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Cabarrus County Formed From Mecklenburg Has an Interesting Early History

The following paper, "A Historical Sketch of the Foundation of Concord," was read before the Study Club here by Mrs. D. Luther Bost some years ago:

In the year 1792, by act of the General Assembly of North Carolina, Mecklenburg county was divided and the northeastern section named Cabarrus, in honor of Stephen Cabarrus, a native of France, but who lived in this State and represented the County of Chowan for several terms in the legislature. The first county court was held at the house of Robert Russell on the third Monday in January, 1793, by the following justices: Robert Harris, senior, Robert Harris, Jr., William Scott, John Allison, Edward Giles, Daniel Jarratt and Joseph Shinn.

The county government was then and there organized with Archibald Houston, Jr., sheriff; John Simians, clerk; Benjamin Shinn, stryaster; Hugh Rodgers, entry taker; Zachens Wilson, surveyor; William Alexander, attorney; Nathaniel Giles, register; John Plyler, county trustee.

The same act of the Assembly which created the county appointed Paul Barringer, John Leppard, Joseph Shinn, Daniel Jarrett, Alexander Ferguson, James Bradshaw, James Harris, Zachens Wilson, Archibald Houston, Benjamin Patton and Robert Smith commissioners "to fix on the most central place in the county for the purpose of erecting a court house, prison and stocks."

Archibald Houston, Martin Phifer, John Means, Daniel Jarrett, and George Masters were authorized to buy 50 acres of land and contract with workmen for the erection of these necessary buildings "as soon as the commissioners shall fix on the center."

But in what particular locality in the center of the county were the 50 acres to be bought on which to build the town?

There was a disagreement on this point. It is not known whether it was among the commissioners only or whether the people of the county took sides in the matter, but disagreement there was. One party desired to locate the town on what is familiarly known as the Pemberton White place or Cook's Crossing; the other party was equally desirous of

buying the land from Billy White, which afterward was owned by the late Jacob Dove.

"There was mutual concession, midway ground was selected, and in recognition of this amicable agreement the town was called Concord. This location of the new county government has never been a cause of dissatisfaction except in the survey of the North Carolina Railroad. The citizens of the town and the railroad authorities had a sharp contention about the line running so far from the center of business.

The first court house was a wooden building on the spot where Corbin Street crosses Union Street. People moved in from the county, built homes and began business in the town of Concord.

The town was not incorporated and no town officers were elected until 1851—38 years later, and the citizens of the little village lived, as once in ages gone by in the land of Israel, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Paul Barringer opened a mercantile establishment on Hudgin's corner, Joseph Young, another store, with R. W. Allison as clerk, on the Allison corner, and where the Lutheran Church stands, Jack Phifer kept a store. Where did these merchants buy their stocks of merchandise and how did they get them to Concord? For there was not a railroad in Philadelphia, shipped them to Charleston and Cheraw, sometimes to Fayetteville, and brought them up from these towns in wagons. These merchants, however, often bought their goods directly from firms in Charleston.

The postoffice was kept where John Patterson lives, Tom Henderson was postmaster and you paid 10 and 25 cents on your letter, according to the distance it had to go, and you had no envelope either. The postmaster lived in the house so long occupied by Mrs. Mary Cross, and between the two, lived Abram Avery, who kept a hatmaking establishment in the rear of his home. On the present court house lot, George Klutz kept a hotel and where the city hall stands another public house was kept by the Mahan family.

Long after the father and mother had passed from earth, the two Mahan sisters with a brother-in-law, Daniel Coleman, lived in the old home and conducted a boarding house. And here was the finest garden in town, the earliest lettuce, peas and beans grew in the beds of rich mold, bordered by box-wood boxes, big as flower barrels, which overhung the walks. At a later date, Dr. K. P. Harris and Major Robert Ford opened hotels which for many, many years were the only stopping places in Concord for the traveling public.

The first jail was built on the old K. P. Harris lot and when it was torn down, Dr. Harris bought the brick walls and erected the "brick row" (Isenhour's restaurant.)

The street leading north out of town turned in a sharp curve at Caleb Phifer's house, ran through the D. F. Cangen lot, on behind the Alexander Russell house (Mr. Hill's home) and up by the cotton factory. The Russell family had a large tract of land in that part of town; their ownership is market yet by their private burying ground, and their house was the last one on that end of the street. Between it and the factory was an old field of broomsedge and scrub-pines, fenced in and used as a muster ground for the annual gathering of the State militia.

In 1839, out on the Beattie's Ford road, near town, brick was made to build the first "cotton factory." The building was completed in the next year, 1840, and officers elected to conduct the business as follows: Paul Barringer, president; K. P. Harris, secretary and treasurer; George Barnhardt, Christopher Melchor, John B. Moss and John F. Phifer, directors. Mr. Jenks, superintendent for a short time, was succeeded by John McDonald, who continued in that office until he bought the factory in 1867. The machinery in this mill was an object of curiosity and people came from a distance of 75 miles in all the country around just to see the wonderful inventions in operation.

