

# MARION

A Gem Set Upon the Spurs of the Blue Ridge.

McDowell County, North Carolina.

An Oasis of Rich and Varied Resources, and a Section of Grand Prospects.

The People, Status, Natural Advantages.

Soil, Climate, Agriculture, Horticulture, Mining, Lumbering, Commerce, Manufactures, Schools, Churches, Etc., Etc.

**P**LEASANT though laborious task is set before us of endeavoring to add our mite in trying to do something that would benefit our great section, and to share returns with those who would aid us in doing so. Only facts, however they may be presented, will be told. No overstrained, unreliable statements will be inserted, if we know it, and we have made an effort to put ourselves, if it will be done so, and more, we shall be duly pleased if what is here given is relied upon by investors and people who desire to come among us to share in a noble development.

Therefore, our greatest allowable ambition shall be to present in this "write up" a correct statement of facts with admirable truthfulness that may be acceptable to the public.

**Marion.**  
The county seat was set apart as such in the year 18— . It was named after the noted Revolutionary patriot, Gen. Francis Marion, of South Carolina.

At the present time it has a population of between 1,000 and 1,200. It is situated near the center of the county, on the Southern Railway, and at present is the northern terminus of the Ohio River & Charleston Railway. It is 100 miles west of Salisbury and 42 miles east of Asheville. It is beyond doubt that as business brightens up the Ohio River & Charleston Railway will be completed, as to the only missing link, from here to Johnson City, Tenn. Then Marion will be on two great railroad trunk lines of the South—oncoming east and west (the Southern), the other north and south. This will make Marion, as it already is, an ideal place for a manufacturing town, which is destined to grow up into thousands. See a list of "what Marion has" in another column.

On November 25, 1894, on a clear, windy Sabbath, in a very dry time, while a good part of the population were attending religious services in the churches, fire broke out accidentally, as we say, in an old rookery, from which the winds carried small coals to the tops of houses hundreds of yards away, setting them on fire. Under the circumstances the fire was soon uncontrollable. Every store in town, except one, and six dwellings were consumed with the contents of most of them. The loss was about \$100,000, with hardly a fifth insured. Yet our people with the energy characteristic of most of them began to rebuild on the burnt district. All business buildings on Main street are of brick. We now have more stone buildings and larger ones, than ever before. Marion is improving faster and more business is done than before the fire. In fact it is evident that the town has entered upon an era of advancement, substantial and promising to the most ardent. Within the past year a new bank, the Commercial of Marion, and a furniture factory have been in successful operation. Buildings for a "novelty woodworking" plant are in process of erection. As with the furniture factory, scores of operatives are necessary in running these. A flouring mill is to be erected as soon as possible. Another large furniture factory is among the probabilities in the near future. Several would (18) here; also, a manufactory for wagon spokes, various tool handles, hubs, brooms, and all articles made of wood, because of railroad facilities, cheapness of raw material and living. Also, tanning factories for fruit, especially for vegetables, would pay largely—such as for canning tomatoes, apples, beans, peas, etc., etc.

We copy the following from "North Carolina and Its Resources": "If [Marion] is especially adapted for all kinds of woodworking factories, on ac-

count of the cheap timber and good railroad facilities. The great number of trees, the bark of which is used in tanneries, makes it especially favorable as a location for a tannery."

From the location among the great offshoots from the Blue Ridge, Marion could be supplied with great quantities of pure mountain water by simply laying down pipes and arranging for a fountain head and a reservoir. The site of the town is on gently elevated ridges—six of them—three running east and west, the others north and south. Between these are several streams that thoroughly and rapidly drain the town.

From parts of the town, and from the high hills around, the Blue Ridge, 15 miles away; the Black Mountains, 25 miles; the Grand Father range to the northeast, 35 miles; and the South Mountains, about 20 miles distant, present a grand panorama of grandeur and beauty. Marion appears as a gem set in "green oceans of mountains raised in tremendous billows immediately around," to quote the language used by the immortal Dr. Elisha Mitchell, the surveyor of and after whom Mount Mitchell was named, on whose very top his remains repose.

