

India Hook a roadway to the past

■ School nestled on this historic site.

YORK OBSERVER Saturday, November 20, 1993 11Y

■ *Editor's Note: Louise Pettus' column on local history will now appear on the Commentary pages of Saturday's York Observer.*

One of the major thoroughfares in Rock Hill is called India Hook Road.

Beginning at the junction of Cherry Road and Oakland Avenue near the northwest edge of the Winthrop University campus, India Hook meanders eastward to the Catawba River and the India Hook Dam and power station.

The name has been around so long that its origins seem to have been lost. Certainly the name was already in use during the American Revolution. An early history of the Revolution written by Dr. Joseph Johnson, titled "Tradition and Reminiscences, Chiefly of the American Revolution in the South," makes reference to the forces of Lord Cornwallis and Gen. Thomas Sumter being in the "India Hook Hills" at the Catawba River.

Alexander Faris' June 2, 1813, plat for land leased from the Catawba Indians shows "India Hook Branch."

Alsey Fuller's 112-acre plat dated Aug. 29, 1816, includes the statement, "... laid off for Alsey Fuller from land formerly John Farises' near the 'Indian Hooke Shoals' east of Alexr. Farises Senrs land ..."

The appraisers of the estate of William Pettus included in their appraisal, March 27, 1818, two pieces of property as "a life lease supposed to be 500 acres — Endy Hook place" and "one lease called Endy Hook Hills."

Old maps and plats indicate that at India Hook shoals there was a spur of land coming off of the east bank of the river shaped roughly like a hook. An unabridged dictio-



Nearby history

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nary refers to "India ink" as originally being red (that is, in the 18th century a red pigment imported from India that was used to make red ink). Given that the Catawba often was colored with the runoff from the neighboring red-clay land, this seems to be the most likely explanation for the derivation of the term India Hook.

A wagon road that crossed the river at the India Hook shoals is shown on a few plats of the early 19th Century and is undoubtedly the same, or almost the same, track as the paved India Hook Road of present-day Rock Hill.

The India Hook shoals (about which we have never found a description) were destined to become the site of the first electric power plant on the Catawba River.

The dam was begun on May 4, 1900, and the project was completed Jan. 15, 1904. The depth of the dam was 8 feet at the top and 35 feet at the bottom. The length was about one-quarter mile. Sixty-thousand cubic yards of masonry, including 400 railroad carloads of cement, went into the dam. The average number of workmen on the project was 500, and the cost was about \$1 million.

The first contracts made by Catawba Power Co. were to deliver electricity "by pole line" to Rock Hill's Globe Mills Arcade Cotton Mill (500 hp); Manchester Cotton Mill (400 hp); Winthrop College (100 hp); Rock Hill Water, Light and Power Co. (500 hp); and, in

Fort Mill, Fort Mill Manufacturing co. (800 hp). In November 1904, Fort Mill homes received electric power. Capt. Samuel E. White, president of Fort Mill Manufacturing Co., underwrote the cost of the electric poles and the wiring. Whether it was Fort Mill householders or Anderson, S.C., homes that received the first electrical power in the Carolinas seems to be debatable.

"The Catawba Index" issue of Feb. 5, 1887 published: "Went north into India Hook, roads wet and muddy. When I arrived at the site of the Old India Hook schoolhouse a pleasant and charming site greeted my eyes. The old dilapidated schoolhouse that has stood there for so many years is still standing, but at a distance from the new house, I saw a neat, tasteful, new frame building... well-ceiled and well-lighted with glass windows, and the room made warm and comfortable with a wood stove... material bought of the school fund and the neighbors and friends built the house... Material cost about \$125, everything else donated."

The schoolhouse described above was, in the early 1900s, one of the model rural schools where Winthrop College sent practice teachers.

Today, you can see the sad remains of the India Hook schoolhouse (which was moved across the road on wheels a few years ago) at India Hook and Mount Gallant roads.

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