

Bamboo 'aeroplane' drew crowd

In 1913, the first York County fair sprouted on Winthrop's campus

More odds and ends:

Fair beginning

Louise Pettus



NEARBY HISTORY

Winthrop's back campus was the first site of the York County Fair. The year was 1913 and the "moving spirit" of the fair was Charles Weeks, widely known as the "Nebraska Breeze," and head of the agricultural department at Winthrop

College. (Yes, Winthrop once had an agricultural department, and Winthrop also taught agriculture education many years before Clemson prepared students to teach agriculture.)

Most of the fairs' exhibits were housed in Tillman Science Hall. What people really came to see was the first "aeroplane" to be seen in the area. Constructed mostly of bamboo, the plane couldn't fly much higher than the trees, but the pilot did some simple stunts to amaze the crowd.

The fair was popular enough for the community to wish to make it an annual affair. The York County Fair officially began the following year. There were some lean years in the 1920s, but rather than see the fair closed, the Frank Roach Post, American Legion, stepped

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1860

forward and agreed to assume the \$1,000 indebtedness and to keep the fair as an annual event.

Counting the Catawbas

South Carolina's first Indian census was taken in 1715. When the Catawbas were counted, the total was 1,470 persons (without names). There were 570 men and 900 women and children.

The population was mostly in seven villages. The British Public Records Office stated that "The proximity of their towns to one another enabled them to mobilize their entire fighting force within two hours, an advantage unparalleled among more extensive nations."

Six of the Catawba villages were on the east side of the Catawba River. The most northern village was in the present-day town of Fort Mill. The most southerly village was on 12 Mile Creek in Lancaster County, just north of the present village of Van Wyck. The most

prominent village, called Turkey Head, which has been called the "spiritual center" of the nation, was in Lancaster County's Indian Land, where Sugar Creek runs into the Catawba River.

In 1737 the Catawba towns were listed as: Neustee, Nawsaw, The Village, Sugaree (or Sugar Town), Carrow (Sara or Cheraw Town), Pedee and New Town.

Bring on the mums

Every autumn in the 1880s and '90s, Rock Hill had a chrysanthemum show. First, there was a parade usually led by the Rock Hill Cornet Band riding on its own bandwagon painted gold and yellow like a circus cart. For the chrysanthemum parade, the bandwagon was decorated with mums and other flowers.

The Cornet Band had 12 members, including some of Rock Hill's most distinguished citizens. John Gary Anderson, of Anderson car fame, played the bass drum. W.C. Hutchison played the alto horn and

Ed Roddey, the tenor horn.

Capt. Iredell Jones headed the Cornet Band and also had his own Iredell Orchestra that played for dances and special occasions.

The parade route started at First Presbyterian Church, going down Main Street to Caldwell, to White Street to Trade (later removed to make way for Dave Lyle Boulevard), to Hampton, then to Moore Street and from Moore to Trade, then to Johnston, on to Saluda and ended up back at the Presbyterian church.

The prize-winning chrysanthemums were then entered in the State Fair, where Mrs. D.A. Johnston of Rock Hill was a regular winner.

Let there be gaslight

In 1860 the town of York, then called Yorkville, contracted for the building of a gas company at the then stupendous cost of \$16,000. The buildings were to be fireproof and able to hold 10,000 feet of gas. Two miles of pipe were laid.

The Yorkville Enquirer commented: "Let there be light. Hitherto, Yorkville has set in darkness, of nights: now she will dwell in light, and it will be some comfort in walking along pavements and no danger of falling into a cellar or running into a lamp post."

Louise Pettus is a history professor retired from Winthrop University. Her column appears Saturdays.