The slope of the surface of the town is to the southeast, insuring healthfulness and genial temperature. Just on the southeast edge of the town is a beautiful little mountain of about 300 feet in height above the town—Mount Ida. From the top—a good before-breakfast walk—the view is surpassingly sublime and beautiful. The height of the town above the sea level is 1,438 feet at the court house, by the United States Geological Survey.

**Educational, Social and Religious.**  
New life has come into the school interests of the community. A two-story, six-room, brick school building nestles among a grove of oaks on a little hill about the distance of three squares from the center of the town. The school—the Marion Institute—has enrolled since the opening last fall 110 pupils. The teachers are Prof. J. E. and Mrs. Guy, Miss Nannie Guy and Miss Charlotte, who are professional teachers and graduates of the best schools, having come to us in 1895. The trustees hear from the patrons scarcely anything but commendation and satisfaction. All branches are taught, from calisthenics and object lessons for the youngest to collegiate studies for those prepared for them. The Bible is a text-book, but the school is nonsectarian.

There are other good primary private schools taught at the respective homes of some of our good ladies—Mrs. T. A. White, Mrs. W. B. Ratliff, and Mrs. J. McNaughton, which give satisfaction.

We have among us people of the very best, noble aspirations, full of hospitality, and who labor and love the interests of "Christ and the Church."

**THE BAPTIST CHURCH.**  
The Marion Baptist Church was dedicated first Sunday in July, 1859, with Rev. J. B. Richardson, pastor, who served the church two years. Since then Rev. G. W. Harman, Rev. C. B. Justice and Dr. M. M. Landrum, have been the pastors. Rev. W. S. Corpening was pastor awhile this year. The present pastor is Rev. B. K. Mason. The membership is 85. The building has been appropriately papered within.

**THE METHODIST CHURCH.**  
The height of the spire is 105 feet. The interior of the vestibule and auditorium is finished in natural wood, oiled, the walls alternating with yellow pine and chestnut. The whole reflects much credit upon the architect and builder, Mr. McCoy.

C. Hartsell, J. W. Wheeler, E. L. Pell, C. G. Little, G. W. Callahan, T. P. Bonner, J. C. Johnston, A. R. Carratt, J. Edwin Thompson Gentry and T. J. Rodgers, the present pastor. On the roll there are one hundred and sixty members. Previous to 1870, this was within the bounds of the South Carolina Conference, but at the General Conference of that year, it was transferred to the North Carolina Conference.

**THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.**  
Was organized with thirteen members August 30th, 1845, with Rev. George N. Gibbs as stated supply, and A. L. Erwin, James H. Greenlee and John Neal ruling elders. Mr. Gibbs filled the position as stated supply until 1849. Rev. Thos. N. Raxton succeeded him in the same capacity in August, 1851, and continued until incapacitated by physical weakness in 1852. He died here February 14, 1855. He was succeeded by Rev. Colin A. Munroe (stated supply) November, 1852, who left December, 1853. Mr. Munroe was succeeded by Rev. E. C. Murray. He was the first pastor who settled in this field. His work was abundantly blessed and by January, 1857, twenty-four members were added to the church, thirteen on profession of faith and eleven by certificate.

Rev. W. H. White, the present pastor, has been in this field since May, 1891. The membership is 88. The old brick church has been beautifully papered within.

**ST. JOHN'S PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.**  
The Episcopal church of Marion was consecrated about three years ago. The building was erected about ten years ago; but was not entirely completed until about five years ago. The Rev. Mr. Bland was rector during that time. Mr. Girard W. Phelps succeeded Mr. Bland and was in charge of the church for several years. The church is not a large building. It is large enough to hold the small number of communicants of the church with some extra seats for those who occasionally attend. Very few of the original members of the mission are now in Marion. Mr. E. J. Justice is now the warden, Mr. J. B. Sandell being the treasurer. The Rev. C. J. Wingate, is at present in charge of the church.

