Killebrew's Mill, Dancy's Mill: One Unnamed Branch to Tyancokey Swamp

Tyancokey Swamp / Walnut Creek Colonial Patent Study · Edgecombe County, North Carolina · 8 July 2026

Nowhere in the surviving Edgecombe County deed record does the small branch feeding the Tyancokey Swamp drainage, east of the Griffis and Griffith lands, receive a fixed, official name. Colonial surveyors and clerks identified it instead, deed after deed, by whichever mill stood on its banks at the time — first Killebrew's, later Dancy's. Even the 1903–05 USGS topographic survey, the base map for this whole study, leaves the channel unlabeled. What reads, on a first pass through the citations, as two different watercourses is better explained as one continuous drainage carrying two successive working names.

The Killebrew years, 1766–1787
Robert Killebrew held 157 acres on this branch by 1766 (Db 6 p.271, out of Thomas White's original 1753 Granville grant); the tract passed by gift to Joshua Killebrew and then to Laurance Killebrew, who conveyed 100 acres of it to James Permenter Jr in 1786 with a call running along “Killebrew's patent line” to “the Mill Branch.” Two grants dated 1779 — James Permenter Jr's own 600-acre patent and John Griffis Sr's 31-acre Little Beaverdam Branch tract — both cite “Robert Killebrew's Mill Swamp” as a boundary. A separate 1787 Permenter warrant begins at “Joshua Killebrew Mill Branch” (also called Curtis Branch), tying into the same Tyancokey Swamp margin. Killebrew is the name this branch carries through the third quarter of the century.

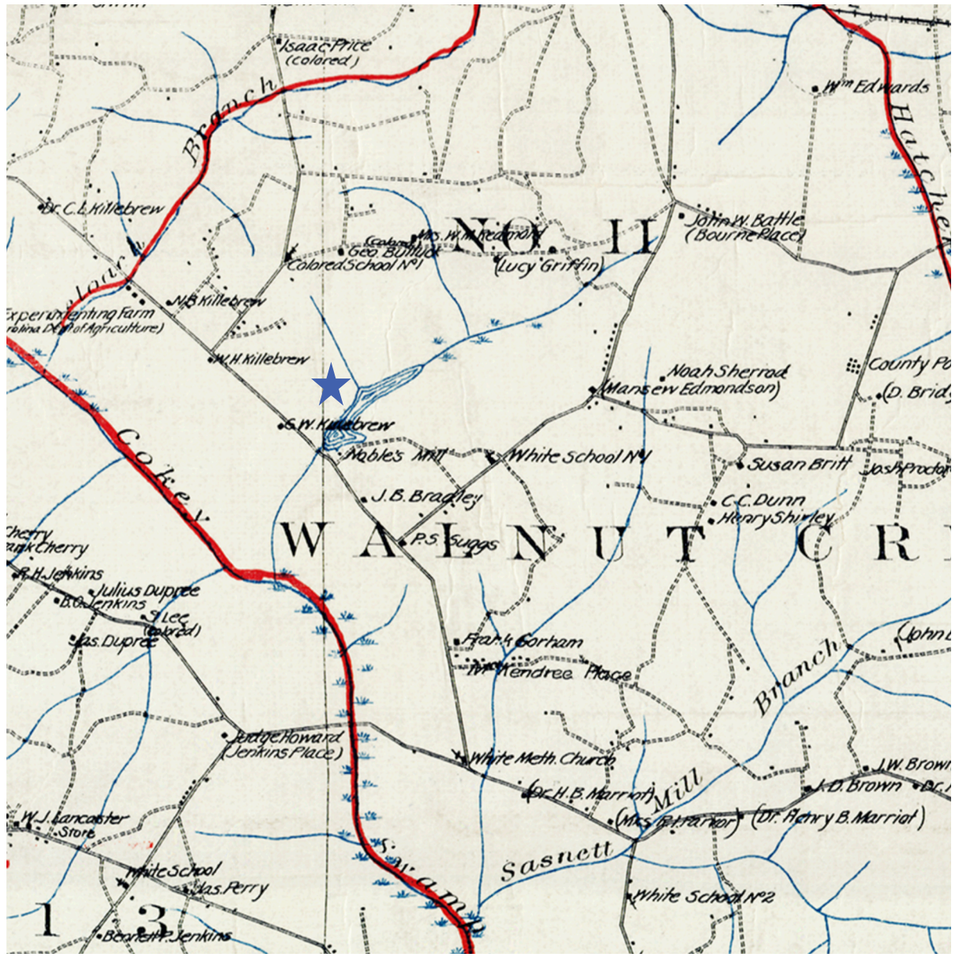
The Dancy years, 1795–1797
By the 1790s the same neighborhood is described under a different mill name. Edmund Clark's 1795 conveyance to Solomon Saunders begins both its tracts on “Edwin” — rendered “Elwin” later on the same page, in the same clerk's hand — “Dancy's Mill Branch,” running along “Edwin Dancy's & William Griffis's line to Francis Griffis's corner.” Two years later, John I. Jackson conveyed two tracts to Isaac Hill: one sited “on the East side of William Dancys mill Branch,” the other “on the North West side of Killebrews mill Swamp” — the one instrument found to date that names both mills side by side.

Reading the succession
No single deed states outright that Dancy's Mill succeeded Killebrew's on the same channel, but the case rests on more than proximity. The citations run in clean sequence — Killebrew 1766–87, Dancy 1795–97, with no year of overlap between the names. Every citation of either name falls inside the same small cluster of adjoining tracts, bounded by the Griffis/Griffith family's own land and Francis Griffis's corner. And naming a working mill-branch for its current operator, rather than for the stream itself, is exactly what the Killebrew family's own hold on “Killebrew's Mill” across three generations — Robert to Joshua to Laurance — already shows within one surname; there is no reason the same branch could not have taken the Dancy name once a Dancy mill replaced or joined a Killebrew one nearby.
The identification is not yet doxa. No instrument bridges the two names explicitly, the branch carries no label on the 1903–05 topographic sheet, and none of the tracts sited on it have been vertex-traced to fixed ground — so part of the apparent overlap could still be an artifact of imprecise placement rather than proof of one continuous channel. For now the theory stands as opinion beyond reasonable doubt: the working name of an unmapped branch, changing hands with its mill, on its way to Tyancokey Swamp.

Sources: Griffith_Killebrew_MillBranch_Note.md (5 Jul 2026 entries); Db 6 p.271 (1766, 1786); James Permenter Jr 1779 600ac patent (File 2081/Grant 287) and John Griffis Sr 1779/82 31ac grant, both citing Robert Killebrew's Mill Swamp; Permenter Jr 1787 75ac warrant (Joshua Killebrew Mill Branch / Curtis Branch); Edmund Clark to Solomon Saunders 1795 (FS ark 3:1:3QS7-9983-N215, img 499/967); John I. Jackson to Isaac Hill 1797 (FS ark 3:1:3QS7-8983-N2JC img693, 3:1:3QSQ-G983-NK5P img694).

Map of Edgecombe County, 1905

https://web.lib.unc.edu/nc-maps/interactive/MC_037_1905p.php



Traci *the Librarian*, clued me in to this Albert Pike map years ago...somewhere in my mind I convinced myself that there was a map exposing Killebrew Mill Pond. Evidently not.
Which is an example of my expression of the old yarn: *"Don't believe anything you hear and only half of what you see."* But note Right There! Plain as Day! is a G.W. Killebrew sitting Right There! by a Mill Pond in 1905. Also note the Nobles Mill close by. I also note Killebrews were thick as fleas on a hound dog along that road.