

Chapter One

York County History - An Introduction (copied from Wikipedia)

York County and its largest city, Rock Hill, are located in the piedmont of South Carolina at its border with North Carolina immediately south of the city of Charlotte, NC.

Interstate 77 originates in Cleveland, OH and passes through eastern Rock Hill to south of Columbia, SC where it ends at Interstate 26. Today this area is a thriving county with an estimated population of more than 210,000. The County includes the communities of Rock Hill, Fort Mill, York, Clover, Tega Cay, Lake Wylie, Hickory Grove, McConnells and Sharon. Much of the western part of the County is still agricultural and is home to peach orchards, strawberry and vegetable fields, and greenhouse operations. The County is bordered on the west by the Broad River and the east by the Catawba River. Both of these rivers originate out of the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina. These rivers, along with major sporting venues and parks located in the County, provide residents with ample recreational opportunities. York County honors its past with several [Cultural and Heritage Museums](#), including [Historic Brattonsville](#), the [McCelvey Center](#) and the [Museum of York County](#).

Human habitation of the area began with settlement by the Catawba Indian Nation. They built their homes along the creek and river highlands and made their living by hunting, farming and fishing. Today, they are known for their pottery. Their influence on the area is still felt. Their trading path from Virginia into the region split after crossing the Catawba River. One path went west to the Lower Cherokee villages; the other, south to Saluda. Today the crossing and the trail are known as Nation Ford and Nation Ford Road. As late as the early 1990s, tribal land claims delayed development of residential and commercial properties in Rock Hill and surrounding York County. Since Federal recognition of the Catawba Nation in 1993, settlement of land claims has been rapid. The Catawba reservation is located a few miles southeast of Rock Hill.

Early white settlers came up from Charleston, SC and down from Pennsylvania through Virginia. The Germans, English, Welsh, Irish and French came and moved on, but the Scots-Irish stayed. Early settlement centered on Ebenezer, currently the area of the Herlong and Ebenezer intersection. Residents built cotton plantations and bales of cotton were shipped downstream through Camden and on to Charleston where they were then shipped to the mills of New England and England for processing and weaving. Originally most of York County was part of North Carolina. A 1772, settlement set the boundary and called the area the “New Acquisition” of South Carolina.

Several Revolutionary War battles were fought on York County soil. The Battle of Huck’s Defeat (or Williamson’s Plantation) on July 12, 1780, was the first British defeat since the fall of Charleston some months earlier. The Battle of King’s Mountain, an encounter

between the Over the Mountain Men of Tennessee and the British forces, was fought on October 7, 1780 on land that straddles the SC–NC border in northwest York County.

In the 1840s the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad Company proposed building a railroad from Charlotte to Columbia, SC. Noise and pollution concerns from citizens caused the surveyors to locate the track about 2 miles east of the community near a rocky area that had been a landmark for travelers. It was labeled on the survey as “rocky hill”. Opening on April 17, 1852, the original post office was called Ebenezer Depot. The name was changed to Rockhill on January 7, 1896, then to Rock Hill on February 20, 1912.

Following the Civil War, the early businessmen were merchants. They borrowed against their resources to stock the stores. When they turned a profit after the first season, they repaid their creditors and purchased a second season’s stock. Banks and utilities soon followed. Instead of shipping cotton north to New England for processing, mills were opened. Included in the mix of business and industry were a buggy and carriage maker, tobacco processor, machine shops, iron works, cannery, furniture-maker and grist mills.

Early residents of Rock Hill attended religious services at a Presbyterian Church in Ebenezer (now Ebenezer ARP Church) When Pine Grove Academy opened, the Methodists borrowed the school building for semi-weekly services. Episcopalian and Baptist denominations opened congregations in members’ homes. Black congregations were quickly organized following the Emancipation. Initial meetings were held in brush arbors. The first formal black congregation organized was Hermon Presbyterian in 1869.

