robert Alfred Brevard, her family's former enslaver⁵. Also enumerated nearby was George Miller, who would later become her husband. By 1880, Rose appeared as Rosannah Miller, married to George Miller, with children Alice, Henry, Eugene, Willie, and Laura⁶.

⁴ 1870 U.S. Census, Ironton Township, Lincoln County, North Carolina, household of Charles Miller with Nancy and Rosanah Brevard; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8K-MDW>)

⁵ 1870 U.S. Census, Ironton Township, Lincoln County, North Carolina, household of Robert A. Brevard (preceding census page); image, Family Search (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8K-M8C?lang=en&cid=fs_copy)

⁶ 1880 U.S. Census, Lincoln County, North Carolina, household of George and Rosa Miller, listing children Alice, Henry, Eugene, Willie, and Laura; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCX7-RSN>)

22	22	Miller George	B	M	28			1
		— Rosannah	B	F	21		wife	1
		— Alice	B	F	7		daughter	1
		— Henry	B	M	5		son	1
		— Eugene	B	F	4		daughter	1
		— Willie	B	M	2		son	1
		— Laura	B	F	1		daughter	1

Between 1880 and her death prior to 24 September 1887, Rosa and George had two additional children, Eliza and Katie⁷. Rosa died sometime before that date, when George Miller remarried Clementine Simonton.⁸

Together, these references help reconstruct Henry Brevard’s family network, underscore the tragic fragmentation of enslaved families, whose relationships are often recoverable only through indirect or later-life records, and foreshadow the individuals who would later emerge in protracted court proceedings over Henry’s land after his death.

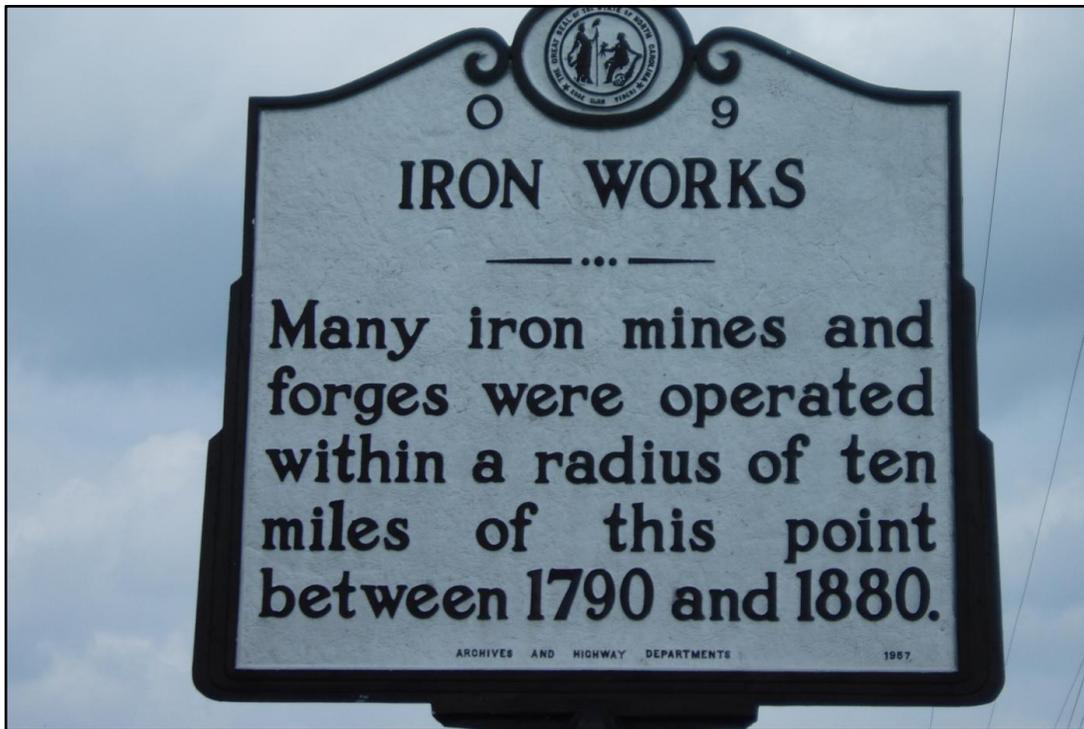
The Brevard Iron Empire That Enslaved Henry Brevard

By the late eighteenth century, Lincoln County had emerged as one of North Carolina’s most important iron-manufacturing centers, anchored along the Catawba River and powered by enslaved labor.⁹

⁷ 1900 U.S. Census, Lincoln County, North Carolina, household of George Miller and wife Clementine, enumerating Eliza Miller and Katie Miller in the household; image, *Family Search* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MSYB-BNM>)

⁸ Lincoln County, North Carolina, marriage record for George Miller and Clementine Simonton, 24 September 1887; image, *Family Search* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP9X-GQF6>)

⁹ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, “Iron Works of Lincoln County,” January 18, 2024. (<https://www.dncr.nc.gov/blog/2024/01/18/iron-works-o-9>)



This industry took root under Captain Alexander Brevard, father of Robert A. Brevard, whose entrepreneurial expansion of iron furnaces fundamentally shaped the region's economy and landscape. Beginning in the 1790s, Alexander Brevard acquired land and constructed major furnaces, including Mount Tirzah and Rehoboth, while his brother-in-law, General Joseph Graham, built nearby Vesuvius Furnace, together forming an interconnected iron corridor in eastern Lincoln County¹⁰¹¹. These furnaces produced pig iron, tools, and implements vital to the regional economy, and they required a skilled, coerced workforce of enslaved men trained as blacksmiths, founders, and laborers¹². The imposing Mount Tirzah estate, often later remembered simply as “the Brevard House”, stood as both an architectural symbol of

¹⁰ Lincoln Landmarks, Facebook post, February 6, 2023 (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=183182647735160&set=pb.100081302775195.-2207520000&type=3>).