All the churches of the town have year-around Sabbath schools, and the ordinary church missionary societies.

The colored people have five organizations and four church buildings. Different branches of the Methodist and Baptist church is represented. They, too, have a yearly public and private school.

some experience as a teacher and otherwise, it is seen that the people are naturally intelligent and easily susceptible of the highest possibilities in reach. With more immigrants of a desirable kind, what may not this people accomplish for good? There is more in people than is sought else.

**Geographical.**  
The county lies to the south and south-east from the hending line of the top of the main Blue Ridge mountains, in the shape, in rough outline, of a right angled triangle with the base to the south.

On the west line the Blue Ridge rises to higher altitudes than anywhere from Georgia to its most northern terminus. The culminating point is the "Pinnacle"—5,701 feet high. The average height along the border of the county is over 4,000 feet; the average elevation of the county is about 1,500 feet, which is naturally proof against malaria, mosquitoes, and oppressive heat at any time. The county contains 399,275 acres of land, valued at about \$700,000. Only about one-fourth is in cultivation.

The South mountains, an eastward projection of the Blue Ridge, rising in places to about the height of 3,000 feet, border the county to the south, so that on account of a number of other "spurs" in and about the county its general surface might properly be called mountainous, but nearly all of the land is not too declivities for cultivation. Its surface is a diversification of hill and dale, ridge and valley, mountains and coves. It lies east of Buncombe, west of Burke, and south of Mitchell and Yancey counties.

**Topography and Soil.**  
The county being such a diversified, high, bowl-shaped plateau, there would be corresponding diversity of soil. Between the ridges and mountains there runs brooklets and laughing towards the sea many brooks, creeks and small rivers. All these are tributary to the not large but rather famous Catawba river, which rises on the northern edge of the county in the coves of the Blue Ridge. It is a picturesque, beautiful mountain stream. It is an artery into which flow scores of smaller streams. Along the river

early, and the great evaporation often prevents moisture in the forming of frost.

Under the same surroundings, and for like reasons, apple culture is more generally successful. In some sheltered mountain coves there are some valuable apple orchards.

Raspberries, blackberries and strawberries, with little culture, produce satisfactory results. But this region is one of the homes of the grape—of different varieties. In the Catawba valley is the original home of the Catawba grape. On ridges of moderate height, in most parts of the county, grape culture would pay. A vineyard of about 15 acres has been in existence at Old Fort for several years, which produces on an average of \$2,000 worth of grapes a year. Hundreds of other such vineyards might be made productive in the county.

Other fruits of minor importance, such as cherries, plums, nuts, are natural to this section and are easily made very productive.

**The Dairying Industry.**  
While not only supplying the needs of the home market, could be made profitable in other markets. Varieties of grass and clover, as well as grains, make the feeding of cattle a moderate cost. These food products are easily raised in abundance; hence, the road to successful dairying is a short one, and markets can be found with a number one article. Butter is made here, which, if in sufficient quantities, would find sale anywhere.

It but follows that the raising of sheep and goats could be made profitable. "Hog and hominy" and plenty of it, is not a difficult thing here with the industries, not only for home use, but as a source of gain.

**Poultry.**  
A section that produces great quantities of grasses, grains and fruits is suited to poultry-raising for profit, and so it is here. Large quantities of chickens, ducks, turkeys, etc., are shipped from Marion and other railroad points in the county constantly. There is money in fowls.

**Honey and Bees**  
With careful and intelligent attention being in good returns. The large stretch of forests, in addition to plant flowers, give an abundance of nectar sweets for the busy bees. From the flowers of the sour-wood, or sorrel-tree, the most delicious and clearest honey is made that the writer ever saw, and in any shaped comb that the ingenuity of man could devise.

**Climate.**  
One of the chiefest sources of pleasure, as well as other advantages of this county and region around, is its superb climate. McDowell for all-the-year-round has a superior climate to the counties west of the Blue Ridge, even just adjoining. High altitudes, even in a short distance, make a great difference as to climate, soil and productions.