Settlers valued an education to prepare for college or to be able to read the Scriptures. The SC General Assembly granted Ebenezer Academy corporate status in 1821. There is evidence that the school existed prior to that as Job Nelson was hired as principal in 1819. The school building was the second public building constructed in Ebenezer. The school remained a private institution until the 1880s when the Rock Hill schools were organized. There were two early public schools: Rock Hill Academy (1854-88) which was primarily for boys (also known as Pine Grove Academy for its location) and Pineopolis Academy for girls begun in 1875. During the late 1880s there were two schools operated for black children, one by the Hermon Presbyterian Church and one by the Episcopal Church. The need for a public graded school was recognized in 1886 and fund raising efforts began. By 1901 there were 38 school districts in York County with 102 facilities.

Pre-colonial and colonial history

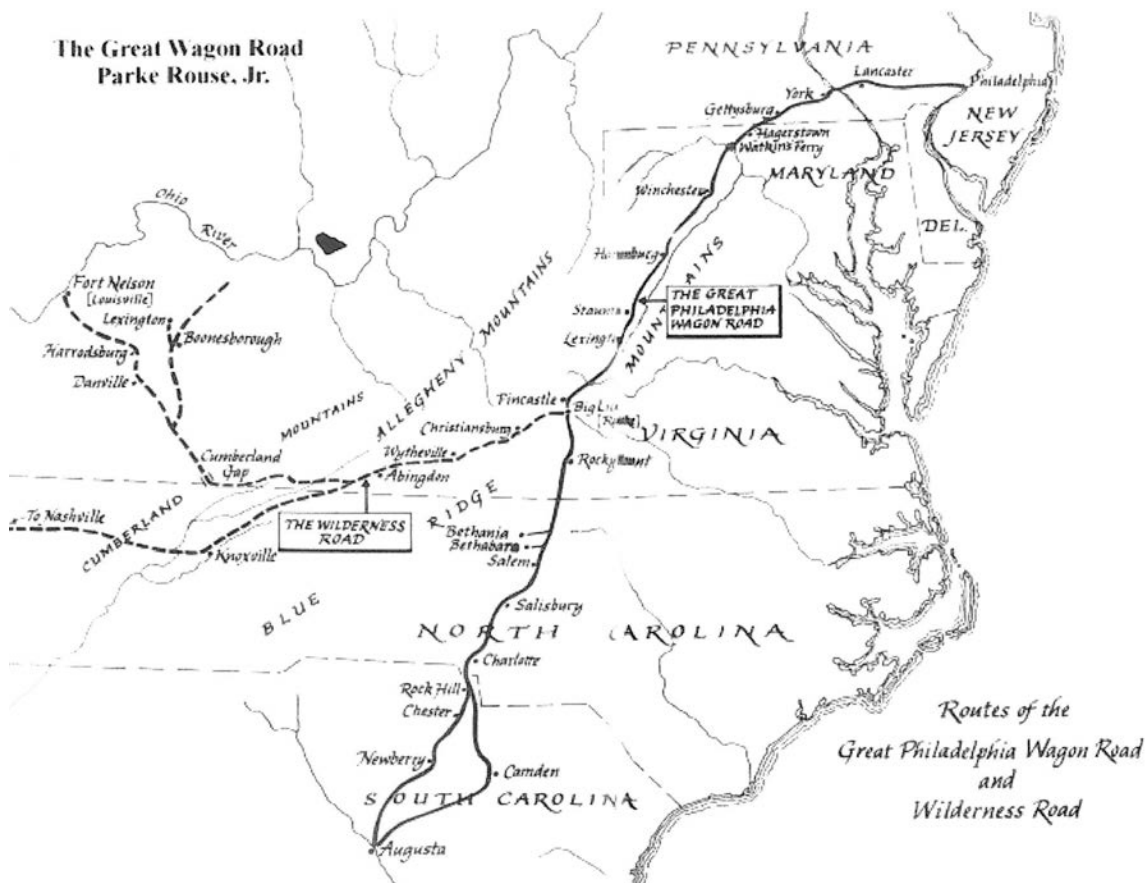
With a population of nearly 6,000 at the time of first [European](#) contact, the native inhabitants, the [Catawba](#) were primarily agriculturalists. [Hernando de Soto](#) passed through the area in the 1540s in his search for [gold](#). Several decades later [Juan Pardo](#) recorded his observation of a predominant [Native American](#) tribe, later confirmed to be the Catawba, in the vicinity of present-day [Fort Mill](#), east of the [Catawba River](#).