¹¹ National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, “History of Vesuvius Furnace.”

¹² North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, “Iron Works of Lincoln County,” January 18, 2024 (<https://www.ncdar.org/VesuviusFurnace/html/history.html>).

planter-industrial wealth and a physical reminder that this prosperity rested on enslaved labor.¹³



Photo of Brevard House, which was burned down in 1968.

Within this industrial world, enslaved Black men like Henry Brevard would have acquired specialized ironworking skills that later translated into post-emancipation trades, directly linking the Brevard family's industrial enterprise to the lived experience of those they enslaved¹⁴.

¹³ Lincoln Landmarks, Facebook post, February 6, 2023 (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=183182647735160&set=pb.100081302775195.-2207520000&type=3>).

¹⁴ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, "Iron Works of Lincoln County," January 18, 2024 (<https://www.ncdar.org/VesuviusFurnace/html/history.html>).

Enslavement and the Iron Industry Context

Multiple threads of evidence point to Henry's enslavement within the Brevard iron enterprise and to enslaver Robert Alfred Brevard.



Robert Alfred Brevard (1799-1879)

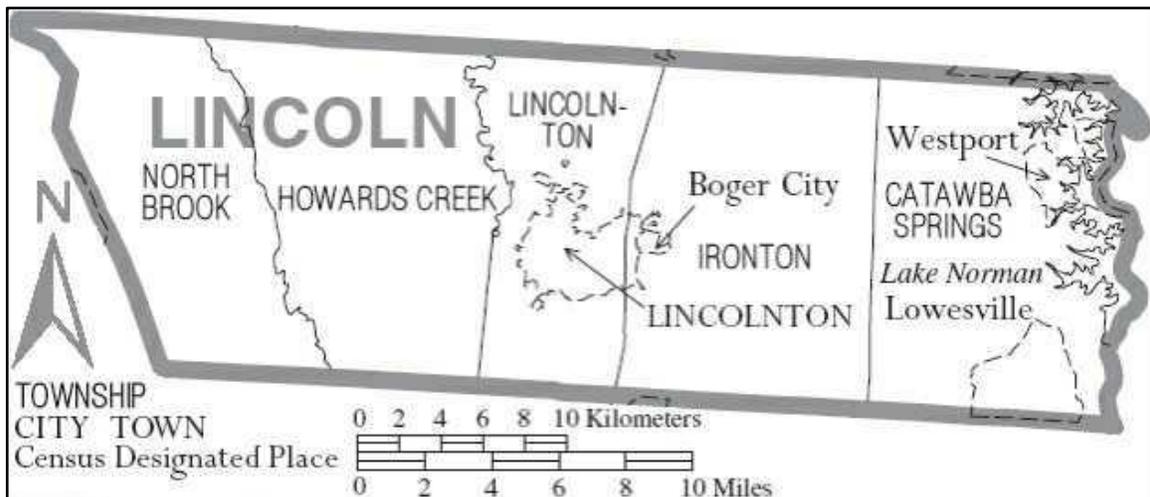
During Henry's lifetime, only two Brevard households, Robert A. Brevard and his son, Alexander Franklin Brevard, are documented as enslavers within Lincoln and adjacent Catawba County's iron-manufacturing district.¹⁵

¹⁵ 1860 U.S. Census and Slave Schedule, Lincoln County, NC; Robert A. Brevard, slaveholding entry; image, *Family Search* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WK5L-J53Z?lang=en&cid=fs_copy).



Alexander Franklin Brevard (1825-1909)

Both men were deeply involved in iron manufacturing centered around Mount Tirzah in what became known as “Ironton” Township¹⁶.



The later appearance of an emancipated Henry Brevard as a skilled blacksmith in federal non-population schedules aligns closely with the labor

¹⁶ North Carolina industrial and iron-manufacturing records relating to Mount Tirzah and “Ironton” Township.

demands of this industry and supports the conclusion that he acquired his trade while enslaved to the Brevards¹⁷.

The 1860 federal census and slave schedule for Lincoln County further reinforces this conclusion, listing Robert A. Brevard as enslaving among multiple people, a twenty-two-year-old male, an age that falls squarely within Henry Brevard's estimated birth range¹⁸.

	NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION.			Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.
			Age.	Sex.	Color.		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Robert Brevard	1	73	Male	W		
2		1	60	M	"		
3		1	64	Male	"		
4		1	48	"	"		
5		1	60	"	"		
6		1	45	"	"		
7		1	48	M	"		
8		1	45	"	"		
9		1	44	"	"		
10		1	43	"	"		
11		1	45	M	"		
12		1	35	M	"		
13		1	30	Male	"		
14		1	28	"	"		
15		1	25	"	"		
16		1	22	"	"		
17		1	20	"	"		
18		1	24	"	"		
19		1	22	M	"		

The 1870 census for Ironton Township adds additional evidence, showing Henry's mother, Nancy Brevard, and his sister, Rosanah (Rosa) Brevard,

¹⁷ 1880 U.S. Federal Non-Population Schedules; Henry Brevard, occupation blacksmith; image, Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1276/records/3434750>).