The average temperature for the four seasons for Marion is about—spring, 58; summer, 74; autumn, 57; winter, 45; average for the year, 58 1/2 Fahrenheit.

The average rain-fall for the year is about 48 inches; the most of it falling in the months of the growing crops, and less in other months.

The average snow-fall is in the neighborhood of 12 inches yearly, and it is five inches for the entire State.

North Carolina, and especially this region, lies outside the course of destructive cyclones. Not in twenty years ever crosses this section. The usual path of such war of the elements is across the region of the Great Lakes and up the Saint Lawrence river, missing even the whole State, usually. In the early fall we catch the western edge of what are called sub-tropical storms, or September gales, of rain and wind. But these winds are divided and scattered by the Blue Ridge and Black Mountains until they are harmless.

McDowell county being on the "sunny side" of the Blue Ridge, has sunny-side advantages in climate over the counties west of the ridge. While their climate is most excellent, ours for an all-the-year-round climate is superior. The mountain breezes make it delightfully pleasant here in summer, while old winter is shorn of its rigors. Mosquitoes are unknown here, unless a few are straying around, having been brought here from the south and east on passenger trains; but he does not thrive here. He sighs and sings a few faint songs for a warmer clime and pines away.

Generally, till about Christmas the weather is pleasant, October and November having been a long Indian summer. Our severest cold, and most disagreeable rains, sleet and snows are in January and February. The latter seldom lay on the ground but a few days. Very seldom in winter, and that but a day or so, does the thermometer go down to zero. At long intervals of years it may go below zero for a short spell.

suffering from malarial and kindred diseases, find here a curing remedy in nature itself, which, combined with judicious treatment, soon leads to recovery. Many such cases we have seen.

There is a superb location for a sanitarium for the accommodation of any number of patients. We need the men with the money and skill for such an enterprise. There is climate and pure water going to waste here that might gladden tens of thousands.

Perhaps there are not one-half dozen here in a year that last till 10 o'clock in the morning—very few at all.

By permission, we append the following, taken from a pamphlet on "McDowell County," by Col. P. J. Sinclair:

MARION, N. C., June, 1886.  
To Col. P. J. Sinclair,  
Marion, N. C.:

DEAR SIR:—In 1859, while attending my first course of lectures at the Univ. of Penn. Dr. Wm. Gerhard, Prof. of Clinical Med., examined my lungs and advised me to quit the Medical profession believing "Vox homo non est Dei."

I graduated in 1861, my health then was so feeble I had to remain in Philadelphia until the late war broke out. I then went home and was at once put in the Army at Raleigh, N. C., as assistant surgeon under Dr. E. Burke Haywood. I soon left there for Va., following General Lee until the surrender, meanwhile watching the effects of climate and water upon my constitution. During my stay with the Army as Surg. of the 22nd N. C. Regiment in charge of many Hospitals, I had ample opportunities of seeing men from every portion of the United States, sick, wounded and in health. I was forcibly struck with the healthy appearance of those from the mountains.

I came to McDowell in 1867, and soon recovered without the aid of medicine. I must say, as to water, I believe it is as pure as ever percolated through the soil. The air is as pure as any that wafts across the foot stool of Jehovah. Malaria cannot exist here, consequently we are exempt from all malarial diseases. If there is a spot where a man can live out his allotted time, I believe it is here.

Let those suffering with Hepatic and Biliary troubles lay aside erroneous views of going to Florida, and come here, for I feel assured that my opinion, based upon a practice of over 25 years, will fully justify me in recommending this county to invalids. McDowell county is nature's Sanitarium, sheltered by the mountains on the West and North, with an Eastern and Southern exposure, with plenty of gaps in the Blue Ridge for thorough ventilation.

We extend a hearty welcome to all sections of the world, and promise to do what we can to encourage the emigration of industrious people of all classes to settle in our midst. Long since have we buried beneath the waters of Lethe in oblivion the sea the remembrance of the War, and can assure our Northern friends if they will come in our midst we will extend to them the hand of fraternal love, and do what we can to make them happy, fully appreciating the fact that what will add to their interest will increase ours.