The [colony](#) of South Carolina was founded in 1670. Twelve years later it was divided into three counties. Craven County, which roughly encompassed the northern half of the

colony, included the southern half of present-day York County, while the top portion of York County was considered part of [North Carolina](#).

Before the boundary between the two Carolinas was fixed in 1772, the northern portion of the York County was part of [Bladen County, North Carolina](#), and in 1750 it was included in the newly created [Anson County](#); the first land grants and deeds for the region were issued in Anson. In 1762 [Mecklenburg County](#), was formed from western Anson County and included present-day northern York County. Five years later, the area became part of [Tryon County](#), which comprised all of [North Carolina](#) west of the Catawba River and south of [Rowan County](#). This area would remain a part of Tryon County until 1772, when the boundary between North and South Carolina was finally established.

The first European settlers in the [Carolina Piedmont](#), traditionally called the [Upcountry](#), were [Scots-Irish Presbyterians](#). Rising rent and land prices in [Pennsylvania](#) drove them southward down the [Great Wagon Road](#), and they began arriving in the Upcountry west of the Catawba River during the 1740s and settled in present-day York County in the 1750s.



The New Acquisition

After its transfer to South Carolina in 1772, much of the area was known as the *New Acquisition*. In 1785, York County was one of the original counties in the newly created [South Carolina](#), and its boundaries remained unchanged until 1897, when a small portion of the northwestern corner was ceded to the newly-formed [Cherokee County](#).

By 1780, the Carolina Upcountry had an estimated population of more than 250,000, predominantly Scots-Irish Presbyterians but with significant numbers of other [Protestants](#) from [Great Britain](#). The Scots-Irish settled in a dispersed community pattern denoted by communal, clannish, family-related groups known as "clachans", much the same as in Pennsylvania and [Ulster, Northern Ireland](#). The clachans developed around the Presbyterian [Kirks](#), or meetinghouses, and became the forerunners of the congregations. In York County, the "*Four B*" churches, all Presbyterian— Bethel, Bethesda, Beersheba and Bullock's Creek— are the county's oldest.

Sandwiched between unfriendly natives to the west, [Cherokee](#), [Shawnee](#) and [Creek](#) Native American tribes, and indifference on the part of English officials in [Charleston](#), who considered residents of the Backcountry uncivilized, the early settlers frequently found themselves targets of Native American raids, and the local [militia](#) became an early police force, patrolling the area for possible Native American or [slave](#) troubles and controlling the seemingly numerous outlaw bands which roamed the region. Militia units, or "Beat Companies", enrolled every able-bodied man on the frontier.

Revolutionary War

Residents of the Upcountry were initially slow to take sides in the [American Revolutionary War](#), content to remain neutral as long as left unmolested; the conflict was initially viewed as one between the [British Crown](#) and Charleston [plutocrats](#). The New Acquisition entered into vocal opposition to Royal authority in 1780 only after three "invasions" of the region: the first by [Banastre Tarleton](#) and his "[Green Dragoons](#)", and two more by [Lord Cornwallis](#). Most of the state had capitulated to the British after their capture of Charleston, but after the [Waxhaw Massacre](#) in nearby Lancaster County in May 1780, residents of the New Acquisition took part in a regional resistance, led by men such as William "Billy" Hill, William Bratton and Samuel Watson. Both the battles of [Huck's Defeat](#) and [Kings Mountain](#), a direct response to the Waxhaw Massacre, were fought in the New Acquisition, and Lord Cornwallis was forced northward, and ultimately to surrender at [Yorktown](#), after facing defeat in the Carolina Upcountry.

Early York County

After playing a significant role in the defeat of the British, Upcountry residents enjoyed a greater share of administration in their region and experienced phenomenal growth after the war. In first [United States census](#), in 1790, York County had a population of 6,604; 923 were listed as slaves, and a quarter of the county's slaves belonged to just nine men. Less than 15% of its population lived in bondage in 1790, while the state averaged 30%.