¹⁸ 1860 U.S. Census and Slave Schedule, Lincoln County, North Carolina; Robert A. Brevard, image, Family Search (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WK5L-J53Z?lang=en&cid=fs_copy).

residing only a few households away from Robert A. Brevard¹⁹. This close residential proximity between newly emancipated people and their former enslavers is a pattern often observed in census records. Both Brevard enslavers lived beyond the end of enslavement, which explains the absence of a post-war probate inventory that might have enumerated an enslaved Henry by name.

Neighborhood continuity further strengthens this case. In 1860, Robert A. Brevard's household appears adjacent to those of the Connor and Dellinger families, all documented enslavers within the same local district. After the Civil War, these same surnames reappear among Henry Brevard's closest emancipated associates and family, most notably as co-trustees in a Methodist Episcopal church land transaction. The adoption and continued use of these surnames by Henry's associates point to their prior enslavement within neighboring Brevard-area enslaver households with the same name.

Taken together, Henry Brevard's roots in Lincoln County, occupational experience in ironworking, demographic alignment in the slave census, post-emancipation residential proximity to his former enslavers, and persistent surname associations of his friends, associates, and neighbors all support the conclusion that Robert A. Brevard was Henry Brevard's enslaver.

Marriage, Family Formation, and Early Freedom

With emancipation, Henry Brevard moved quickly and boldly to build a life as a free man and for his family. On 7 August 1866, he and Susan Wingate registered their marriage in Lincolnton Township, Lincoln County, through a cohabitation record with the Freedman's Bureau, which documented that

¹⁹ 1870 U.S. Census, Lincoln County, North Carolina, household of Rosanah Brevard; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8K-MD7>).

the couple had already been living as husband and wife for approximately six years prior to emancipation²⁰.

7th Augt. 1866
 Personally appeared Henry Brevard & Susan Wingate
 & acknowledged themselves as man and wife and
 that they have been living together as such for about 6
 years. & wish to remain as such

This record reflects a marriage formed during slavery and later legalized, a common practice among formerly enslaved couples seeking legal recognition of long-standing unions.

The household enumerated in the 1870 federal census provides further insight into Henry and Susan Brevard’s family structure during the early years of freedom. In addition to Henry and Susan, the census lists two young males living in their household: Matthew Brevard, born about 1854, and Haywood Brevard, born about 1867²¹.

133	133	Brevard Henry	33	M	13	Black Smith
		Susan	35	F	13	Washing House
		Haywood	3	M	13	
		Matthew	16	M	13	Black Smith

Matthew Brevard was listed as a blacksmith, the same skilled trade practiced by Henry. Based on age, occupation, and shared surname, Matthew may

²⁰ Freedmen’s Bureau, Records of Cohabitation, Lincoln Township, Lincoln County, North Carolina; Henry Brevard and Susan Wingate, registered 7 August 1866; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QJ8B-G5GD>)

²¹ 1870 U.S. Census, Lincoln County, North Carolina, household of Henry and Susan Brevard; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8J-PQ9>).

represent either a younger brother of Henry Brevard or a non-relative enslaved alongside him within the Brevard iron-manufacturing enterprise. Alternatively, if Henry Brevard’s birth is placed closer to 1837 rather than 1843, Matthew could plausibly be Henry’s son, born during slavery prior to his union with Susan, and raised by Henry within his trade tradition. While the surviving records do not permit a definitive conclusion, the census strongly suggests a close familial or apprenticeship-based relationship rooted in shared enslavement and skilled labor.

The second boy, Haywood Brevard, born about 1867, was almost certainly the son of Henry the son of Henry and Susan Brevard²².

33	33	Brevard Henry	B. 7/14		1	Booksmith's Hammer
		Susan	B. 7/38	Wife	1	Keeping house
		Haywood	B. 11/13	Son	1	Iron Works farm
		Reel Williams	B. 11/19	Hired	1	Booksmith's Hammer
		Deer Jane	B. 7/20	Hired	1	Iron Works farm

His birth closely follows the 1866 registration of Henry and Susan’s marriage and aligns with the transition from enslaved marriage to legally recognized family formation. He is listed as Henry and Susan’s son in the 1880 census. Together, these census entries underscore the continuity of Henry Brevard’s household across slavery and freedom.

Susan Wingate Brevard’s lineage would later prove central to Henry’s extended family responsibilities. Through Susan’s daughter Frances Wingate Connor²³ — whom she had with Isaac “Ike” Brevard, whose relationship to Henry, if any, remains unclear— and granddaughter Sarah Connor

²² 1880 U.S. Census, Lincoln County, North Carolina, listing Haywood Brevard as son of Henry and Susan Brevard; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCX7-TXF>).

²³ Lincoln County, North Carolina 1869 Marriage record for Francis Wingate listing parents as Isaac Brevard and Susan Wingate; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP9N-VDLT>)

Carpenter²⁴, Henry became the de facto patriarch for Sarah's daughter, Susan's great-granddaughter Ola Brevard²⁵, whom he raised as his own child.



Photo Ola Brevard McCorkle (1886-1974) with her husband Logan Dodson McCorkle, nephew of Rufus LeRoy McCorkle.

Landownership and Reconstruction-Era Independence

One of the clearest markers of Henry Brevard's post-emancipation success was his acquisition of land. On 3 July 1874, less than a decade after emancipation, Henry purchased approximately ninety acres from Thomas J. Caldwell for \$300, receiving full fee-simple title²⁶.

