

## Historical Sites and Local History in Macon County

(By W. J. Morgan)

No section of North Carolina is richer in historical sites and lore than Macon county. The best known and most prominent historical object is the Indian Mound near the depot at Franklin, it being the largest and best preserved of any of our mounds.

Here was the sacred town of Niquassee which seems to have been the capital and the centre of the religious and social life of the Middle Cherokees. It was here that the clans came for their tribal and religious ceremonies, and where the chiefs and warriors sat in solemn council and discussed the problems of Indian life.

How long this mound was in building there is now no way of knowing, but it must have taken a long period of years, possibly centuries, as the Indians had no beasts of burden and the work all had to be done by hand, the earth being carried to the top of the mound in baskets, and possibly something being added to height of the mound each year.

There are other mounds up and down the river and creek valleys. All have been much reduced by erosion and the cultivation of crops, and in one case the mound has been reduced to the level of the surrounding ground and its site is only a memory.

Village sites are numerous, villages appearing on the old maps every few miles up and down the valleys. There are copies of several old maps in existence all having some of the same names, and each having names that none of the others have.

The Rutherford expedition claims to have destroyed thirty-five villages. If that is correct there must have

been many villages that never appeared on any of the maps.

If all these village sites could be located and the Indian names applied, it would add much of interest and romance to the various sections.

Then there are the track rocks near Prentiss on which are carved the tracks of animals and birds, arrows and strange symbols that no one to day is able to interpret.

On Peeks creek is the soapstone quarry where the Indians carved their soapstone pots and bowls from the solid boulder, and where he gathered the smaller pieces from which he fashioned pipes discoidal and many problematical forms for which the student of today can only guess for what purpose they may have been used.

As to the battlefields, south of Franklin near the Indian village of Echoee, Col. James Montgomery and his 2,000 scotch highlanders were met June 27, 1760, by the Cherokees under their Chief Sah-loo-ee and the only thing that saved the highlanders from annihilation was the poor marksmanship of the Indians and the valor of the 500 backwoodsmen in the party who covered the retreat. Montgomery retreated at great sacrifice, throwing away his stores and supplies so that the horses could carry the wounded. The dead were sunk in a stream so that their bodies might not be recovered and scalped.

One year later Col. James Grant met the Indians near the same place, but he overcame them and destroyed their villages and crops and drove them in to the hills to starve.

In 1776 another army of 2,400 men came in to the valley. This army was under the command of Col. Rutherford and they encamped at Franklin. A detachment sent to destroy Sugah town (Kul-et-se-yi) east of Franklin, was surprised by the Cherokees and escaped only after a fierce battle and through the help of a detachment sent to their relief.

Rutherford himself encountered a force in Wayah Gap but repulsed them after a hard battle. An Indian killed in this fight was found to be a woman dressed as a man.

It will be doubt be of much in-

Boone was once in the territory embraced by Macon county, a document in existence attesting to the fact.

Not far from the village site of Burningtown is the Sally Deer branch. Here was buried Little Deer, the

husband of Sally Deer, who lived here long enough afterward, before joining her people farther west, to give her name to the little stream.

On the Morgan farm on lower Burningtown once stood the Cabin of Yellow Bear, a Cherokee whose Indian name was Yo-nah-Qua. He was

well remembered by the old people on account of a feud between him and a white man. This white man lay in ambush in a near by swamp and when Yellow Bear came to the cabin door at daybreak with a small child in his arms, the bullet intended for the Indian man killed the child.

It is evident that every section of the county is teeming with romance and unwritten history, and the location marking and mapping the sites and piecing the threads of our local history together, furnishes a broad field for some one that has the time and is interested in such things.

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