

December events in North Carolina

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Besides the Yuletide season, the month of December has also brought many interesting and memorable events to North Carolina over the years. Take a tour through the years of fascinating facts about the Old North State and the twelfth month of the year.

December 17, 1903 was a day that not only changed North Carolina, but mankind as well. In one of the most important moments since humans took notice of the birds, Wilbur and Orville Wright made the first controlled flight of a motorized, heavier than air machine.

Taking place at Kill Devil Hills on the Outer Banks, the Wright's flight was not the daredevil act that many folks thought. Rather, it was the culmination of several years of study, hard work, and experimentation. The 1903 expedition that saw the historic "First Flight" was actually the third year that the Wright brothers had been coming to the Outer Banks to conduct their flying research.

The month of December back in 1700 saw English explorer John Lawson make a trek across North Carolina. Lawson's journey included a visit to the region that includes the Catawba River. While he was on his adventure, Lawson is said to have been perhaps the first white man to sample barbecue. The 'cue was served to him as a guest of the Santee Indians. Lawson described the meal as "fat barbacu'd venison which the woman of the cabin took and tore into pieces with her teeth." Other Native American hap-

penings during December in North Carolina history were not as congenial as the "barbarcu." December 29, 1836 saw the Cherokee Indians surrender their tribal lands to the federal government in the treaty of New Echota.

Soon, all but the group of Cherokees known as the Eastern band will be moved to Oklahoma in a march known as the "Trail of Tears".

Several sports events have made history and news during Decembers past. In 1892, the first intercollegiate football game played by African-Americans took place in Salisbury. In the contest, Salisbury's Livingstone College beat Biddle University by a score of 4-0.

In other historic December sports news, December 30, 1950 witnessed Duke University stage the most spectacular comeback in NCAA basketball history by coming from a 54-22 deficit to defeat Tulane by a final score of 74-72.

Rounding out sports news, December 4, 1994 was the day that Charlotte Smith of the University of North Carolina performed the first basketball dunk by a woman since Georgeann Wells of West Virginia had done the deed back in 1984.

The War Between the States brought action to North Carolina on December 23, 1864 when a fleet of Union ships and troops attempted to take Fort Fisher near Wilmington. One method intended to soften the fort up was to pack an old cargo ship full of gunpowder and drift it close by where it would explode.

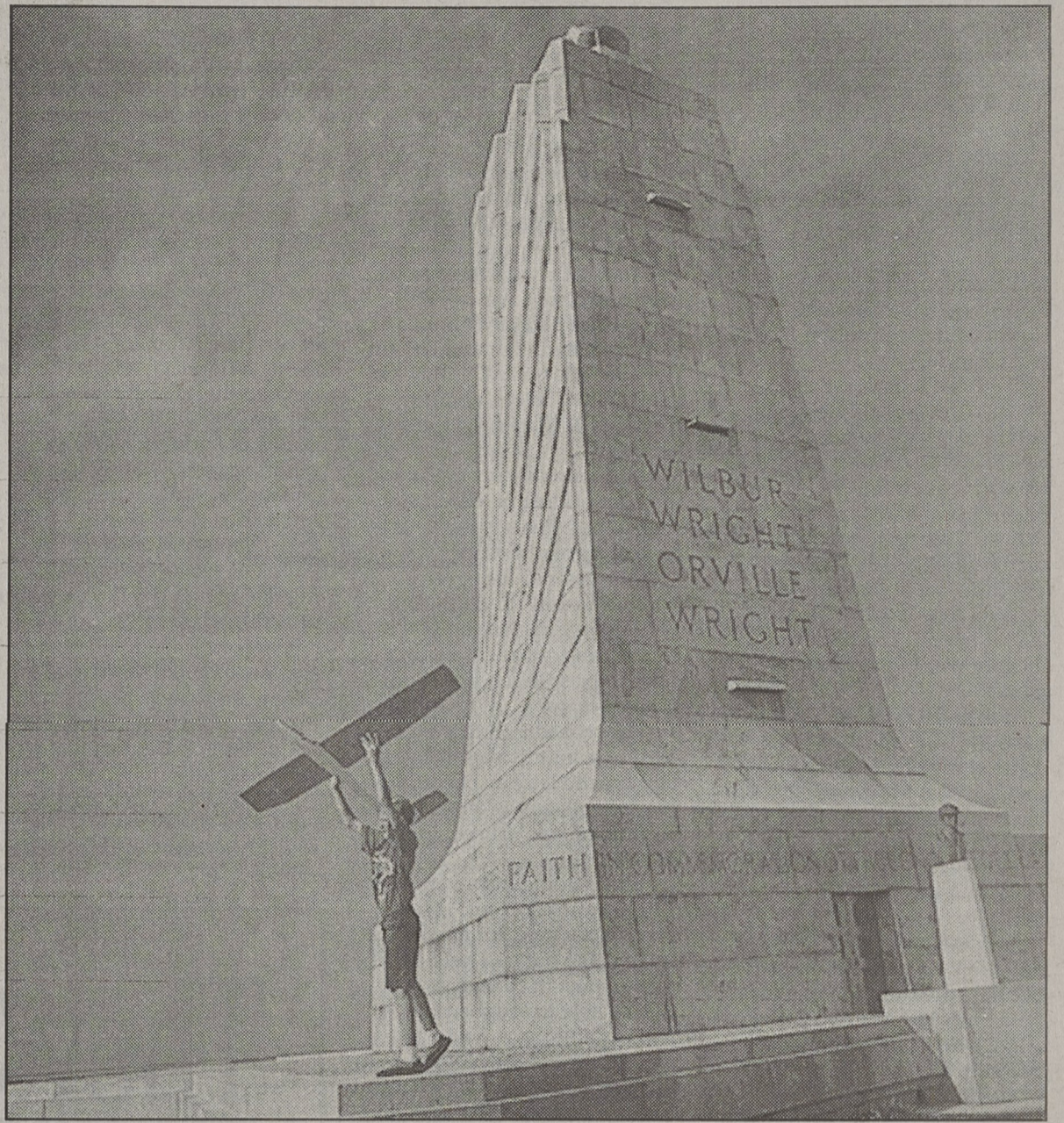
Unfortunately for the Yankees, the idea didn't work and only produced a huge shower of sparks. Northern General Burnside described the action with the words "there's a fizzle."