²⁴ 1870 U.S. Census, Lincoln County, North Carolina, household of Frances (Wingate) Connor listing daughter Sarah Connor; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW8J-GK1>).

²⁵ 1974 Lincoln County, North Carolina Death record for Ola Prim McCorkle, listing her mother as Sarah (Connor) Brevard; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FP7G-RT5>)

²⁶ Lincoln County, North Carolina, deed records, Thomas J. Caldwell to Henry Brevard, 3 July 1874; image, Family Search (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-896S-3V88?view=explore>).

This Indenture, made this the 1st day of July in the year Eighteen hundred and seventy four Between Thomas J. Caldwell & wife Sarah Latta of the County of Lincoln and State of North Carolina of the one part, and Henry Brevard of the County of Lincoln and State of North Carolina of the other part. Witnesseth; That the said parts of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of Three hundred Dollars, to the said part of the first part in hand paid, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have sold and conveyed and do hereby sell and convey to the said part of the second part, his heirs and assigns, all that tract or parcel of land lying in the County of Lincoln and State of North Carolina, bounded as follows. Viz

Beginning at a stake in the road, thence with the meanders of the road N 87 E 17 poles to a stake in the road, thence S 79 E 32 poles to a stake thence S 88 E 32 poles to a stake, thence N 83 E 30 poles to a stake, thence N 73 1/2 poles to a stake, Mundy's Corner thence N 39 1/2 W 11 1/4 poles to a hickory, thence N 46 E 50 poles to a small pine Mundy's Corner, thence N 15 W 1 1/2 poles to a pine Mundy's Corner, thence S 45 W 136 poles to a hickory, thence S 36 E 57 poles to a stake, thence S 39 W 64 poles to the beginning. Containing by estimation 90 Acres be the same more or less, Joining lands of Wm. W. Mundy and the and also the woods, prairie, water, water courses, and all and every part thereto belonging or in any wise appertaining to the aforesaid land, And all of the estate, right, title, interest, claim, demand, dues, and right of power in law or equity.

That same year, he also acquired an additional seven-eighths of an acre from William W. Monday, a transaction that was later confirmed through court-ordered registration.²⁷

539

The Execution of a deed from
 W. W. Monday
 deed to
 Henry Brevard
 duly proven by oath of Wm. H. Edwards
 the subscribing witness and ordered
 to be registered Oct 9. 1875
 deed to Henry Brevard

²⁷ Lincoln County, North Carolina, deed and court registration records, William W. Monday to Henry Brevard, seven-eighths acre; image, Family Search (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:57WF-3QVB-59?view=explore>).

These purchases placed Henry, less than ten years after the Civil War ended, among a relatively small but growing class of Black landowners in Reconstruction-era Lincoln County.

The surviving documentation does not specify how Henry Brevard accumulated the capital necessary to acquire this land. However, given his later identification as a blacksmith, a skilled and in-demand trade in the postwar South, it is reasonable to conclude that Henry was able to leverage paid labor in the ironworking economy to convert skill into property ownership. This pattern was common among formerly enslaved craftsmen whose technical expertise provided one of the few viable pathways to economic independence during Reconstruction.

The detailed metes-and-bounds descriptions preserved in later court records confirm that these tracts formed a contiguous holding along local roads and neighboring farms, underscoring Henry's permanence and visibility as a property owner.

Blacksmith, Community Leader, and Church Trustee

Henry's listing as a blacksmith in the 1880 federal non-population schedules confirms that he practiced a skilled trade, likely carried forward from his years in bondage.



Illustration of a 19th-century African American blacksmith, representing the type of work Henry Brevard likely performed.

Skilled ironworkers often occupied respected positions within Black rural communities, and Henry's subsequent actions reflect that status²⁸.

²⁸ 1880 Federal Non-Population Schedule, Lincoln County, NC, listing Haywood Brevard's occupation as blacksmith; image, Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1276/records/3434750>).

Name of Corporation, Company, or Individual producing to the value of \$500 annually.	Name of Business, Manufacture, or Product.	Capital (real and personal) invested in the business.	Greatest number of hands employed at any one time during the year.	Average number of hands employed.			Wages and Hours of Labor.						Months in Operation.			Value of Material (excluding Mill Race and Machinery) Consumed during the year.	Value of Product (including Machine and Mill Race) Consumed during the year.	
				Males above 16 years.	Females above 16 years.	Children and youth.	Number of hours in the ordinary day of labor.	May to November.	December to May.	Average day's wages for an unskilled laborer.	Average day's wages for an ordinary laborer.	Total amount paid in wages during the year.	On full time.	On 3/4 time only.	On 1/2 time only.			Value of Material (including Mill Race and Machinery) Consumed during the year.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Brevard & Henry	Blacksmithing	\$1000	3	1 1/2			12	10	1 1/2	80	450	11					200	850
Michels	Blacksmithing	\$100	2	1 1/2			8	8	1 1/2	84	625	12					300	915

On 29 January 1885, Henry and his wife Susan sold seven-eighths of an acre from their land to a group of trustees, Henry Brevard himself, Augustus Derr, and Adolphus Dellinger, identified explicitly as trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church²⁹.