**The Secenery**  
Of this county and region is rich and varied from the soft, hazy outline to the bold and grandly picturesque and sublime. In the Rocky Mountain range during most of its majestic course, the prevailing style of scenery is the grand, mingled with the awfully weird and sublime, with fewer soft finishings of nature's brush. But in Western North Carolina we have the grand, the sublime, some of the awfully weird, much of the picturesque, but over all nature has painted a coat of perpetual green on the tops of her highest mountain, while at all times the thick undergrowth of shrubs and trees presents a soft, beautiful effect, near by or distant, at every turn of a hill top, or mountain ridge, like in a kaleidoscope, the view has new beauties, or an entirely new scene bursts on the tireless eyes.

In May and June when the mountain laurel blooms, is when you may place laurel on your brow. Then the many hills and mountains appear as vast bouquets of pink and white, contrasted with the green of the

leaves. The mountain ivory furnishes very oceans of flowers of white with dark specks.

Along the Catawba river and its tributaries the water falls, cascades, the tumbling, rolling and laughing waters sing perpetual poems and songs to nature's God. No wonder that when a native of Western North Carolina lives elsewhere he often sighs for the mountains of his childhood.

**Timber.**  
The mountain coves and ridges, and even the mountains to the very tops are nearly always timbered. In the coves and on the sides, the timber is large and valuable. Vast quantities of it has not yet been reached by the ax. Pine, oak, of half dozen varieties, chestnut, maple, hickory, ash, poplar, yellow and white, some walnut yet, and some kind, are the main paying varieties. Vast quantities are shipped away from the county yearly. Lumber sells, delivered, at from \$5 to \$8 per 1,000 feet, plused at a some higher rate.

**Hunting and Fishing.**  
While there is not as much game as in the years gone by, yet there is more to delight the hunter here than in most other sections of the country. The county lying up on the Blue Ridge and reaching up almost to the edge of the Black Mountains, contains a large part of the best hunting and fishing sections. Some deer, more bear and many turkeys abound, with numbers of smaller game, as small birds, squirrels, small pheasants, etc., etc. The head waters of the mountain streams abound in speckled mountain trout. Some wild cats are found, and the ground hog retreats in his many haunts.

**YANCEY COUNTY.**  
See Timber and Mineral Resources—No Better County in the State—A Railroad from Greensboro, N. C., to Salisbury, N. C., April 12, '97.  
Editor's Message:

As a regular reader of THE MESSENGER, I have noted with a keen sense of regret that as yet in the history of your paper it has failed to contain a single line from Yancey county. I, therefore, hope to see the following appear in your next issue.

Yancey county, as you are aware, joins McDowell on the west, and is in turn bounded on the west by Madison county and the State of Tennessee; on the south by McDowell and Buncombe counties; on the north by Mitchell, Yancey, like all the counties of Western North Carolina, is richly rich in natural resources, blessed with mild winters and pleasant summers, with an average rainfall of fifty-two inches. A pleasant climate, freed from most all diseases, unsurpassed in mountain scenery.

Yancey county is away up among the clouds, Burnsville, its capital, being 2,840 feet above the tide-washed sands of the Atlantic—almost in the shadow of Mt. Mitchell, the highest mountain east of Pike's Peak.

Every little hollow contains one or more springs of pure free stone water, gushing forth from nature's heart, which combine to make rivers large enough, deep enough and wide enough which could be, with little trouble, applied to push with tireless energy, millions of wheels of any machinery.

