

Hoke County nears 75th birthday

Raeford, North Carolina is located in Hoke County, North Carolina's 99th county. The bill establishing Hoke County was enacted into law on February 18, 1911, to become effective on April 3, 1911.

The first officials of the new county were appointed by the governor to serve until an election could be held. Jephtha Poole and W.T. Covington were appointees as Commissioners to meet the County Commissioners of Cumberland and Robeson Counties, primarily to lay off boundaries of the new county. Hoke had to assume its per capita share of the Public indebtedness of the parent counties, and pending court cases were transferred to the new county. These actions were necessary due to the fact that the new county had been formed from land acres formerly within the other two counties.

Raeford was designed as the county seat. The Governor had the authority to appoint the entire slate of first officials, but chose to let a Primary election by the people select the list. W.B. McQueen became the first Clerk of Court, J. Hector Smith, the Register of Deeds; Edgar Hall the Sheriff; W.J. McRaney, the Treasurer and County Commissioners were elected as follows: J.W. Johnson, Chr.; Surveyor, J.L. McFadyen; S.J. Cameron, and J.A. McPhaul, Coronor, Dr. A.P. Dickson; Supt. of Education, Prof. J.A. McGoogan; Board of Education, N.A. McDonald, John A.

Hodgin, and Neill McKinnor; County Attorney, J.W. Currie; State Senator (1914) J.W. Johnson; and State Representative (1914) Thomas McBryde.

The county initially contained 268,000 acres with a population of about 10,000. There were no paved roads and the economy was strictly based on cotton. The only high school in Hoke County was Raeford Institute, established by Dr. and Mrs. A.P. Dickson who were highly concerned for the education of their 13 children. With the assistance of J.W. McLauchlin and McRae family donated four acres of land and the school was founded in 1895. Marcus J. Dew and J.P. Smith had charge of the construction.

In the fall of 1903 the main building burned, and the school was moved to the Presbyterian Church, and four months later was moved into a new building...later the number of buildings for the Institute grew to nine. In 1910 the school had an enrollment of 325 students. Raeford, which was chartered in 1901, was composed almost exclusively of people who moved to the community in the interest of their children.

Raeford was formerly located on the site of a cotton field, with those few families who had settled there making up the population in 1898. In 1899, the Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad was extended to the present location, and the new Raeford was started. When the first train came

down the track, it is said that the teachers let the children from the institute walk through the woods to meet the train.

The gentlemen who operated the turpentine distillery and general store at old Raeford, located near what is known as the swimming hole on Rockfish Creek, wanted a post office in their store for their convenience and the town people also. In order to choose a name for the post office, they too a syllable from each of their names...one being John McRae, and one being A.A. Williford...Thus the name "Raeford" was given to the town.

The first newspaper, "Facts and Figures" was published from March 1905 to early 1911 by S.D. Poole, and in 1911 F.P. Johnson bought the paper and published it until September 1913. He changed the name to Hoke County Journal. On September 3, 1913, J.W. Johnson and other citizens organized and incorporated the Raeford Publishing Company, with Bion H. Butler as editor. In January of 1915, S.D. Poole rented the machinery and again became editor of the paper, which he continued to call the Hoke County Journal. In 1928 Paul Dickson, Sr. started another paper, the Hoke County Journal, and consolidated the two pages as the News-Journal. Paul Dickson, Jr. became publisher of the News-Journal upon Mr. Dickson, Sr.'s death.

In 1918, Little River township,

located in the northern part of the county, was separated from the remainder of Hoke County by the Ft. Bragg Reservation, and in 1958 the 20,000 acres of the township became part of Moore County.

It would be impossible to cover the entire history of all the events which have taken place to bring Raeford and Hoke County to their present level of growth and development. The community has grown and no longer resembles the town that grew out of a need for educating children and transporting cotton to market.

Industrial development has kept the economy alive in spite of the machination of farms that had driven many families from agricultural activity during the past twenty years. Faberge, Inc., Tex-Elastic, Corporation; Raeford Turkey Farms, Inc., and the Pacific Mills division of Burlington Industries, Inc. are the four major industrial firms providing employment in Hoke County today. In addition to these, the Upchurch Milling Co., Raeford Lumber Co., Hoke Concrete Co., and Hoke Oil and Fertilizer Co. offer needed supplements to the economy of the area. Other business and professional firms provide the bulk of non-farm employment.

New growth and progress is constantly being sought and achieved through the efforts of the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce and the more progressive business and professional people and private citizens of the town and county.



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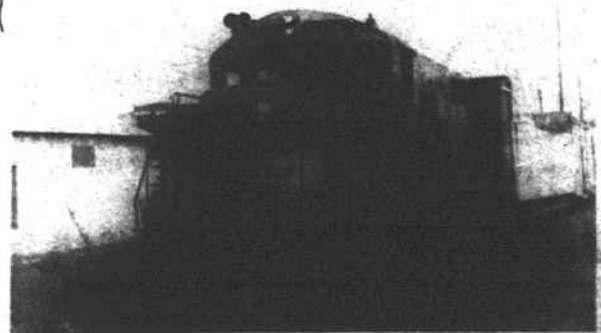
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