This indenture made on the Twentieth day of Jan. A.D. 1884 between Henry Brevard of the county of Lincoln and State of North Carolina and Adolphus Dellinger Augustus Derr and Henry Brevard Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of the first part Witnesses that for and in consideration of the sum of ten Dollars to him paid the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged the said Henry Brevard has given granted bargained and sold with full power sole give grant bargain and sell unto the said Adolphus Dellinger Augustus Derr and Henry Brevard Trustees as apparent and their successors in office a certain tract or parcel of land lying and being in the county and State aforesaid on the Turkeyfield Ferry road and joining the land of the Rock Spring Farm of George B. D. Bolick and others and bounded as follows beginning at a rock D. C. Bolick's and the corner of the Rock Spring Farm of George B. D. Bolick and running N 50° E 24 poles to a rock then S 60° E 14 poles thence S 85° West 2 poles to the beginning containing by estimation seven eighths of an acre to have and to hold together with soil and appurtenances the privileges and advantages thereunto belonging in and unto the Trustees of the said Church

²⁹ Lincoln County, North Carolina, deed records, Henry and Susan Brevard to trustees Henry Brevard, Augustus Derr, and Adolphus Dellinger, 29 January 1885; image, Family Search (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-L98W-Q5Y2?view=explore>).

This transaction established the land on which Brevard Chapel would stand, permanently linking Henry's name to one of the region's oldest African American religious institutions.

Loss, Remarriage, and Extended Family Care

Susan Wingate Brevard died in March 1893 and was buried at Bethel United Methodist Church³⁰, a white congregation that appears to have supported, or at least been connected to, the founding of Brevard Chapel. Her death marked a turning point in Henry's later life.

In 1894, Henry married his second wife, Elizabeth (Eliza) Derr, in a ceremony officiated by Rev. William Augustus Derr³¹. Augustus Derr and Eliza Derr were both later buried at Saint James United Methodist Church, an African American congregation, suggesting a possible family connection as well as denominational networks that linked Brevard Chapel with other Black Methodist communities in the region.

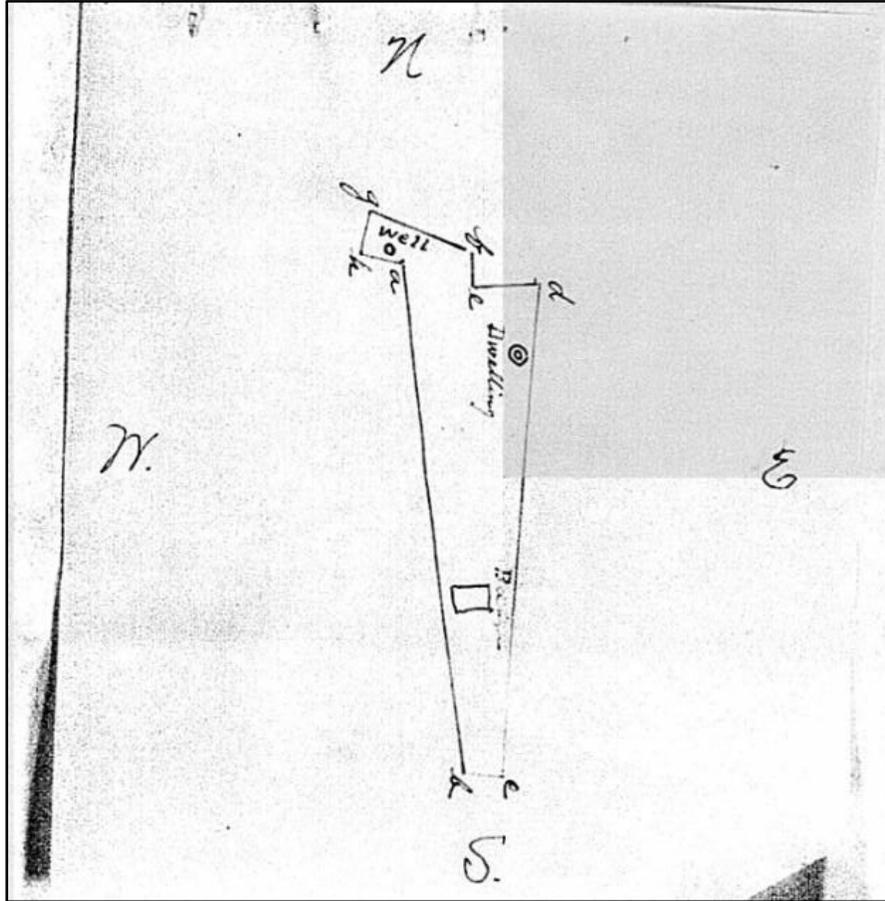
Death and Probate: In Loco Parentis

Henry Brevard died on 10 January 1899, owning approximately ninety acres of land in Lincoln County, North Carolina³².

³⁰ Lincoln County, NC, death record for Susan Wingate Brevard, March 1893; burial at Bethel United Methodist Church; *FindAGrave* (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/263820829/susan-brevard>).

³¹ Lincoln County, North Carolina, marriage record for Henry Brevard and Elizabeth (Eliza) Derr, 1894; image, *Family Search* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP9B-3M7B>)

³² Lincoln County, North Carolina, probate records, estate of Henry Brevard, 1901, listing his death date as January 10, 1899; image 1692, *Family Search* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6X-5LF>).



