

Ownership History of the
Pierce Rector Barn
Located on the Ronnie McBride Property
(South) Marshall Township
Madison County, NC

The Ronnie McBride property is located along Rector Corner Road, opposite Rector Chapel, about 2 miles (2.7 road miles) southeast of Marshall, in the South Marshall Township of Madison County. The barn-of-interest, the Pierce Rector barn, is located in the SE portion of the 41-acre tract, near the end of H.C. Rector Farm Road (Figure 1). The barn is a hewn, timber livestock barn dated from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. Based on the property ownership history researched through the Madison County Register of Deeds, along with selected genealogical information, the most likely owner/builder of the barn is the barn's namesake, John Peirce Rector, born in 1859 and, according to census data, lived his life as a farmer until 1920 and, presumably, until his passing in 1929.

As suggested by the names of local roads, a chapel and cemetery in this part of the county, the Rector family has a long history of property ownership in the Marshall Township. Though not believed to be the barn tract, per se, the earliest Rector deed located in this area was a 155-acre tract purchased by Lewis Rector as a state-issued grant in 1814. There were no records found, but somehow this tract was later acquired by J.J. Gudger in 1843 as part of his 50,000-acre acquisition west of the French Broad River that included the entire South Marshall Township (Figure 2 diagrammatically shows the complete ownership history of the barn tract.) In 1848, the above referenced 155-acre tract was included in a subsequent purchase by Joel Rector, Lewis' grandson (Figure 3), as part of a 313-acre purchase, incorporating 4 separate tracts, shown in Figure 4. The description of tract 3 in this deed contains the phrase "which said piece of land was granted to Lewis Rector the 7th December 1814", so there is little doubt as to the lineage. Joel Rector supplemented the 1848 purchase five years later with a 200-acre purchase adjoining the earlier tracts, resulting in a spread of over 500 acres. Though the exact boundaries of the tracts shown in Figure 4 are only approximated, there are enough clues in the various tract descriptions to be highly confident that the 1853 purchase did include the future barn location.

The history of the barn tract through the late 1800s is not clear, but with Joel Rector's passing in 1881, it seems most probably the barn acreage was bequeathed to his children, including Sarah, Rebecca and John Pierce, whose names all appear on various deeds, as grantors, between 1913 and 1923.

Unfortunately, the locations of these tracts could not be pinpointed due to ambiguous landmarks, missing bearings or distances and/or inaccurate or miswritten boundary calls (i.e., the description does not make geometric sense). However many of the descriptions do refer to the 'Joel Rector home tract', 'Joel Rector estate' or the 'J.P. Rector old home place', all believed to be located in the tracts shown on Figure 4. Though the exact ownership lineage has not been worked out in detail, the 1900, 1910 and 1920 census data all list Pierce Rector as a farmer living in the Marshall Township, specifically on Rector Road, in 1910 and 1920. If the barn dates to around the turn of the century, it seems most likely that Pierce Rector was responsible for the construction.

The grantees for the above referenced deeds in the early 20th century, all shown in Figure 2, were either J. P. Rector or his eldest son, Hilliard C. Rector, Sr. (note the road the barn is currently located on is named after Hilliard Rector). Hilliard passed away in 1957, again, presumably, leaving much of his estate to his children. The next definitive deeds are from 1966 when two 50-acre tracts, one of which contained the barn, were conveyed to Hilliard Rector, Jr. (Figure 5). The Rectors retained ownership of the barn until these same two tracts were sold to Ronnie and Sharon McBride in January 1981. Ronnie McBride obtained sole ownership of the property in 2007.