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**A SHORT HISTORY OF
LEXINGTON COUNTY**

Romantic Indian legends. . . chilling frontier adventure. . . quaint old world customs. . . are but a few of the colorful threads forming the fabric of Lexington County's history--a chapter only now emerging in the story of South Carolina.

Settled by diverse (but chiefly Swiss-German) and sometimes discordant elements, who nevertheless managed to effectively use limited available agricultural resources, the area was crucial to the state's development by its "command of the Cherokee path and much of the future traffic of the piedmont."

A small Indian village, inhabited by the Congaree Indians of Siouan stock who lived widely in the area until they were decimated in the Yamassee War of 1715, was located at the junction of the Congaree River and Congaree Creek, below Cayce.

On this site was built a principal fortified military garrison in 1718. The garrison, a palisade wooden fort manned by 12 men and an officer, was built by Cherokee labor following an agreement in 1716 between Col. James Moore, representing the British Charles Towne government, and the celebrated Cherokee Indian "wise man and conjurer," Charite Hayge. The name "Congarees" evidently was used until the Revolution to describe not only the outpost but the surrounding countryside as well.

In 1748 a second garrison was established 2½ miles north at the Congarees after attacks upon settlers in the late 1740's by Iroquois warriors from the Ohio Valley. In 1754 the fort's commander, Lt. Peter Mercier, who had married the widow of prominent Congaree trader George Haig, "led the garrison to Virginia, where they joined George Washington's expedition to build a fort on the Ohio."

Reminders of these and other colonial forts--some of which were simply garrisoned farm houses--remain today, reflected in the routes along modern highways which closely parallel the early paths and trails between forts and settlements. At least four other settlers' forts were used in this area during the Indian wars. The two Congaree forts were especially significant as strategic crossroads in opening up and defending the Carolina backcountry.

CONGAREE TRADING POST ESTABLISHED

In 1733 the first large trading post or factory in central South Carolina was built near the old Congaree fort site by Thomas Brown, a North Irishman who operated the post for the next 20 years. The post was

a center of exchange with the Indians between Charles Towne and tribes as far west as the Mississippi River. The Congaree posts spurred expansion of upper South Carolina and culminated in the selection and founding of Columbia, east of the river, as the state's capital city in 1785.

The area was given its first real political identity in 1733 as Congaree District, one of 11 districts containing townships laid out to provide defensive buffers for Charles Towne against hostile Indians. Because of its location, Congaree District served as the principal inland buffer for raids from the vast Cherokee nation to the northwest and other marauding bands from as far away as New York State.

Congaree District included all of the present county except that land north of the Saluda River, the area south of Sandy Run Creek and the western third of the county. It later was extended and contained 652,000 acres and was roughly 34 miles long and 30 miles wide. The township, lying along the eastern side of the district, along the Congaree River, covered 919 acres, was seven miles square and was laid off in 686 lots.

Prior to the establishment of the district-townships, the area had been divided into the old colonial counties laid out in 1680. Territory south of the Saluda River lay in Berkeley County. That part of the Dutch Fork (land along and between the Saluda and Broad rivers) north of the Saluda was in Craven County. The term "Dutch" is actually a misnomer, a colloquial term for early German-Swiss or Deutsch settlers.

In 1735 the district was renamed Saxe Gotha in an attempt to lure for frontier settlement hardy German immigrants. The name evidently was given in honor of the marriage of the British Prince of Wales to Princess Augusta of the German State of Saxe Gotha.

That same year a party of immigrants from Switzerland petitioned the Provincial Assembly for payment to ship passage in order that 19 of their number might come ashore. Among this group were such family names as Gallman, Fridig, Mattias, Muller and Spuhl. The Commons House provided the payment and the immigrants were sent to Saxe Gotha. Thus, the county's first settlers were Switzers, who were soon followed and greatly outnumbered by Germans, primarily from the German cantons of Switzerland, Wuerttemberg and the Palatinate and some from Prussia, Hamburg and Alsace-Lorraine.

In 1737 Stephen and Joseph Crell (Krell) and their families arrived in the township as the first German immigrants. The opening of a wagon road from Amelia Township in Orangeburg to Saxe Gotha in 1737 further expedited settlement. That year the Cherokee Chief Cassett and members of his tribe extended a cordial welcome to a group of arrivals in the vicinity of the Red Store (now Calhoun County) on the old Charleston Highway.