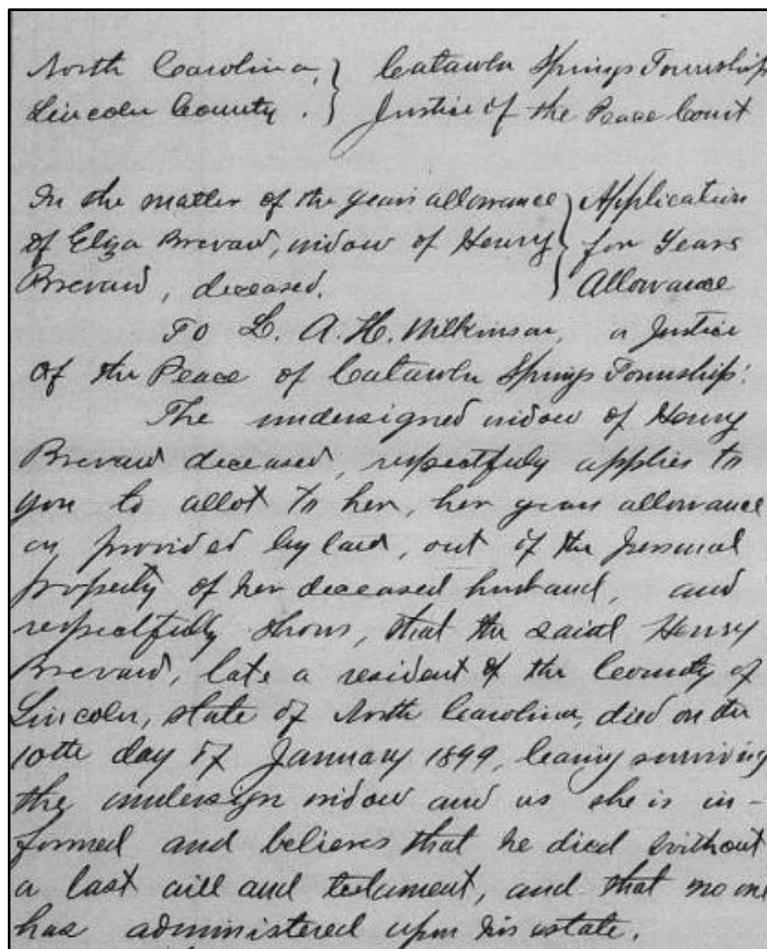
Mapping of Henry Brevard's land, as documented in the 1901 probate records of his estate.

He died without a will, setting in motion a probate process that would ultimately reshape both the ownership of his land and the recognition of the family relationships he had built during his lifetime.

Court records show that Henry Brevard had been acting *in loco parentis*—in the place of a parent—to children who were not his own. One was Crosby Nixon Brevard, Eliza's son from a prior relationship; the other was Ola Brevard, age fourteen, identified as the great-granddaughter of Henry's first

wife, Susan Wingate³³. Together, the records confirm that Henry and Eliza assumed parental responsibility for these children, underscoring Henry Brevard's role as a family anchor that extended beyond biological parentage.

Just weeks after Henry's death, Eliza applied for a widow's year's allowance totaling \$500. Notably, \$200 of that amount was designated for the care of children living in the household—further evidence of the family Henry had been supporting. The remaining \$300 represented Eliza's personal widow's share³⁴.



North Carolina, } Catawba Springs Township
Lincoln County. } Justice of the Peace Court

In the matter of the year's allowance } Application
of Eliza Brevard, widow of Henry } for Years
Brevard, deceased. } Allowance

To L. A. McMillan, a Justice
of the Peace of Catawba Springs Township:

The undersigned widow of Henry
Brevard deceased, respectfully applies to
you to allot to her, her year's allowance
as provided by law, out of the personal
property of her deceased husband, and
respectfully shows, that the said Henry
Brevard, late a resident of the County of
Lincoln, State of North Carolina, died on the
10th day of January 1899, leaving surviving
the undersigned widow and as she is in-
formed and believes that he died without
a last will and testament, and that no one
has administered upon his estate.

³³ Lincoln County, North Carolina, probate records, estate of Henry Brevard, petitions filed 1899–1901, establishing *in loco parentis* care for Crosby Nixon Brevard and Ola Brevard; image, Family Search (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:57WF-375G-19?lang=en&i=227>).

³⁴ Lincoln County 1899 probate and Superior Court records documenting court-ordered details of widow's dower awarded to Eliza Brevard McCorkle; image 1725, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6X-5LF>).

In 1900, Eliza remarried Rufus Leroy McCorkle³⁵, who soon became administrator of Henry Brevard's estate.

Cash with order.—Printed and for sale at Harrell's Printing House, Weldon, N. C.—10-24-'99.—5000.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA, } Office REGISTER OF DEEDS.
 Lincoln COUNTY. } June 31 1900

To any Ordained Minister of any Religious Denomination, or any Justice of the Peace of Said County:

1 *Rufus McCorkle* having applied to me for a LICENSE for the marriage
 of 2 *himself* of 3 *Lincoln County*
 age 4 *31* years, color 5 *colored*, the son of 6 *Eliza McCorkle*
 and 7 *Eliza McCorkle* the father now 8 *Dead* the mother 9
Dead resident of 10 *Brevard* and 11 *Eliza*
Brevard of 12 *Lincoln County* age 13 *29* years, color 14
Colored daughter of 15 *Solomon Derr* and 16 *Vicy Derr*
 the father 17 *Living* the mother 18 *Dead* resident of 19
Lincoln County

* And the written consent of _____ the _____
 of the said _____ to the proposed marriage having been filed with me,
 and there being no legal impediment to such marriage known to me, you are hereby authorized, at any
 time within one year from the date hereof, to celebrate the proposed marriage at any place within the
 said County.