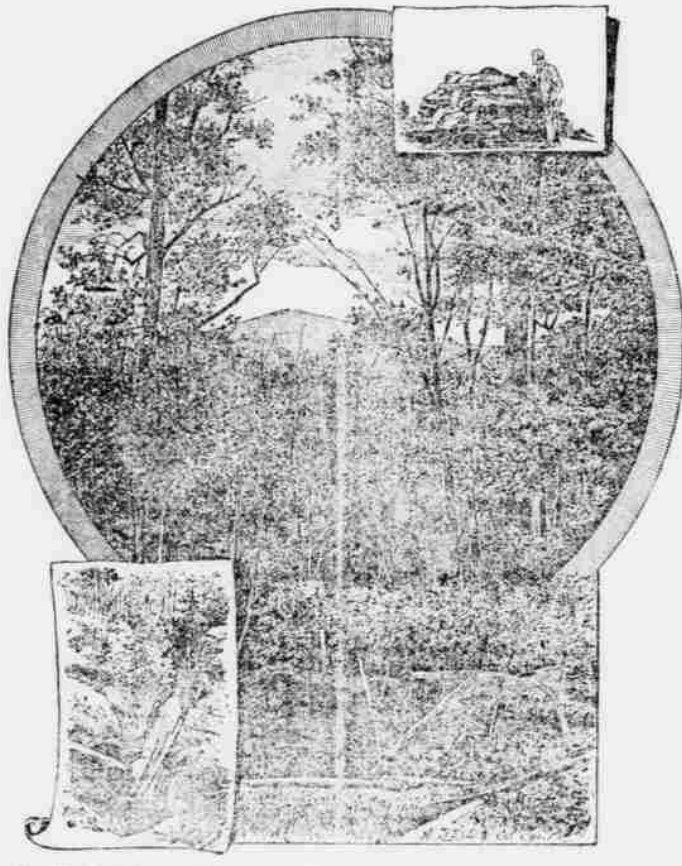
As for timber, we have it sufficient to build a tower of Babel to the moon. Or if wood was used for fuel in this modern day, we have the timber sufficient, if it was in fuel shape, to fire every furnace in America and keep them hot for six months. Our county alone owns seventy-five million feet of pulp timber in this county, and they have not got 1,000 part, yet; and after the timber is cut away, the soil would, with little attention, grow grass sufficient to feed the "cattle of a thousand hills."

We have one iron deposit large enough to replace every man-of-war vessel in the combined navy of the world.

Chromite, enough, if it was manufactured, to paint the world red, and there have lots left for the second coat.

Kaolin, talc, and limestone in paying quantities.

**Building Stone and Clays**  
Abundant in the county. Large quantities of clay suitable for all grades of brick are found near Marion, in places on the Catawba river and near Old Fort. Sandstone, soapstone, red sandstone, and other building stone are found in large, profitable quantities in different parts of the county. In Turkey Cove there are quantities of Egyptian and other colored marbles. In the Linville and other mountains there are large quantities of granite and marble of good quality and variety awaiting only paying development of the capitalists.



Mt. Mitchell from a Distance—Highest Point East of the Rockies—7,017 Feet.

**McDowell County—History.**  
The county was organized in 1842, and was named after Col. Joseph McDowell, a distinguished officer of the American revolution of 1776. He was born within the limits of the county on "Pleasant Gardens" farm, now owned by Maj. J. W. Wilson, of Morganton. The county was formed from portions of Burke and Rutherford counties.

**The People.**  
The inhabitants of this county and region are very generally descended from the Scotch and English and a few German colonists of the anti-revolutionary period of 1776. Especially since that time quite a vigorous sprinkling of the Scotch-Irish of the eastern part of the State have been among the best and most influential citizens. The studiousness, perseverance, nobility of purpose and with reasonable versatility that characterize, with moderating environments, these peoples, belong to ours. History shows that the highest reaches of true human development have been among such peoples. We have among us the noblest and truest of people; while no state of society is claimed to be perfect, yet with divine direction they appreciate the noble, the true, and the good in human character and life.

Our people are noted for their open-hearted hospitality. About 2,000 of the total of 12,000 population of the county are colored people. The white inhabitants are a very homogeneous people of similar nature and habits, preferring "to be rather than seem to be." From



Rev. W. H. White, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Marion, 1795 East and So.

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