



The way it used to look

The Hoke County Courthouse as it looked just after its completion in 1912. Although it resembles the facility now standing on Main Street, some changes have been made. Doors and windows have been replaced and shrubbery has been planted to make the building more attractive.

Hoke Co. Has Come A Long Way Since 1911

By Josephine Hall

Hoke County is situated in the southeastern section of North Carolina in the edge of what is known as the Sandhills. It is the second youngest county in the state, having been formed in 1911 to become the 99th county. It is 24 1/2 miles long at its greatest length and 16 miles wide at its greatest width. It has a total of 389 square miles.

The county is made up of seven townships.

In 1918 92,000 acres of Hoke County land were taken by the Federal government to form Fort Bragg.

Averaging 8 miles in width, the reservation is to within 4.4 miles of Raeford, the county seat.

The reservation contains 120,000 acres.

Little River Township, which had been separated from the remainder of the county by the reservation became a part of Moore County by an act of the legislature in January 1957. This left approximately 156,000 acres in the county.

The 1980 census shows that the county had a population of 20,178. The total estimated population in July 1981 was 21,202.

Raeford had an estimated population of 3731 in July of 1981. Raeford is traversed by two major highways.

U.S. 401 runs north and south and State 211 runs southeast and west.

There are two railroads serving the county, the Aberdeen and Rockfish and the Laurinburg and Southern.

Because of the county's highway system, it is served by an adequate number of trucking lines.

There are nine rural mail routes coming into Hoke from other counties.

McCain Hospital has its own post office.

A natural gas main runs across the county thus making natural gas available for industrial as well as home heating purposes.

Raeford Airport serves the area. It is also the headquarters for a parachute jumping training center.

Parachutists from Canada and Europe have trained there.

Hoke County has two distinct agricultural sections.

The southern and eastern areas have been said to be adapted to growing many agricultural crops and vegetables.

The western section of the county grows some crops and lends itself to timber growing and a few peach orchards.

There are about 1,000 farms in the county today.

Livestock and turkey raising account for a percentage of Hoke County's income.

The average altitude above sea level of Hoke County is 300 ft.

The average temperature is 62.2 degrees. The average yearly rainfall is around 45 inches and snowfall averages 5 inches.

Hoke County has several industries besides farming.

In 1951 Robbins cloth mill completed a large plant covering eight acres. It was eventually sold to Burlington Mills.

This plant employs 1600-1700 persons.

The dyeing plant has a working force of about 400 and the Raeford plant around 1250.

Faberge Inc., a cosmetic firm, is the newest of the Hoke County industries. At the present it employs about 500 people, 85% of whom are Hoke County residents. It was announced recently that Faberge plans a \$2 million expansion which would create between 50 to 100 new jobs.

The House of Raeford, a turkey processing plant gives employment to around 900 persons.

Tex Elastic, now in the process of changing hands, employs 168 people.

There are other smaller industries in the county. Some of these have to do with timber and timber products, as well as building and fertilizer products.

Resources, besides its people, include its climate, forests, sand, water and agricultural advantages.

In 1907 the first state tubercular sanatorium was founded in the western part of the county and opened its doors for patients in late 1908 or early 1909.

The site was chosen because the section of the state was fairly central and because the area was fast becoming known as a health and winter resort, particularly because of the dry climate, sandy soil and pine trees.

Now, McCain Sanatorium is in the process of being converted from a tubercular hospital to a state prison facility.

The nucleus around which Raeford, the county seat and only city in the county grew was Raeford Institute.

Dr. and Mrs. A.P. Dickson conceived the idea in the interest of educating their 13 children.

The Institute later became a boarding school and was attended by students from other counties in the area.

The Highland Scots, those idealists of freedom of thought and action, came to this area some 50 years ago.

Here they built their homes, churches, and schools. Many of the people living in the county today descended from these Scotch Highlanders and are proud of their heritage.

The fact that the first Medical School in N.C. was established

here around 1865 attests to the importance of education in the area.

Hoke County has one central high school which is located in Raeford.

In the 1982-83 school year there were 4,733 pupils enrolled, 269 teachers were employed and 256 seniors graduated.

Around 45% of these graduates plan to continue their education in colleges, trade schools or other training facilities.

The loss of young people to other cities and areas is one of the serious financial and resource problems of the county.

One of the great needs is to stop so many young people from out-migrating because of lack of job opportunities.

The fact that they do not return to the county represents hundreds of thousands of dollars from which Hoke County gets no returns.

Sandhills Community College near Southern Pines offers a number of classes in the county. Also, Hoke County is fortunate to be in an area where students can commute to college in Fayetteville, Pembroke, Laurinburg, Lumberton, Sandhills in Southern Pines and Fort Bragg evening classes.

The 1980 census reports show that the average family income in Hoke County is somewhat lower than the state average.

About 462 households were shown to have an income of less than \$2,500 per year, and 635 households received less than \$5,000 annually.

Of the people over 25 years of age, 912 have had four years of college or more, 2,960 have had four years of high school and 3,085 have had 0-8 year's (elementary) 2927 Hoke County residents work outside of Hoke County.

There are two banks and one savings and loan office.

A new National Guard Armory has been completed in the last several months. There is no hospital in the county. There is no nursing home but a rest home serving around 70 people is located in Raeford. The town of Raeford has a swimming pool for membership only.

The Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce is located in Raeford.

There are around 125 farm ponds averaging about 2 acres each in the county.

A golf course is located in the Arabia community and 2 horse training facilities are now operating in the western part of the county.

Raeford has a Civic Center and there are 8 county owned community buildings in the rural areas.

Hoke Co. is governed by an elective five member board of commissioners. Additional officers, either elected or appointed assist them in administering county government programs.

A few miscellaneous facts about our county include:

--The county's birth date is April 3, 1911.

--Raeford got its name from the last syllables of the names of two of its early settlers, Mr. John McRae and Mr. A.A. Williford.

--Hoke County was named for General Robert Hoke, Lincolnton. It is said that General Robert E. Lee wished General Hoke to be his successor should he become incapacitated.

General Hoke resembled Gen. Lee.

At one time N.S. Blue owned three fourths of the Hoke County land taken by Fort Bragg.

The first industry in Hoke County was the distillation of turpentine.

The Raeford Plant of Pacific Mills was to have been the largest

worsted manufacturing plant in the world.

At one time Raeford was the smallest town in the United States with two military companies.

The late Miss Jane Pratt, a native of Hoke County served as a representative in Congress from the Eighth District after the death of Congressman Lambeth, for who she had worked.

Hon. Lauchlin Bethune whose home was built around 118 years ago near McCain, served in Congress and rode horseback to and from the sessions in Washington to his home in Montrose.

Hoke County received national recognition for her scrap iron drive which started on December 19, 1941.

George Willis, a local man gave over 30,000 pounds of scrap metal to the drive.

This was just one example that emphasized the patriotism of Hoke citizens.

Kathy McMillian, a Hoke High student, competed in the 1976 Olympics and won a silver medal in the long jump competition.

For many years baseball was a popular sport in the county.

Jake May a Hoke County player went on to the big leagues and became a star. Hoke County served as a training center for teams from Pennsylvania for several years.

The House of Raeford prepares and ships products to many foreign countries and to steamship lines.

Many of these items are prepared according to the ethnic customs of the people who receive them.

The Hon. J.W. McLauchlin who served in the North Carolina Legislature and who introduced the bill to form Hoke County is known as the Father of Hoke County.