

Train celebration brought Fort Mill's

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Tipsy tale surrounds location of Chester County Courthouse

In June 1853, the Charlotte, Columbia and Augusta Railroad was completed. The Fort Mill community planned a picnic to celebrate the arrival of the train.

All morning, the crowd assembled near the trestle at the Old Nation Ford. One of the last to arrive was an old fellow who parked his wagon on the track. Some of his neighbors told him he should move the wagon so as not to be hit. The man had just gotten into his wagon when the locomotive blew its whistle, so scaring him that he jumped out and ran. The locomotive demolished the wagon.

It is thought that this is the first York County case of a train hitting a vehicle.

1st rail accident

■ In 1785, the three counties of Chester, Lancaster and York were created out of Camden District. By state law, each county had to establish a courthouse in its geographic center.

Arthur Cornwell of Chester once wrote a short history of Chester and in it told a story as to how the Chester courthouse came to be at its present location.

The county had not been surveyed with any degree of accuracy and there were a number of landholders near the estimated center who wished to have the courthouse built on their land or near it. One of the landowners was Edward Lacy, a Revolutionary War hero and an influential member of the state legislature.

Lacy invited the state-appointed commissioners to look at his site, which had a large spring. At the spring, Lacy had a large spread of refreshments, including a jug of whiskey. By the time the whiskey was consumed, the commissioners thought it was a good idea to build the courthouse on Lacy's land. But exactly where?

The commissioners came up with the idea that each of them would start at the spring and run in different directions as far as they could go before collapsing. The courthouse would be built on the spot where the last man stood.

It happened that the last man to fall had run to the west. He ended up very close to an Indian path known in Chester as the old Saluda trail. And that is how, according to Arthur Cornwell, the Chester County Courthouse came to be built at its present location on Saluda Street.

■ The 1876, York County tax assessment from the county auditor reveals that the county folks owned 3,728 dogs valued at

NEARBY HISTORY

Louise Pettus



\$19,092. Contrast this with 6,864 sheep and goats valued at \$6,864. Or consider that the value of all stocks of out-of-state companies or corporations (excepting national banks) was \$19,755, not much more than the value of all the dogs. But why were dogs so heavily taxed?

■ World War I was in its third year when the United States declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary. Some Americans, eager to get into the fight, joined

British or French forces rather than wait for the United States to be prepared to go overseas. One of these was Elliott White Springs of Lancaster.

As soon as Springs graduated from Princeton in 1917, he enlisted in the British air force. While a college student, he had taken flight lessons. Springs came out of the war as America's third-ranking flying ace credited with shooting down 11 enemy planes. He won the British Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war, Springs wrote one of the most highly acclaimed aviation books, "War Birds," and went on to build a textile empire now known as Springs Industries.

Another World War I hero from York County is lesser known, probably because he was on the staff of the British War Hospital. Dr. Philip Williams Hunter was captured by the Ger-

and held in a German prison until the Nov. 11, 1918, armistice. He nearly starved to death and was in rags in an unheated, solitary prison cell.

Hunter was awarded the British Military Cross for distin-

guished service and came back to York to resume his medical practice.

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