Dr. Houston's house is one of the first buildings in Concord. A grand ball was given there in January, 1827, in celebration of the battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815—and in 1865, Jefferson, retreating south from Richmond, was entertained one night in April by Mr. and Mrs. Victor C. Barringer, whose home it then was. What a grand supper Mrs. Barringer did have for the fleeing President and his staff!

Concord also has the honor of having one of her citizens, Hon. Daniel M. Barringer, elected to Congress, as a member of the House of Representatives for the five sessions, from 1825 to 1835. In 1804, the Presbyterians built a log house church on the ground where the second, a brick building, is still standing.

Late in the history of the town, the Methodist congregation built a church and a parsonage on Church Street; the Lutheran congregation erected a large church in a fine grove on Corbin Street. None of these churches had a bell, until 1854, when Major Yorke was commissioned to buy one for each congregation.

The session house of the Presbyterian Church was the village schoolhouse until another was built on the lot where Mr. Sandy Smith lived.

Dr. Charlie Fox, later of Charlotte, was one of the first physicians of Concord and lived where Mr. Zeb Morris has built his home. It is probable that Dr. Charles Harris, the celebrated doctor of the Poplar Tent neighborhood, was often called to Concord, as his reputation gave him an extensive practice.

In 1851, the town woke up and had itself incorporated by act of General Assembly. This same act decreed that the board of commissioners for the town of Concord should be composed of intendant of police and four commissioners, and the officers appointed by the last were: Josiah L. Bundy, Alfred Brown, William Drew, Daniel M. Wagner and Ransom Winecoff.

Josiah L. Bundy, as the first named in the act, was intendant of police, and vested with the same authority, duties and emoluments as is given to the same official under the title of mayor.

The official heard of the board of commissioners held office under the name of intendant of police until 1873, when it was changed, by act of Legislature, to

mayor. The corporation line ran one-fourth of a mile south from the crossing of Corbin and Union streets, and north to the factory line; one-fourth of a mile east and west from Union Street, making the town one mile and one-eighth long and one-half mile wide. These limits were extended by the Legislature of 1887, and again in 1889 to its present boundaries.

How old is the town? One hundred and fifteen years old. Think back a century to the little cluster of houses, scattered along two streets! How silent and oppressively quiet the village must have been—no roar of road or whistle of cotton mill; how dark at night when light was furnished by candles only, and not a match in North America. In this same year of 1793, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, Richard Dobbs Spaight was Governor of North Carolina. The cornerstone for the first building for the University at Chapel Hill, was laid and in the next year, 1794 the Legislature convened in Raleigh for the first time, and, in the newly completed State House, George Washington was President of the United States and Philadelphia was the capital.

George the Third was King of England; Napoleon Bonaparte was a young man, 24 years old, and just beginning his military career as an officer of artillery in the French army.

The horrors of the French Revolution were alarming the nations of Europe; King Louis XVI had been dethroned, tried and condemned, and in January beheaded at the guillotine—the beautiful Queen imprisoned only to meet the same fate in the following October.

The Bastille had been torn down, but other prisons were crowded, with the best and noblest of the land and thousands were guillotined until Paris ran red with blood.

But the broad Atlantic rolled between the Old and New Worlds, and no echo of those horrors disturbed the village of Concord, that walked by day and slept by night in peaceful security.

"Time, like an ever-rolling tide," has borne away the generations of a century, and each generation in passing has added improvement and importance to the town of Concord. The county seat now stands a bustling center of busy humanity, where handsome homes, large mercantile establishments, fine churches and school buildings adorn the streets, evidencing the wealth, the culture, and the high character of its citizens; and where invested capital flourishes in every manner of business and trade from the peanut parcher to the cotton mill.

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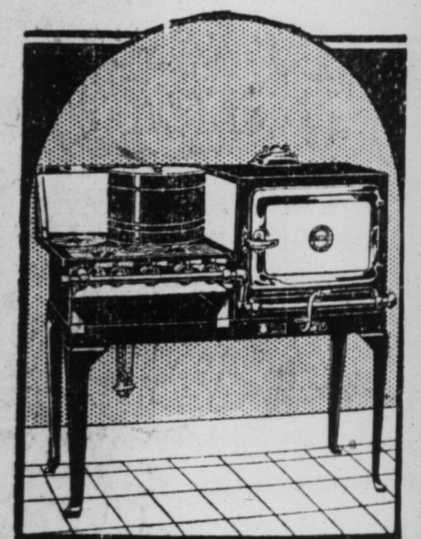
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