

Outlook Edition: Our History

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before the full moon each month, and set a speaking limit of 15 minutes per man on any subject under discussion. Cruel and unusual punishment to today's politicians.

Kings Mountain became one of the first towns in the state to enact prohibition in an election held on October 15, 1874. The vote was 13-0.

As a town grows, education becomes necessary. Two schools opened in 1874, one located at the site now occupied by the J.S. Mauney Memorial Library, and the other on Gaston Street.

Captain William T. Reilly Bell founded his military and high school in Kings Mountain in 1876, after an extensive search throughout the state for a proper site.

Bell's School was located on the site of what later became Central School. Students came from several states and cut quite a figure around town in their gray uniforms with dark stripes down the trouser legs. Bell operated the school for ten years before moving on to establish schools in Shelby and Rutherfordton.

Mrs. Summers writes that one of Bell's students discovered tin in the area. Tin mining later became an important and widespread industry.

During the late 1800s, the business district began to spread its wings.

The first major industry of that period was started by W.O. Ware, who opened a steam operated sawmill in 1882. Then, in 1888, the Mauney brothers and Capt. Dilling opened Kings Mountain Manufacturing

Co., the first cotton mill in town and the beginning of an industry that was to become so important to the entire area.

Stores, shops and other businesses soon followed. There was Ben Huff's Wagon Factory, Cornwell's Buggy Factory, a drug store, Guthries, which manufactured ladies shoes, Cansler's Grocery, Williford's Dry Goods, and others. Kings Mountain was preparing to shoulder its way into the twentieth century, then tragedy struck.

In 1890, lightning struck the Williford building and much of the downtown area was destroyed by fire.

Most of the businesses rebuilt during the next few years, and in 1900 the Bank of Kings Mountain received its first charter. Six months later the bank received a national charter, becoming the First National Bank of Kings Mountain, the first chartered national bank in Cleveland County.

In 1903, the people of Kings Mountain, who now numbered over 2,000, began to seek a new identity.

The county seat was in Shelby at that time, but independent Kings Mountians sought to separate and form their own county to be called King County, with Kings Mountain as the county seat.

A large group from Gaston, Lincoln and Cleveland counties met in Cherryville on February 2 to hear A.R. Rudasill of Kings Mountain describe the plan. A vote was set for February 6 to further develop the plan.

Shelby officials were opposed to the plan in the state legislature, where it was introduced as a bill. The bill, though supported by Dr. J.G.



Mountain View Hotel in early 1900's

Hord, Maj. T.W. Kendrick, Rudasill and Dr. Falls from Kings Mountain and S.S. Mauney of Cherryville, died in committee.

That wasn't to be the last border squabble however. As the city grew, more and more people were adding to their property and soon some of their land was jutting into Gaston County.

The state General Assembly, in 1915, set a referendum for the people of Kings Mountain to decide whether their town should be wholly in Cleveland or Gaston County.

There were 642 registered voters and 611 cast a ballot. The result was 341 for Cleveland and 270 for Gaston.

Today, there are many Kings Mountain residents who actually live in Gaston County.

Kings Mountain, mostly because of the "Battle" is thought of as an historical city. From time to time dignitaries come to help celebrate the anniversary of the battle of Kings Mountain. Guests, in the past have been William

Jenning Bryan, President Hoover and Vice President Rockefeller.

The story goes that Democratic Governor O. Max Gardner of Shelby introduced Hoover with a two sentence statement then went back to Shelby.

Gerald Ford has been extended two invitations, accepted both times then was forced to cancel twice. Vice President Rockefeller filled in for him once.

Kings Mountain has not lacked for color over the years. "Centennial," a publication of the city, tells of T-model races down Mountain Street during the early years after the turn of the century. Then there was the medicine show that used to visit each year. The "Over Mountain" men trek through each year to celebrate the Battle of Kings Mountain.

The first telephone was installed at Dilling Mill in 1927, the first Fire Department established in May of 1931, and the first Boy Scout troop in North Carolina was chartered in 1910 in Kings Mountain.

The hospital was opened in 1951, and recently expanded. Miss Lottie Goforth bequeathed \$34,000 for construction of the facility before she died.

The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s brought many improvements and new facilities through the use of federal funds and civic involvement. Water and sewer systems have been expanded and the downtown business district has undergone redevelopment. The Community Center, a new high school and a new junior high school were built. Many new businesses have been attracted to the area.

The Kings Mountain Water Filtration Plant began operating in 1971 with the opening of the John H. Moss Lake.

Kings Mountain is a success story. Residents are proud of their city and all are eager to extol its merits. Community pride is evident everywhere.

History is but the story of people and their accomplishments. The dedication of its people is the real story of Kings Mountain.

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