Another Civil War ship with North Carolina December connections is the ironclad USS Monitor. Ten months after its battle with the CSS Merrimack near Hampton Roads, Virginia, the Monitor sank December 30, 1862 in a storm off Cape Hatteras. The ship was being towed to Charleston at the time of the sinking. The Monitor- which is still on the ocean floor- was discovered in 1973.

In a less than complimentary journal entry dated December 1838, English stage star Fanny Kemble writes that in her opinion North Carolina is the poorest state in the Union. Kemble goes on to describe the houses as "mean and beggarly." She writes the people had a "squalid and at the same time fierce air." Finally, Kemble comments on women using tobacco as "disgusting and disagreeable."

Shelby's own O. Max Gardner made a bit of North Carolina December remembrance when as governor he held a special dinner in 1929 to showcase Tar Heel produce. Just a few items on the bill of fare included scuppermong juice, cigarettes, ham from Caledonia Prison Farm, and West Jefferson cheese.

December odds and ends in North Carolina includes the 1906 opening of the Bijou movie house in Wilmington. The Bijou was the first full-time movie theater in North Carolina. Another December ditty was the 1990 closing of the original Hardee's hamburger place in Rocky Mount. December 1961 saw North Carolina's first ski resort- Cataloochee Ski Ranch in Maggie Valley begin operation. Finally, December 1875 saw the Currituck Beach Lighthouse illuminated.



Wright Brothers National Memorial, Kitty Hawk

Photo courtesy of NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development

Every month of the year has an interesting past in our state. For a complete look at North Carolina's history by the calen-

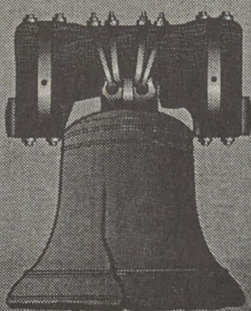
dar, read Lew Powell's "On This Day in North Carolina." Another good source of North Carolina trivia arranged in

chronological order is "North Carolina: Reflections of 400 years".

Offices Closed for Holiday!

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday our offices will be closed Thursday, November 23 and Friday, November 24. This will effect the Belmont Banner/Mount Holly News, The Cherryville Eagle, The Kings Mountain Herald and The Bessemer City Record. Offices in Kings Mountain, Belmont and Cherryville will re-open Monday, November 26. Sorry for any inconvenience and have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

FOOTBALL CONTEST ENTRIES
NOT DROPPED OFF BY
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22 BY
5PM WILL NEED TO BE MAILED IN
AND POSTMARKED BY 5PM
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH!!



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