Establishment of the county seat

A county seat was laid out in 1786 at Fergus's Cross Roads, where several roads converged near the [geographic center](#) of the county. The new town was first known as the village of York, or more commonly York Court House. In 1841, the town was incorporated and officially became [Yorkville](#). In 1823 its population, as recorded by [Robert Mills](#), was 441 and included 292 whites and 149 blacks. By 1840 the population had reached 600, and in 1850 Yorkville consisted of 93 dwellings and 617 inhabitants. In the years just prior to the [Civil War](#), the town gained a reputation as a summer [resort](#) for many [Lowcountry](#) planters trying to escape the [malarial swamps](#) of the Lowcountry for the moderate climate to be found in the Upstate. By 1860, the population of the town had topped 1,300, an increase of more than 125% in only one decade. During the Civil War, the town also became a focal point for residents from the Lowcountry as a refugee destination during Federal [occupation](#) of their towns.

Antebellum York County and the Civil War

With the introduction of the [cotton gin](#) in the 1790s, the county's economic prospects increased as the importance of "[King Cotton](#)" grew, and slavery become an integral part of the economy. In 1800, 25% of all white families in the Upcountry owned slaves, but by 1820 nearly 40% were slaveholders. Slave ownership increased significantly in York County between 1800 and 1860, though most slaves worked on small and medium sized farms rather than large plantations. In 1800, whites made up 82.10% of the total population in York County, but by 1860 the white percentage of the total population had dropped to 62.50%. Figures from 1860 reveal slave holdings in York County were relatively small, with approximately 70% of all farms holding fewer than 10 slaves and less than 3% of the farms with 50 or more.

The proportion of York District farms in 1860 was:

- less than 50 acres (0.2 km²): 20 %
- 51 to 100 acres (0.2 to 0.4 km²): 23.9 %
- 101 to 500 acres (0.4 to 2 km²): 53.9 %
- more than 500 acres (2 km²): 2.7 %

In 1810 the York District had increased in population to more than 10,000, of which over 3,000 were slaves. By 1850, York District included 15,000 residents, over 40% of whom were slaves. On the eve of the Civil War, the county's population had grown to approximately 21,500, with almost 1/2 of the population enslaved labor. York County was heavily tied to agriculture, with 93% of the work force involved in raising crops in 1850, while the rest of the United States averaged a 78% agricultural work force.

In 1825 only three post offices operated in all of York County, at Yorkville, Blairsville and Hopewell, but by 1852 York District had 27. The county's first newspaper, *The Yorkville Pioneer*, was established in 1823, and ran for little more than a year, and was

followed by several others until *The Yorkville Enquirer*, which remains in publication today, was begun in 1855.

Chartered in 1848, the Kings Mountain Railroad Company began construction of a connecting line between Yorkville and the Charlotte and South Carolina Railway at Chester completed in 1852. [Rock Hill](#), located on the Charlotte and South Carolina, rapidly developed as a transportation center in eastern York County, from a crossroads with 100 residents in 1860.

More than a dozen academies were operating in the county at the outbreak of the Civil War. The most famous was the Kings Mountain Military Academy (**NOTE: William Minter Patrick went to school there**) in Yorkville, founded in 1854 by Micah Jenkins and Asbury Coward.

On the eve of the [Civil War](#), York District was one of the more populated districts in Upstate South Carolina. The 1860 white male population of York County was just over 5,500. 14 [infantry](#) companies formed in York County after war was declared, and during the war the York District would have the highest death rate of any county in South Carolina. Only one minor battle was fought in the York District, the battle for the Catawba Bridge at Nation's Ford in 1865.

