

This Is Women's History Week

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD BY GRACE HAMRICK

It's Women's History Week (March 2-8) and an opportune time to give credit to many women in Cleveland County who have distinguished themselves or added flavor to local history.

"Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams" is the 1986 theme. Four members of the Cleveland County Commission for Women have organized the local observance: Shirley Lail, G-W Admissions Office; Kay Kiser of the Department of Social Services; Teresa Melton, director, Center of the Aging at the mall; and Betsy Wells, Kings Mountain teacher.

Legend has it the historical marker on Highway 226 near Grover is the birth side of Susan B. Twitty who saved her brother from John Burke and Tory raiders at Graham's Fort in 1780, a month before the Battle of Kings Mountain. In a safe moment she cried "Brother William, now's your chance—shoot the rascal." He did, right through the head, and Susan darted out among a shower of bullets, brought in Burke's gun and ammunition as trophies of victory.

Among early business women, dating from the early 1880s, were millinery shop operators Miss Maggie Blac, Patty Ramsey and Sue Palmer. Patty married banker Burwell Blanton and Sue, Dr. Augustus Beam. Mrs. Lula Connelly and Miss Belle Frimm trimmed and sold hats; needle experts were Miss Laura Button, Miss Verona Durham and Miss Mattie Adams. Mrs. M.E. Rudasill operated a sash, blind and door factory.

Mrs. Ben Briggs dipped a bucket of water from a spring near her Kings Mountain home and discovered tiny gold nuggets that triggered a gold rush in 1834 through 1890. The original Briggs mine yielded \$1 million. Mrs. Tracey Wright, in 1872, gave Kings Mountain its name, originally known as White Plains.

On April 22, 1861, Zulia Durham presented a silk flag, 3x5, made by Shelby women, to Cleveland County's first Civil War unit, Co.E, 12th regiment, the Cleveland Guards. After being lost and found several times through the years, Mrs. Pansy B. Fetzer found it, coded it and stored it in the N.C.

Museum of History Flag room.

Misses Hattie Durham and Luna Young were the first switchboard operators on the completion of the first telephone exchange around 1895. Among the first in publications were Miss S.J.J. Dickson and Mary Davis who edited and published "The Literary World" around the 1870s. Posey Downs of Casar wrote genealogies of several upper Cleveland families; Mayme Jones was an early historian; Mrs. B.A. Harry of Grover is recognized as an historian.

Dr. Delia Dixon Carroll, if not the first female physician in N.C. was one of the earliest. She was physician at Meredith College for 35 years prior to her death in 1934 in an auto accident. Her sister, Addie Dixon Thacker, was an orator and novelist, having authored "Strength of the Weak" in 1910; "The Outcast" in 1927; "Young Sinners", 1928; "Cell No. 33", 1919; and co-authored in 1930 "The Strange Death of President Harding." Delia and Addie were members of the famous Dixon family, sister of noted Tom Dixon, Jr., author, actor and lecturer who first found fame with his novel, "The Leopard's Spots."

Ida E. Roberts, wife of Rev. John Wesley Roberts, first black man in the county to graduate from college, was also an ordained minister, taught school and music, was a poet and public speaker. They were parents of exceptional children, including Dilutha Cabiness who taught music and was church organist; Dr. J. Ida Jiggetts, a psychiatric therapist and author, founded Westchester Drug Abuse Clinic in Mt. Vernon, N.Y., earned her doctorate at New York University; and Daeira Roberts, operator of Roberts Rest Home in Shelby and an organist.

Attie Texas Bostic, 15th of 16 children of Samuel Evans Bostic and Jane Price Suttle Bostic, was the county's first woman foreign missionary. She went to China in 1900 til 1941 when she was held in a Japanese internment camp in occupied China. She came home on the Gripsholm which took 77 days, covering 21,880 miles and crossed the equator four times.

Miss Emma Frick worked tirelessly for 35 to 40 years with the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, organizing its Sunday School in 1906 and served as superintendent or teacher till her death in the Charles Hotel fire in 1928. Mrs. Susan Elliott Weathers in 1915 was named the first county Home Demonstration agent. When the Shelby Hospital was opened in 1923, Miss Ella MacNichols was superintendent and Miss Etta Beverly was superintendent of nurses for 17 years.

This nation's only known female Third Degree Mason lies buried in Sunset Cemetery. Catherine Sweet Babington, known as Kate, hid for over a year during lodge meetings in her girlhood home in Kentucky. She heard secrets of the First Degree, the Second Degree of Masonry and finally the Third Degree. She was the great-grandmother of Carrie Babington.

Before the days of embalming, Mrs. David Webb was one of many who were well known for helping with burials and "laying out" of women and who also served as midwives.

Other early educational figures included Mrs. J.A. McDonald, principal of Shelby Female Academy in 1889, with Miss Addie Gardner heading the high school department. Miss Lucy Baber was assistant principal of Lattimore Academy 1900-1906; Miss Etta Curtis, for whom the old Curtis-Huggins building was named at Gardner-Webb; Miss Bryte Baker and Mrs. Bonnie Mauney Summers headed Kings Mountain school systems. Mrs. Summers also known for her genealogical studies and wrote a history of the first 50 years of that city.

Mrs. Johnsie (Moffatt) Ware was also an historian, genealogist and an accredited flower show judge.

Dr. Laura Plonk and Miss Lillian Plonk, sisters of Kings Mountain, founded the Plonk School of the Arts in Asheville; Mrs. Joe (Irma) Thompson started what is now East Elementary School in Kings Mountain; Mrs. W.T. Weir, English teacher and librarian, has dedicated a lifetime to that city and was co-chairman of its Centennial Celebration in 1974.

In 1890, Mrs. Frances Lou Smith Cornwell, Mrs. J.T. Kendrick and Mrs. A.P. Carpenter were instrumental in beginning First Baptist Church of Kings Mountain, collecting lumber on the corner lot and turning it after every rain.

Mrs. C.E. Neisler, during the depression prevailed upon the Mauney and Neisler families to keep mills going at a loss rather than allow widespread unemployment; Mrs. E.W. Griffin was instrumental in beginning Driver Education in the state schools.

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