GERMAN-SWISS SETTLE AREA

The 11 families of this group constituted a part of the first real colonization effort for this area. They included John Sallings, Abram

and Herman Gyger (Geiger), Jacob Liver (Lever), Julius Gredig (Graddick), Caspar Fry, Conrad and Casper Kuntzler (Kinsler), John Jacob Bieman (Baughman) and Elizabeth Shalling. The influx of Germans continued through the 1750's and was motivated by the immigrants' yearning for their own land, their desire to better their economic conditions and for religious and political freedom.

Most of these immigrants came directly from Europe; a few came down from Pennsylvania. The second largest group of settlers were Virginians of English extraction. The land bounty system of providing 50 acres headright for each family member and servant was strongly appealing to the early settlers, many of whom later added to their holdings by taking advantage of the offer of 100 acres at \$10 for service rendered in the Revolution.

These early settlers were chiefly small farmers and mechanics who practiced their trades in their new homes. The most prosperous ones operated stores, trading posts, saw and grist mills. Most were poor, cultivating their small farms with labor necessarily supplied by all members of the family working together. Early accounts of impiety, ignorance and depravity in Saxe Gotha have been largely refuted by later historians.

Scholars of the Swiss-German elements describe them as being "thrifty, frugal and hospitable. . . an honest, industrious, economical people with a deeply ingrained sense of obligation to the Church and State." The people of the Fork and Saxe Gotha did suffer from lack of schools, ministers, and civil institutions, not uncommon for a frontier society; but historic research shows that most of the settlers were literate and were eager to establish schools, churches and courts. Isolation and unfavorable frontier conditions did, however, seriously impede the social and economic progress of the district.

On February 28, 1739, Hans Jacob Reimensperger, an enterprising Switzer who lived in the area now West Columbia, was chosen immigration agent for the English king for the district. Reimsperger wrote an enticing booklet entitled "Good News from the Royal English Province Carolina," had his neighbors attest in writing to the allurements of the area, and armed with these, set out recruiting new settlers. The booklet was widely distributed under the auspices of the English king and was responsible for attracting more German immigration.

CHURCHES BEFORE 1800

During 1739 the Rev. Christian Theus arrived in Saxe Gotha as its first minister and school teacher, and remained to minister to the needs of Saxe Gotha for the next 50 years until his death. By 1750 Saxe Gotha had 800 to 900 settlers. In 1750, also, the first church and school for the township were established near Beaver Creek after a recommendation two years earlier by the General Assembly that 500 shillings of the township fund be used for

those purposes. The meeting house building was used jointly by the two leading faiths: the Calvinist Presbyterian Reformed Germans and the "Augsburg Confession" Lutheran Germans.

Rev. Theus continued to serve both groups until 1765-68, after which the Reformed group, with Rev. Theus, moved several miles north and built St. John's Reformed Church, which was still standing in 1768. The Lutherans moved two miles south near the mouth of Sandy Run Creek.

Churches played an important part in the area's early development. Before 1800 the following churches had been organized: Sandy Run Lutheran Church, 1778; Bethlehem Lutheran, near Irmo, 1788; St. Jacob's Lutheran Church, Leesville, 1792; St. Peter's Lutheran (Piney Woods), 1794; St. Peter's Lutheran, Lexington, 1787; Bethel Lutheran, White Rock, 1762; Ebenezer Methodist, Swansea, 1792; Broad River Baptist Church, 1762.

Because Saxe Gotha Village was located in a low, fever ridden area, the settlement shifted towards St. John's Church. The community, including Fort Congaree, became known as St. John's. When the wagon road between the village and Augusta was opened in 1754, river traffic began to quicken. Martin Friday began operating a ferry moving back towards the ferry site where Granby Village was established sometime before 1774. No trace of the old towns in this area remains today.

According to tradition, Granby was named after the Earl of Granby, a popular British nobleman and Commander-in-Chief of the British army. As the head of navigation on the Congaree River, Granby became one of the most important commercial centers this side of the Mississippi River. Indigo, cotton, manufactured ropes, Indian corn, and beeswax and other goods from Saxe Gotha and the up-country were carried in boats of 70 tons to Charles Towne, from where salt, fabrics and other merchandise needed by the settlers in the interior were shipped upriver.

SUFFERING IN CHEROKEE WAR

The area enjoyed peace until the outbreak of the destructive Cherokee War of 1760-61. Some 50 area settlers were brutally murdered in savage Indian attacks. The settlers remained clustered miserably for safety in garrisoned forts throughout the district for long months. Many Lexington men served during this period with colonists from this state, North Carolina and Virginia when expeditions were formed at the Congaree in punitive detachments against the Indians.

