

Rise and fall of the hotel

■ From rude beginnings, area hostelries developed into a point of pride.

The first travelers through this area either camped out or depended on the hospitality of families.

After the Revolutionary War we find enough people passing through to justify the opening of inns, which offered food, drink and a room for the travelers, as well as stabling and feeding their horses.

The early inns were mostly along the major roads (the 1825 Mills Atlas map of Lancaster District shows seven inns on the north-south highway). Yorkville, Chesterville and Lancasterville all had at least one inn close to the courthouse, which was very busy during court sessions.

Lancaster District had a "watering place" known as Hanging Rock Mineral Springs with not only bath houses, but a racetrack and horses for rental to those interested in fox hunting.

Probably the best all-around pre-Civil War hotel was Rose's in Yorkville. Rose's ballroom was the scene of many a society dance and provided first-class service. During the Civil War, some of Charleston's wealthier refugees made the hotel their home for the duration. Confederate Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge addressed the citizens of Yorkville not

long before the hotel became headquarters for federal occupation troops.

Rock Hill's first large hotel was built in 1869 by David Gordon in the geographic center of town. In 1888 Capt. W. Lyle Roddey built on Main Street what was called the "largest building of its kind outside of Charleston" by the Charleston News and Courier.

Forty hotel rooms topped a mercantile store, the First National Bank and the hotel lobby. A few years later the Carolina Hotel near the railroad depot, also with 40 rooms, offered hunting rights on 12,000 acres of land in a special appeal to sportsmen.

Many changes occurred in the hotel business after World War I, and Rock Hill, in an effort to become a convention town, cast about for a way to attract customers. In 1925 the Chamber of Commerce began a drive to finance a hotel with "all the modern conveniences."

The Community Hotel Corporation was chartered. The home site of W.L. Roddey became the site of the new hotel. Shares, pegged at \$100 each, were sold over a 10-month period. The goal of \$250,000 was exceeded by \$12,600.

The Andrew Jackson Hotel, with 362 shareholders, opened on New Year's Eve of 1927. Collier's Orchestra played for the big dance. Eighty bedrooms were available at overnight prices ranging from \$1.45 to \$4. The \$1.45 rooms did not have private baths.

A lot of famous people stayed at the Andrew Jackson, particularly artists and lecturers who

came for Winthrop College's concert and lecture series. The aviator Amelia Earhart stayed there, as did Harry James, Betty Grable, Dorothy Lamour, Benny Goodman and Harry Truman's vice president, Alben Barkley.

But in spite of star names, on the whole, the Depression years were years in which there were no dividends for the stockholders. When the Carolina Maneuvers came along in the fall of 1941, the hotel was full-to-overflowing with bunks, even set up in the ballroom. But the maneuvers lasted only a few months, and when World War II arrived in full force, hotel help was hard to find.

The hotel's board of directors sold the hotel in February 1946 to S.L. and W.H. Myers, who operated hotels in Greenville, Florence and Chester and who spent \$100,000 modernizing the hotel. The Myers brothers soon found they couldn't compete with outlying motels and sold to a Detroit group who couldn't compete either.

In 1966 the Andrew Jackson Hotel building was purchased by Guardian Fidelity, which operated it until 1970. The building was refurbished as the Guardian Building and streamlined, but many of the best features — the chandeliers, molded plaster medallions and the lovely frieze — were kept.

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history

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