Postbellum York County and early industrialization

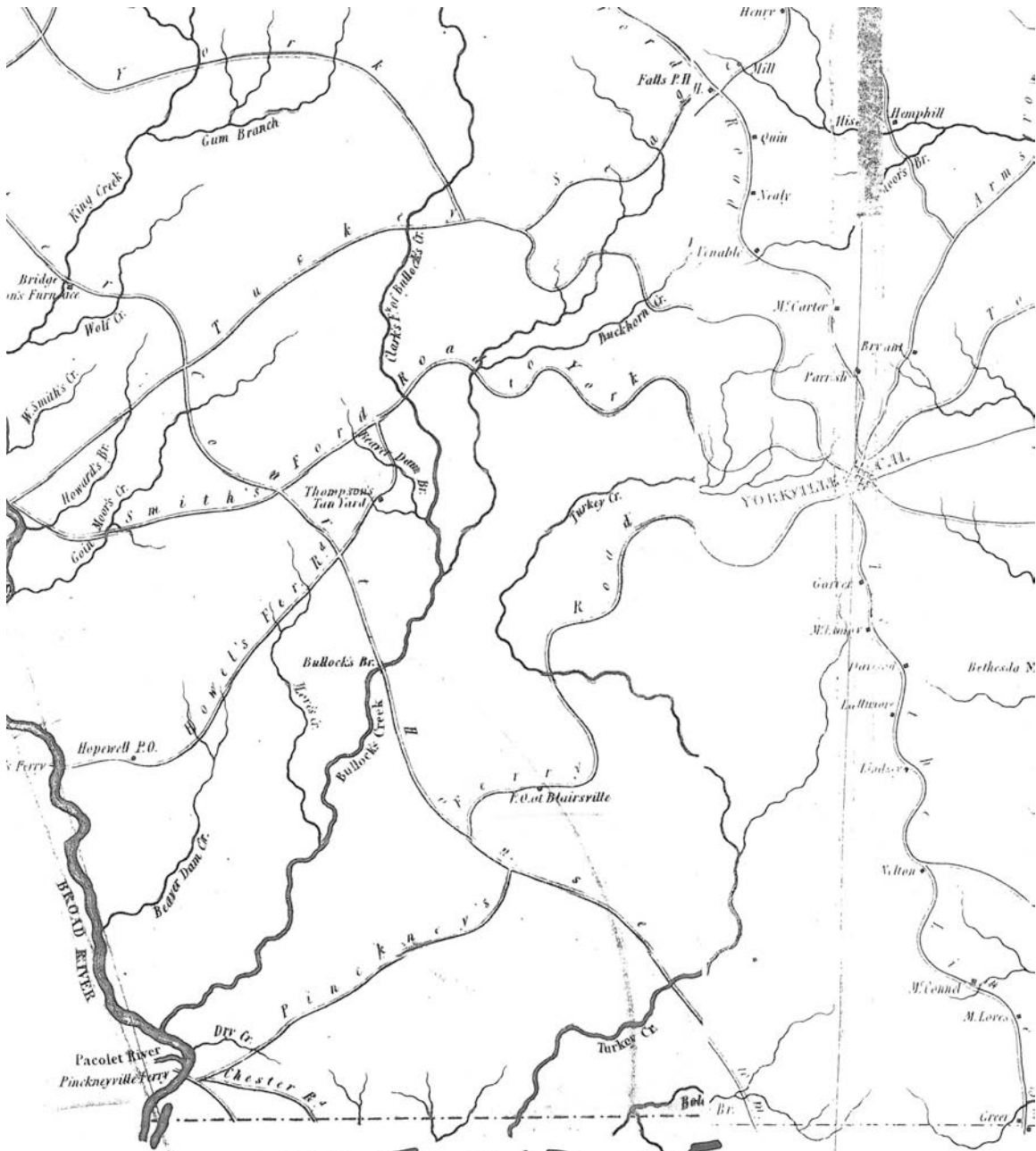
During [Reconstruction](#) many of York County's larger property owners were forced to sell off portions of their land to smaller farmers: The size of the average farm in York County dropped considerably while the number of small farming operations increased. Late-19th century agriculture in York County was characterized by relatively small farm operations and an ignorance of soil qualities and the benefits of [diversification](#), which eventually led to the agricultural difficulties of the 1890s and 1920s and 1930s.