After the Cherokee War the area was terrorized and pillaged by notorious bands of cruel, vicious outlaws. Saxe Gothans, with other backcountrymen, organized in 1767-68 the Regulator Movement, a vigilante group determined to stop the outlaws' outrages after continued appeals to the Charleston government for help in maintaining law and order went unheeded. Some 1,500 Saxe Gothans attended the Regulator Congress at the Congarees June, 1768, the results of which effected long neglected action by the assembly to provide courts and local law enforcement for the backcountry.

Saxe Gotha leaders among the Regulators were Moses Kirkland (later to become a top Tory leader), William Arthur, Rudolph Buzzard, John Frazer, Bartholomew Gartman, Wood Tucker, Christopher Smith and Elisha Teiger.

It was in this period that the infamous "Weberite Heresy" took place. The Weberites were a group of blasphemous fanatics led by the deranged Jacob Weber. Weber somehow convinced his followers that he was the Diety and that two others of their number were the Son and the Holy Spirit. A quarrel precipitated the violent slaying of these latter two under Weber's direction. In 1761 he was tried and hanged in Charles Towne for the murders. The strange sect thereafter disbanded and moved away.

During the Revolution the area was bitterly divided. Many families were split asunder by fierce loyalties to adopted Whig or Tory sentiments. Fields and homes were burned and murders committed by both sides. Destruction was widespread. Even after the British surrender at Yorktown, armed encounters among friends and neighbors took place.

Fort Granby below present Cayce was the major outpost for British regulars in the area. The site was the Cayce House, which stood a short distance north of Friday's Ferry at Granby Village. It was built originally in 1765 as a trading post by the Camden merchant firm of John Chestnut and Joseph Kershaw.

In 1781 the British seized the Cayce House. Here the fortunes of war surged back and forth as the post was captured and recaptured by both sides, until finally held by the Continentals under Light Horse Harry Lee and Gen. Thomas Sumter.

It was here that Lexington County's Revolutionary War heroine, young Emily Geiger, was searched under orders of Lord Rawdon after being stopped on her daring night ride as a courier for the Continental Army. Before she was searched, she memorized and swallowed the message she was carrying from Gen. Greene to Gen. Sumter. After her release, she resumed her ride and successfully completed her mission.

All during the Revolution pitched skirmishes took place in the county. Although little information for this period has been found, records do exist relating conflicts at Gilbert (then, "The Juniper"), Lynch's Million (Pelion), on Hollow Creek, at Tarrar Spring (near Lexington), at Muddy Spring (Two Notch Road) and along the Tory Road on the North Edisto River.

Local patriot officers included Godfrey Dreher, Gabriel Fridig, Hans Adam Sumner, Llewellyn and John Threewits, James Turner and John Kinsler. Many other citizens, men and women, served actively as militiamen or were aided in providing supplies to the Continentals.

SAXE GOTHA CHANGED TO LEXINGTON

On March 12, 1785, Lexington County was established as a county in Orangeburgh District and had its western boundary extended westward to the

old Ninety-Six Precinct line. Additional territory enlarged the county in 1808 with more land (south to the North Edisto River) extracted from Orangeburgh District. In 1785 the county's name was changed from Saxe Gotha to Lexington in honor of the Massachusetts battle, although Saxe Gotha was continued as the name of the election district until discarded in 1852. On March 24, 1785, a county court was established. Then on February 19, 1791, the county court was abolished and public records were transferred to the Orangeburgh District Court.

During this period Granby Village flourished and was named the county seat in 1785. It was reported to have been a "place of considerable prosperity with its broad, fertile river swamp lands extending many miles below." The merchants made fortunes and lived in good style. Their families were well educated and formed a circle of refined society that was at once moral and elevated." Among them were the Bells, Hanes, Arthurs, Fridays, Seibels and others who were among the founders of Columbia.

In 1802 Granby was said to be only slightly smaller than Camden, which then boasted 200 houses, while Columbia had 80-100. President George Washington visited Granby on his Southern tour in 1791, after having breakfasted at John W. Lee's Stage Tavern (in Leesville) and proceeded by way of Gilbert and Summit (not then there) to Granby on his way from Augusta to Columbia.

On December 21, 1804, Lexington County became Lexington District but court continued to be held at Orangeburgh until the court house and jail could be erected at Granby. They were built in 1805 and court was held in 1806. That court house, the second of five the county has erected, was later moved across the river and used as Columbia's Presbyterian Church.

As Columbia developed, Granby simultaneously declined, and by 1837 was virtually deserted. Besides being in an unhealthy location, Granby was often damaged by river floods. On December 18, 1819, the General Assembly passed an act to change the county seat, the place selected being near the geographic center of the county on a hill near 12 Mile Creek. A two acre site was purchased from Anna Barbara Drafts Corley (Granny Corley) on January 24, 1820.

