

Annexations changed county boundaries

In 1954, Lancaster County's state senator, Bruce Williams, sponsored a bill that 23 years later would add 66 square miles and about 3,000 people to Lancaster County.

The area was annexed from Kershaw County following a referendum of those affected. State law required that at least two-thirds of the people affected had to approve the annexation.

At the time, the town of Kershaw was split by the Lancaster-Kershaw county line with 920 of the residents living in Lancaster County and 456 living in Kershaw County. The schools were in Lancaster County and so were the major industries — Springs, Kershaw plant and the Kershaw Cotton Oil Mill. Mayor Arthur Jones and the town council had continuous difficulties with the local taxes and dealing with two counties on school-and-road maintenance.

The Kershaw County senator in 1954 was John West, later an S.C. governor. West had no problem with the town of Kershaw being united. Instead, he objected to the idea of giving up the village of Liberty Hill, and the majority of people of Liberty Hill had less reason to seek a change than the people of Kershaw.



Nearby history

LOUISE PETTUS

West had considerable political power, but he knew he would get nowhere if he proposed that Kershaw County annex all of the town of Kershaw. It would have not been possible under the S.C. Constitution, which stated that each county had to have at least 500 square miles. Lancaster had only 515 square miles compared with Kershaw's 786.

When the referendum providing for annexation was accepted by the voters and the state assembly in 1977, the result was a meandering mixture of streams and roads. On the east, there was a straight line from Lynches River to Little Lynches River where the boundary went south following Little Lynches River to its juncture with Hanging Rock Creek.

After that, the appearance of the map became even more ragged with the use of county roads and the roadbed of the Southern Rail-

road until Beaver Creek was reached along with a road northward to Stoneboro. From Stoneboro it was a straight shot on a southwestern course to Lake Wateree.

Williams was so pleased with the prospect of the Kershaw acquisition that he proposed that the Fort Mill township be annexed to Lancaster County, at the same time. That went over like a lead balloon. The State newspaper reported that York County's representative, W.D. Bradford, who was from Fort Mill, "snorted" at Williams' idea. York County's other representative, J. Bates Harvey, said about Lancaster County, "We can't help it if they don't grow."

Until the late 1920s, Fort Mill had been cut off from easy access to the courthouse in York, and there were several instances where this isolation had worked against the township. But in spite of that, Fort Mill people were not likely to vote to join Lancaster County.

However, York County had previously experienced giving up part of its territory. In 1897, York, Union and Spartanburg counties all gave up some land to form Cherokee County. York's contribution was its northwest corner. Originally, the Broad River served

as the western boundary of York County from its entry into South Carolina down to the Chester border. While a considerable amount of York County land was given up in 1897, the area was sparsely populated compared to Fort Mill's population in 1954.

York, Lancaster and Chester counties were created in 1785 out of Camden District along with the counties of Clarendon, Fairfield, Richland and Claremont. The last named became known as Sumter District in 1859.

Even though the nine counties were created in 1785, not all boundaries were surveyed immediately. The line separating Chester and York counties was not run until Dec. 19, 1796. The line separating Lancaster and Chester counties was always the Catawba River. The Lancaster-York boundary was and is, the Catawba River and Sugar Creek, with Sugar Creek being the eastern boundary of Fort Mill Township and the western boundary of Indian Land township in Lancaster County.

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