You are required, within two months after you shall have celebrated such marriage, to return this
 License to me, at my office, with your signature subscribed to the certificate under this License, and with
 blanks therein filled according to the facts, under penalty of forfeiting two hundred dollars to the use of
 any person who shall sue for the same.

H. A. Self
 Register of Deeds

1. Name of person applying for license.	7. Mother of man to be married, Living or dead.	12. Residence.	18. Living or dead.
2. Name of man to be married, in full.	8. Living or dead.	13. Age.	19. Residence if known, if not, state unknown.
3. Residence.	9. Living or dead.	14. White or colored.	*If both parties are over 18 years of age, strike out.
4. Age.	10. Residence if known, if not, state unknown.	15. Father's name.	
5. White or Colored.	11. Name of woman to be married, in full.	16. Mother's name.	
6. Father of man to be married.		17. Living or dead.	

³⁵ Lincoln County, North Carolina 1900 Marriage record for Rufus Leroy McCorkle and Eliza (Derr) Brevard; image, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QP9J-47F3>)

Lincolnton, N. C.

North Carolina.
Lincoln County.

In the Superior Court.
March 22 1901.

In the matter of the Administration of the
estate of Henry Brevard, deceased.)
Ex Parte.)

To the Honorable Clerk of
the Superior Court.-
Lincoln County, North Carolina.

The undersigned widow
of Henry Brevard, deceased, now the wife of Leroy McCorkle, hereby
relinquishes her right to administer upon the estate of her late
deceased husband, Henry Brevard, in favor of *Leroy McCorkle*
and respectfully request your honorable court to appoint the said
Leroy McCorkle as administrator of said estate.

Eliza McCorkle formerly
Eliza Brevard, widow of Henry Brevard,
deceased.

Court filings identified the lawful heirs as Eliza and Henry's nieces and nephew, Henry, Jennie (Eugenia), and Katie Miller (a minor), the children of his deceased sister, Rosannah (Rose) Brevard Miller. Neither Matthew nor Hawood Brevard are listed, indicating that they were either not eligible heirs or had died by 1900.

By 1901, the court determined that Henry Brevard's personal property was insufficient to cover estate debts, making the sale of land unavoidable. After Eliza's legal right to dower was established, approximately eighty-one acres remained subject to sale³⁶.

What followed was a series of court-ordered land sales between 1901 and 1902. Although Eliza repeatedly emerged as the highest bidder, her

³⁶ Lincoln County probate and Superior Court record, 1901; image 1728, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6X-5LF>).

purchases were repeatedly challenged by higher post-auction bids from an outside buyer. Acting in the name of securing a “fair price,” the court set aside completed sales and ordered re-sales.³⁷

The matter ultimately concluded in March 1902, when the court confirmed the final sale of the eighty-one-acre tract to Eliza McCorkle and barred the claims of Henry Brevard’s nieces and nephew³⁸.

North Carolina,
Lincoln County.

In the Superior Court.
Before A. Nixon, C. S. C.

R. L. McCorkle Administrator of
Henry Brevard, deceased.

vs

Final Decree.

Henry Miller and others.

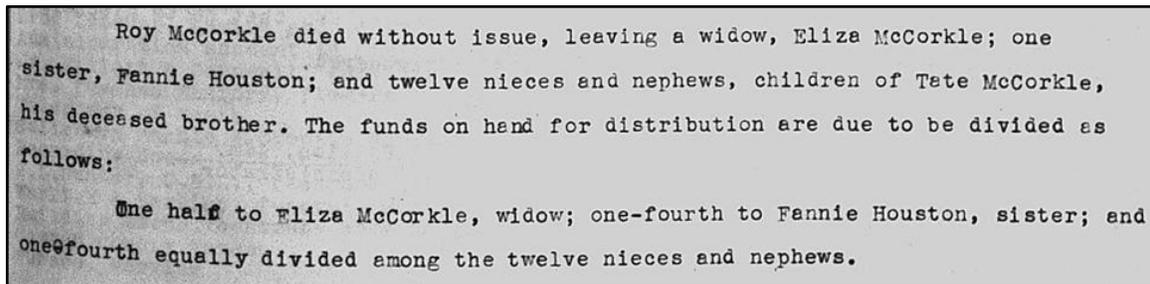
This cause coming on to be heard upon the report of sale and papers filed in this cause. - And it appearing to the court, that the report of sale had on the 31st day of March 1902, per order of this court, has remained on file for more than twenty days, and no exception and further bids having been filed, and it appearing to the court that the lands sold herein to-wit the 81 acre tract, has brought a full and fair price. - It is therefore upon motion of plaintiff's counsel, ordered, adjudged and decreed, that the sale had on the 31st day of March 1902, at which time Eliza McCorkle, became the last and highest bidder, at the sum of two hundred and eighty dollars, be and the same is hereby in all things confirmed and approved. - It is further ordered, that R. L. McCorkle Administrator and Commissioner, be and he is hereby authorized and directed to convey by deed said lands, adjoining the lands of R. D. Bolick, Adolphus Dellinger, Augustus Derr, Charley Robinson, F. Q. Howard, Mrs Jane Shelton, Rock Spring's Camp Grounds and others, containing eighty one acre more or less, to Eliza McCorkle, upon her complying with the terms of sale and payment of the purchase money in full. - That the rights, title and claims of the defendants Henry Miller, Jennie Miller, and Katie Miller, be and there are hereby forever barred. - It is further ordered, that the proceeds arising from sale

³⁷ Lincoln County probate and Superior Court records documenting court-ordered sale of Henry Brevard’s land, 1901–1902; image, *Family Search* (image 1728, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6X-5LF>)).