The first court house on this site in Lexington Village (which developed around the court house and was, indeed, called Lexington Court House until 1900) was erected in 1820-21 and was a wooden structure.

GROWTH OF LEXINGTON VILLAGE

In its first few years the village is described as being essentially a woods, "the pine trees and blackjacks standing within twenty yards in rear of the court house." In addition to the court house and jail the only buildings in town were John Meetze's store and tavern, a store run by Moses Jacobs and Lewis Levy, Charles Conner's blacksmith shop, Judge Gantt's "one-room house," Granny Corley's house and the house of Ephraim Corley, the butcher.

Lexington village and the district grew, although large numbers of its citizens departed in the first half of the 19th century in the huge westward migration which followed the expansion of the southern cotton kingdom. By 1859 the census taker reported in the village newspaper that the town had a population of 441 and the district 8,726. The 1860 District Census recorded a population of 9,333 whites and 6,246 Negroes.

The town had no church until 1831 when the first St. Stephen's Lutheran Church was erected. The location in 1833 of the Southern Lutheran Theological Seminary and Classical Academy undoubtedly aided the village's growth. At first the town had no school, or physician and but one lawyer, a Virginian named R. H. Goldthwaite. But before 1830 Jesse Drafts opened a school, "charging one dollar a month for tuition." There were probably some simple field schools in the area and other classical schools were known to have operated earlier.

Platt Springs Academy on Platt Springs Road was begun in 1812 above where Red Bank Creek joins Congaree Creek, and was said to have been a leading school in the state in the 1820's and 30's. The Lexington Classical Academy was started before 1830, was incorporated into the seminary and reopened in 1858, with S. E. Caughman as principal, as the Lexington Classical and English School.

The Lexington Female School began May 28, 1856, under the supervision of Mrs. Martha A. Corley. During the same period the Sandy Run Academy operated and an English School at Rish's Store on the North Edisto River was taught by S. M. Simons. The Carolina Female Seminary, under William Berly operated from 1859 for several years.

Lexington County's first newspaper was started by J. C. DeGaffareilly in the village in 1853 and was called the Lexington Telegraph. In 1853, also, the Lexington Flag was begun in the village by George Adolphus Fink.

By 1857 the Flag was being edited by E. J. H. Dreher and J. H. G. Leppard. In 1854 The S. C. Temperance Standard was published in the village with S. E. Caughman, J. R. Breure and S. Corley listed as editors. The Flag apparently was the only paper to continue publication until 1865 when its presses were destroyed by Union troops.

From then until 1871, when the Lexington Dispatch, still extant, was begun by Godfrey Harmon, the county had no newspapers.

Before 1900 other newspapers were published in Batesburg, in Leesville, Lewiedale (Gilbert), Summit and Chapin.

COUNTY INDUSTRY BEFORE 1860

By 1860 the county enjoyed some degree of industrialization although saw milling and cotton planting were the major income producing occupations. Before the War Between the States there were in the county 73 saw mills, one cotton and wood mill, eight carriage and wagon makers, one sash and blind factory, two boot and shoe makers, one tannery, one blacksmith, one

turpentine distillery, one printing establishment and one wooden bucket factory.

Earlier industries had included precision gunmaking south of Leesville by John and Paul Quattlebaum and Elijah Hall, and brickmaking (started in 1804) in present Cayce by the Guignards. The Guignard Brickworks today are the oldest in the nation.

The largest single pre-war industry by far in the county, and second largest textile mill in the state, was the Saluda Factory on the Congaree. It was built 1828-29, operated by 150 slaves, had 5,000 spindles and made brown shirting and colored cloth for slaves. The factory, a four-story rectangular building of granite measuring 200 feet by 45, was destroyed by Union forces entering Columbia February 17, 1865.

The war cost Lexington County untold suffering, not only in death or injury to more than one quarter of its male population between 16 and 60 who served in the Confederacy, but also by the ravages and destruction of an invading army numbering more than 60,000 regular Union soldiers who overran the area for four days and nights prior to their shelling Columbia from the west bank of the Congaree and burning of that city in February, 1865.

While Gen. William Sherman entered the county from the southeast by way of the Old State Road, other columns under Gen. Hugh J. Kilpatrick and Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum advanced from the southeast, their armies completely covering the county.

Homes and buildings were burned; foodstuffs, furnishings and livestock either destroyed or carried off. Only reaches of the Dutch Fork, well beyond the rivers, escaped the Federal torches. Kilpatrick's men fired the village, nearly devastating it and burning to the ground St. Stephen's Church, stores, homes and the Robert Mills' designed court house, said in 1853 by the Columbia Southern Guardian to be a "better court house" than the one in Richland County. The village had suffered a serious fire in 1855, in which a large number of houses and stores were destroyed, but the court house was saved.

