

**M**ore odds and ends:  
Prior to World War I, at least one town in every county tried to have a large enough auditorium to attract traveling shows that continually crisscrossed the country. Often they dubbed these auditoriums the Opera House.

Chester, Yorkville, Rock Hill and Lancaster all had their opera houses downtown, though Rock Hill's was named Roddey Hall.

By whatever name, there were occasional operas, but most of the traveling productions were not so high-toned. It was more likely that the audience was attracted to light plays, magic shows, band performances, local amateur nights, etc.

In the fall of 1913, the Yorkville Enquirer reported that "Mutt and Jeff" put the "Ki-Bosh" on a circus performance. It seems that a circus was billed on the same night as "Mutt and Jeff."

"Mutt and Jeff," a musical comedy, had a cast of 50. (Mutt and Jeff was a comic strip long after the theatrical "Mutt and Jeff" retired.)

When showtime came for the circus and the band struck up the familiar fanfare, there were only "three men, two women and two children in the seats. The Circus owner, manager and ring master were tearing their hair in mental anguish, with but three dollars in the ticket wagon."

Out of curiosity as to what had attracted so many people, the whole group went to see "Mutt and Jeff." The circus manager spent \$1.50 sending a telegram to his advance agent telling him to never again schedule the circus at the same time as "Mutt and Jeff," which had "magnetic powers."

■ The first hydroelectric plant on the Catawba River was at India Hook shoals between Rock Hill and Fort Mill in 1903. Three men were instrumental in building the plant - Dr. Gill Wylie, a Chester County native and an accomplished New York surgeon; William States Lee, a Lancaster County native and engineering

genius; and William Church Whitner, an Anderson county native who built the first electric power plant in the world.

When these men decided to form the Catawba Power Company in 1904, they decided their headquarters would be in Columbia. But Columbia's city fathers wanted no part in such an operation. They couldn't imagine that there would be enough of a market for a power company to make a profit.

Disappointed, Wylie, Lee and Whitner then chose Charlotte as their headquarters. Catawba Power Co. evolved into Carolina Power Co. and eventually became Duke Power Co.

■ It was once the fashion for streets to be named either for people of local prominence or for trees (such as Elm, Maple, Oak, Pine, Laurelwood, etc.). Rock Hill's Black Street was named for Alexander Templeton Black, whose farmland was in the center of the town when it was laid out in 1851.

Black's land adjoined the land of George Pendleton White. Thus the origin of Black and White streets.

Rock Hill has had a Cherry Road since around 1910, but it was not named for a tree. It was first a farm road through the property of James Milton Cherry, a native of Chester who came to Rock Hill at 14 and prospered. When the road was paved in 1920 (the first concrete road in South Carolina), Cherry paid most of the cost.

The idea of individuals' paying for paving a public road would be unthinkable today, but Cherry was not the only person to do so. In the 1920s, Elliott Springs of Fort Mill was so disgusted with the condition of the road in front of his home that he paid \$25,000 to pave what is now S.C. 160 from his house (the White Homestead) to the N.C. state line.

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## Louise Pettus



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3/31-2001

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opera houses were  
'not so high-toned'

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