Richmond Hill

Richmond Hill in Yadkin (formerly Surry) County was the home of former North Carolina Chief Justice Richmond Mumford Pearson. Judge Pearson conducted a private Law School here for approximately 30 years, 1848 until his death in 1878. Over 1000 students including 6 state Supreme Court justices, 3 U.S. representatives and 3 state governors attended school here. Classes were held in a modest building (no longer in existence) on the west side of the grounds or he simply under the trees on this property. Students lived on tiny log huts or boarded with local families.

This brick home, built in the mid-later 1800s was restored in the 1970s and the surrounding 30 acres have been turned into the Historic Richmond Hill Nature Park. Richmond Hill is a part of the North Carolina Civil War Trails. Judge Pearson who was opposed to secession even though he owned slaves, became known throughout state because of his rulings against the conscription of men into the Confederate Army.

Richmond Hill Nature Park is open from dawn to dusk.

This site, a part of the “Geocaching for History” program, was researched and placed by the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield North Carolina Foundation and the North Carolina Humanities Council. The goal of this program is to encourage physical activity and exploration of the history of our community.
Richmond Mumford Pearson
The Fifth Chief Justice
Richmond Hill was the home of North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice Richmond Mecklenburg Pearson (1825-1879) and his family. Pearson conducted a law school from 1868 to 1876 in a small building located next to the house. Students lived in log cabins near Pearson’s home, or boarded with local farmers. Pearson personally taught a thousand students.

Pearson, who served as chief justice from 1879 to 1879, opposed secession. During the Civil War, he championed individual rights over the power of the Confederate government. When Confederate conscription laws were enacted and men were arrested for avoiding the draft or deserting the army, Pearson—who believed the laws were unconstitutional—issued writs of habeas corpus to release several men from the county jail. The writs required a prison official to bring the prisoner into court to determine whether he had been imprisoned unlawfully and, if the judge so ruled, to free him. The Confederate government...

North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice Richmond W. Pearson conducted this house from 1868 to 1876. A handsome structure of the Greek Revival and Italianate architectural styles and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Richmond Hill Foundation restoration and maintenance.

...
Richmond Hill

Estate and Law School of
Richmond M. Pearson
Chief Justice of the N.C. Supreme Court, Teacher,
Champion of Freedom and the Rule of Law

The Man
Richmond M. Pearson moved to Yadkin from Davie County, N.C., about 1840, just before his election to the legislature in the North Carolina Supreme Court. Pearson served in the Court for 29 years, 59 of them as Chief Justice. He was known for his strict adherence to the law and his advocacy for individual rights. Succeeding Governor Zebulon Vance, he brought discipline to the Confederate Government by his use of the writ of habeas corpus to free men he believed illegally conscripted into the army. During Reconstruction, Pearson firmly refused to issue a strong executive, a group of armed citizen bands, when Republican Governor William W. Holden refused to proclaim Pearson's veto to law enforcement. Nearly impeached because of his school, Pearson then presided over the impeachment trial of the Governor, resulting in the first removal of a state governor in America.

While serving on the Supreme Court, Pearson continued his law school here at Richmond Hill. He was so kind to those poor old students and gave a tremendous amount of information and advice to them. He was an inspiration for his untold knowledge and love for this state. He was elected to the US Senate by the people, where he served.

The Estate
The original log house stood southeast of the present brick house, which was built about 1861 for Pearson's second wife, Mary McDonald Pearson. A separate kitchen once stood in the rear of the main building. Log cabins inhabited by the law students were approved about the area.

By the law 1890s the house had been abandoned for many years and was finally abandoned. At this time a program of renovation was initiated by the Yadkin County Historical Society and others. Funds came from federal, state and local governments, as well as from foundations, businesses, and individuals. The house has now been fully restored and furnished with period furniture, some donated by Pearson family descendants. Additional furnishings are still needed. The house and grounds are open to the public.

Richmond Hill Nature Park

Historic Richmond Hill Nature Park
140 Richmond Hill Road
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Nature Park Trail Guide

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