COURTHOUSE RECORDS DESTROYED

With the destruction of the court house went most of the early public records and documents of the county, a loss that has severely hampered historical research of the area.

After the war most Lexington County families were left destitute. Many of the leading families and public officials had been Unionists before the war, but had worked loyally as Secessionists once the conflict began. The county, from its beginning a small farmer society more akin to that of the independent, self-reliant Yankee New Englander than to neighboring areas and their large plantation based societies, had embraced a tragic cause and had paid dearly for it.

From the havoc left by the war, Lexington County entered a grim era of rebuilding and reconstruction. It was almost unanimous in support of Wade Hampton with a large and willing Red Shirt organization ready to move at his command. Progress for the county in the remainder of the 19th century was painful and slow, aggravated by lack of capital and heavy reliance on a none too productive agricultural economy.

AREA OF COUNTY REDUCED

The Radical Constitution of 1868 changed all districts into counties, and marked the beginning of Lexington's modern county boundary lines, except for areas lost in enlarging Newberry and Richland Counties after 1900 and land taken in creating the new counties of Aiken (1871), Saluda (1895), and Calhoun (1908).

Before the war there had been but two municipalities in the county: Summit, incorporated December 15, 1847 and Lexington, incorporated January 28, 1861. After 1870 the extension of rail lines throughout the county encouraged more towns and the following were established: Leesville (Feb. 24, 1875); Batesburg (May 31, 1877); Chapin (Dec. 24, 1889); Irmo (Dec. 24, 1890); Swansea (Dec. 19, 1892); West Columbia (Brookland, later New Brookland--Dec. 24, 1894); Gilbert (Lewiedale--May 12, 1899); Pelion (Sept. 12, 1912); Cayce (Sept. 17, 1914); Springdale (June 17, 1955); South Congaree (Aug. 8, 1957); and Pine Ridge (June 2, 1958).

The present century has brought tremendous change and phenomenal advances. A system of modern highways and the construction in 1930 of Lake Murray Dam (Dreher Shoals Dam and hydroelectric power house) on the Saluda River have enabled the county to diversify its economy on a broad basis of scientific agriculture and extensive industry.

The nation's important County Farm Extension Service programs, expertly administered from its land grant colleges, had its beginnings in Lexington County in this century. In 1914 the late A. Frank Lever, Sr., U.S. Congressman, introduced the Smith-Lever Act in Congress to establish the service. Congressman Lever and another Lexington native, B. H. Rawl, are credited with developing the program which modernized American agriculture by making available to every farmer vital technical and scientific assistance based on precise research and demonstrations.

This century has also produced the area's first governor and federal judge, George Bell Timmerman, Jr., S.C. Governor (1955-59) and his father, the late G. B. Timmerman, Sr., who served on the federal bench 1941-1961. One other Lexingtonian, Lemuel Boozer, had served briefly as Reconstruction lieutenant-governor, July-October, 1868.

VIEW OF COUNTY TODAY

Today, the county excels in many fields of endeavor. Networks of new suburban residential developments stretch comfortably along complex

industrial plants and model farms. Lovely recreational centers and camp sites lie within a few miles of every citizen.

Committed to a share in the state's future, the county's people nonetheless cherish its traditions and are proud of its past. The County Historical Society has quadrupled its membership since 1968 and this year has won two state awards for work on the county's first project in historic preservation. A county museum with holdings worth more than \$60,000 now preserves the John Fox House--former faculty and student residence of the old Lutheran Seminary, second oldest organized Lutheran seminary in the nation.

In this cultural center historical artifacts depicting the everyday life of yesterday year can be found and interpreted in terms of the area's people, their trials and aspirations.

From frontier crossroads to tomorrow's bell wether, few areas of the state offer as much in historical color--or have brighter prospects for a radiant future.

DATE OF

MUNICIPAL CHARTER ISSUANCE

Batesburg	May 31, 1877
Cayce	September 17, 1914
Chapin	December 24, 1889
Gilbert	May 12, 1899
Irmo	December 24, 1890
Leesville	February 24, 1875
Lexington	January 28, 1861
Pelion	September 12, 1912
Pine Ridge	June 2, 1958
South Congaree	August 8, 1957
Springdale	June 15, 1955
Summit	December 15, 1847
Swansea	December 19, 1892
West Columbia	December 24, 1894
Gaston	

Compiled by Nancy F. Wingard and Clayton B. Kleckley
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