

ODDS & ENDS #52

More odds and ends found in old newspapers:

An early, and short-lived, Yorkville newspaper, called "The Compiler" printed in its June 27, 1840 issue a complaint of an anonymous citizen about the local graveyard. The correspondent wrote that Yorkville citizens should cry with shame, saying: "The beasts of the field trample upon and defile the spot . . . The common road passes thru and among resting places of our fathers and children."

The correspondent went on at length about the conditions with such as: "Who can feel as he ought to in the presence of the dead, surrounded by filth of every imaginable kind, and by animals of every description?"

Only a few years later in January 1849, a writer-artist, Benjamin Lossing, visited the town of Yorkville and apparently didn't see the village in the same way. Lossing wrote that Yorkville was "a very pleasant village of about eight hundred inhabitants. . . the streets are regularly laid out, and adorned with beautiful Pride of India trees, filled, when I was there, with clusters of fruit. I saw some elegant mansions; and in the gardens, fine palmettos, the first I had seen, were growing." Lossing thought Yorkville the loveliest village of the upcountry.

Now fast forward to 1877 when the Yorkville Enquirer was reporting that a special election was to be held in which every county was to vote on whether or not cattle and hogs should be fenced in or that the state would continue, as they had done since 1670, to allow cattle and hogs to roam freely. (The owners of the cattle were required, by law, to register them and either brand the animals or notch the ears. No brand or notch could be duplicated by anyone who lived within five miles of the first recorder.

It was by a very narrow margin but York County (and Chester and Lancaster County voters as well) voted in 1877 to fence in the cattle and hogs. However, it was not a county-wide decision but was carried out township by township. In York County.

In York County the eastern-most townships favored fencing and the western townships (including the town of Yorkville) voted to keep the status quo. To their credit, however, Yorkville by 1877 had placed a fence around its cemetery.

A hundred years before the fencing law was voted on (1777), buffalos roamed freely. York County had a Buffalo Creek and Kershaw County had a community named Buffalo.

In 1859, John Logan wrote his "History of the Upper Country of South Carolina." In his description of the land, Logan wrote, "As late as 1775, the woodlands, carpeted with grass, and the wild pea-vine growing as high as a horse's back, and wild flowers of every hue, were the constant admiration of the traveler and adventurous pioneer."

Another feature mentioned by many early historians covering this area was the large population of passenger pigeons, now extinct. In 1897 the memory of J. E. "Uncle Ned" Jefferys stretched back to the late 1830s "when passenger pigeons flew in such numbers that they blacked out the sun." It was estimated that the flocks were numbered in the millions. Jefferys said that the incoming flight of the pigeons lasted several hours and there are accounts that say the flight lasted for several days.

Jefferys recalled that at night the pigeons roosted in the Bethany area of York county and "came down into the trees in such numbers as to break down the limbs, and next day the trees would look like they might have been visited by a cyclone." Hunters filled large bags with the birds. Jefferys remembered hunters standing on Yorkville's main streets blazing away at the birds. The flesh was tender and said to be delicious. They were so easy to kill that in 1913 the passenger pigeon was declared extinct.