³⁸ Lincoln County probate and Superior Court records documenting sale of Henry Brevard’s land to Eliza McCorkle, 1902; image, *Family Search* (image 1668, Family Search (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VH6X-5LF>)).

The proceeds were applied to settle the estate, closing a chapter that reveals both the strength of the family Henry built, and the legal pressures that shaped its outcome.

The land Eliza McCorkle acquired through Henry Brevard's estate remained in the family for decades, but ultimately it did not remain intact.



Roy McCorkle died without issue, leaving a widow, Eliza McCorkle; one sister, Fannie Houston; and twelve nieces and nephews, children of Tete McCorkle, his deceased brother. The funds on hand for distribution are due to be divided as follows:
One half to Eliza McCorkle, widow; one-fourth to Fannie Houston, sister; and one-fourth equally divided among the twelve nieces and nephews.

After Eliza's death in 1940, the property passed to multiple heirs, and in 1947 the court ordered it sold for division of proceeds among her and Leroy McCorkle's heirs because it could not be fairly divided³⁹, bringing to an end family landholding that began with Henry Brevard's purchase in 1874.

Legacy

Henry Brevard's life traces a powerful arc common to many Black families in the post-Civil War South yet rarely documented to the level of detail they deserve. Born enslaved into an iron-manufacturing regime, Brevard developed a skilled trade, secured land in his own name, helped found a church that bore his name, and raised not only his own household but the children of his extended family. Through Brevard Chapel and the descendants who carried his name and legacy into the twentieth century, Henry Brevard's story is remembered as a remarkable testament to resilience and the enduring power of family and community after emancipation.

³⁹ Lincoln County, North Carolina, probate records, estate of Eliza McCorkle, partition proceedings resulting in court-ordered sale for division, 1947; image, *Family Search* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:37SQ-29DX-ZQ9?view=explore>)

Brevard Chapel: Faith, Community, and Preservation

Brevard Chapel stands as one of the oldest surviving African American churches in Lincoln County, North Carolina. Constructed in the 1870s on land donated by Henry Brevard, the chapel became a spiritual and social anchor for formerly enslaved families in the post–Civil War era.

According to long-standing oral church tradition, African Americans in the Brevard community once walked four to five miles to worship at St. James Methodist Church in the Little Egypt community⁴⁰. In the 1870s, Henry Brevard donated an acre of his land for the construction of a closer house of worship, which became known as Brevard’s Chapel. Brevard Chapel and St. James Church would later share a cemetery, reflecting overlapping congregational and familial networks⁴¹. This tradition aligns with documentary evidence linking the Brevard, Derr, and Dellinger families and situates Brevard Chapel within a broader landscape of Black Methodist religious life in post-emancipation Lincoln County.

The modest wooden structure is notable for its Carpenter Gothic architectural style, a rare and increasingly endangered form among rural Black churches of the Reconstruction period⁴². For generations, Brevard Chapel hosted worship services, community gatherings, and rites of passage, embodying the central role of the Black church in rebuilding communal life after emancipation.

⁴⁰ Local church tradition regarding worship at St. James Methodist Church in the Little Egypt community.

⁴¹ Lincoln County cemetery records showing shared burial grounds between Brevard Chapel and St. James Methodist Church.

⁴² Architectural surveys documenting Carpenter Gothic rural churches in North Carolina.



Although the congregation eventually declined and the chapel closed in the early twenty-first century, its historical significance remained clear. In recent years, community advocates and preservation organizations now led by HEARTS Collaborative, Inc. have mobilized to prevent the demolition of the structure and to pursue a restoration strategy that honors both the building and the people who created it⁴³.

Today, Brevard Chapel is recognized not only as a religious site, but as a tangible link to Henry Brevard's life and to the broader story of African American self-determination, landownership, and faith in Reconstruction-era North Carolina⁴⁴.

As one of Lincoln County's most significant African American historic landmarks, its preservation is essential to safeguarding the county's post-emancipation Black history.

⁴³ Lake Norman Publications, "Local Entities Rally to Preserve Brevard's Chapel UMC." (<https://www.lakenormanpublications.com/articles/local-entities-rally-to-preserve-brevards-chapel-umc/>)

⁴⁴ Preservation advocacy records relating to Brevard Chapel, early twenty-first century.

Andre Kearns (Andre@BlackAncestries.com) is a respected genealogist, author, and speaker, and the founder and CEO of [Black Ancestries](#), a firm dedicated to helping people of African descent uncover, celebrate, and preserve family history. With degrees from Morehouse College and Harvard Business School, Andre blends analytical rigor with compelling storytelling to make genealogy both accessible and deeply meaningful.

Over the past 20 years, he has conducted in-depth research on African American lineages, specializing in tracing ancestors through slavery and beyond. He has traced his enslaved Kearns ancestors back to the Cedar Grove plantation in Huntersville, Mecklenburg, North Carolina, now protected and operated by the HEARTS Collaborate. Andre is an active leader in national genealogical and historical organizations and serves as co-chair of the HEARTS Collaborative Reunion Project. His forthcoming book, *Finding Cornerstone Stories: Uncovering Inspiration in Your Family's History* (2026), reflects his mission to inspire families by reconnecting them with the power of their past.