Notes concerning the maps shown on the next three pages:

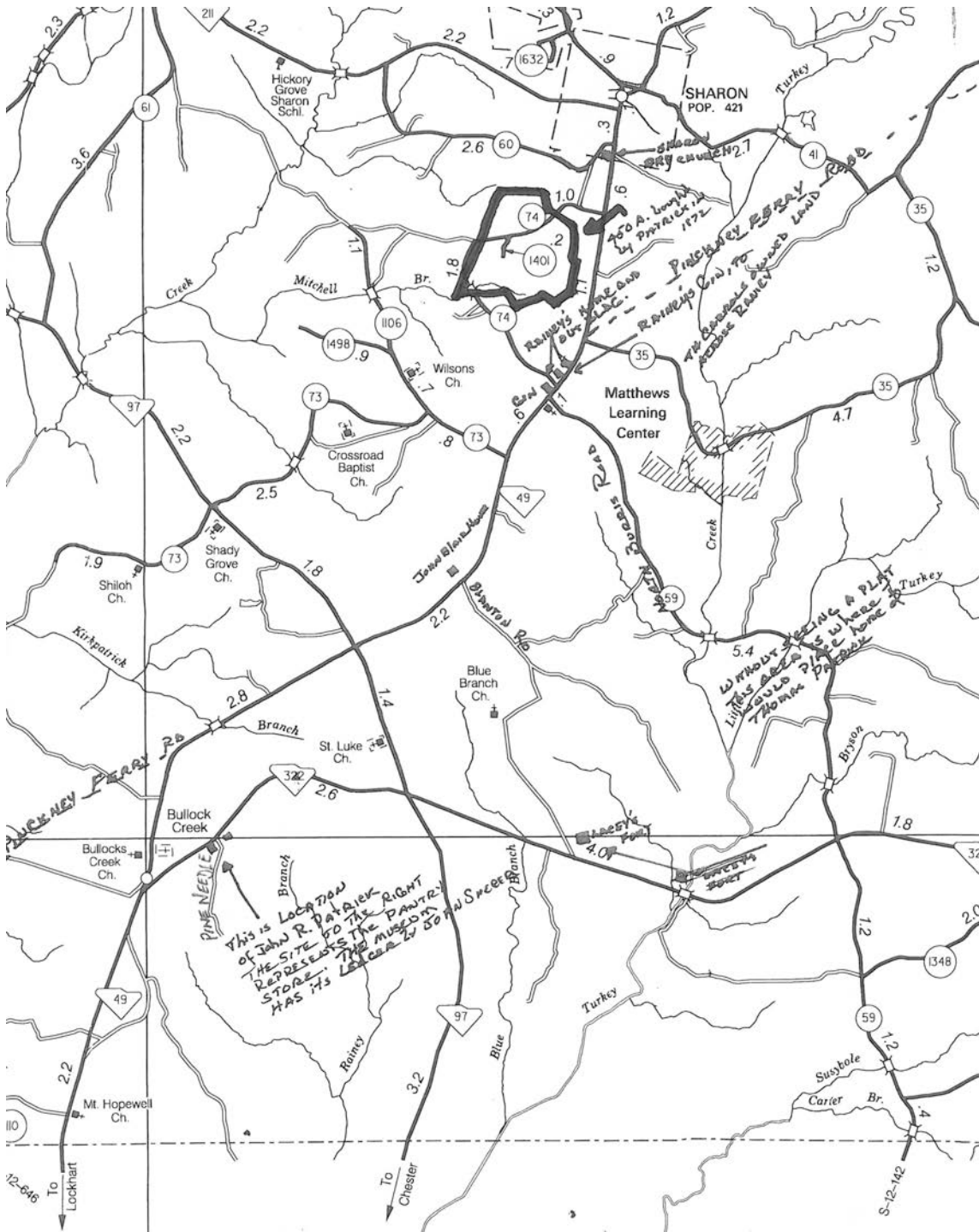
The 1825 map shows the important road to the Pinckneyville Ferry on the Broad River. Blairsville and Bullocks Creek were located on this road. It was an important road for the Patricks. It ran the ridge between Bullocks Creek and Turkey Creek.

The 1910 map is the map Jerry West gave to Earle Barron in 1992. Jerry wrote out the locations for the John Robert Patrick house and the approximate location of Thomas and Mary's house.

The modern map of York will give the reader a chance to locate the area by modern road numbers and towns.



1825 MAP OF
 C H E
 YORK DISTRICT



1910 Map of Bullocks Creek and Turkey Creek. Jerry Wright showed Earle Barron the sites of Patrick interest.

