

Once a racing town, Rock Hill had 2 tracks for horses, 3 for bicycles

More odds and ends:

They're off: At the turn of this century, Rock Hill was known as a racing town for horses and bicycles.

There were two horse-racing tracks, one on the Winthrop farm and the other in Ebenezer. Running and trotting races were frequent and drew large crowds. The best-known horse was Spendthrift, owned by J.S. Whitaker of York. Spendthrift was an ancestor of the famed Man O' War.

Lancing tournaments required no track; any large flat expanse would do.

In the tournaments, men dressed as knights attempted to spear rings while riding hard. This was more of a social event because every knight had his lady who, if he won, would be crowned queen.

For those who favored bicycle racing, there were two outdoor tracks, one on Hampton Street and one on Oakland Avenue.

An indoor track built of hardwood and designed so the oval curved at angles that allowed riders to bank their cycles was built on the fourth floor of Winthrop Training School next to the basketball court. Since WTS was not built until 1912, this track came later than the others.

Scouting around: The first Boy Scout troop in York County was formed in the spring of 1913. There were only three or four troops then in South Carolina. In August the Scoutmasters, chief W.M. Carothers and assistant Murray Mack, led their 26 Scouts on a

two-week hike to the N.C. mountains.

Two covered wagons carried the camping equipment. The Scouts were between the ages of 12 and 17. Most were hardy enough to walk from York County to Chimney Rock, but the high point of the trip reportedly was camping on the Revolutionary War battleground at Kings Mountain.

York County tobacco: During the 1880s, manufacturing tobacco products was in the same stage automobile manufacturing would be two decades later. Many small companies sprang up, eager to cash in on a new demand for their products. Each hoped its product would bring fame and fortune.

In 1883, Dr. J.E. Massey had a tobacco factory in the back of his Fort Mill drugstore. Massey packaged his tobacco under the "Waxhaw Belle" label, 5 cents per package.

The name referred to the location of the large Massey plantation in the Waxhaws of Lancaster County. This project lasted only one season because Massey said he didn't have the time for it.

In 1887 George Conway set up a small factory to produce smoking tobacco in Rock Hill. The tobacco was grown in York County, some of it within five miles of Yorkville. This factory lasted longer than Massey's but soon could not compete with the products of James P. Duke and other N.C. entrepreneurs.

Lending their ears: In the summer of 1845, upstate South Carolina suffered one of its worst droughts in history. Corn dried up, mills quit grinding for lack of water, cattle were suffering, cotton bloomed at a height of only 3 or 4 inches. A.S. White of Fort Mill recalled "corn mostly tasseled out

about knee-high, with one little stem of a tassel and no silk."

Rain finally came in August, too late to save the crops. In an agricultural society, the lack of rainfall is a disaster. And there was no federal assistance. To top it off, the previous year had been a poor crop year.

Many people pulled up stakes and moved west. Others hung on, hoping for better luck in 1846. But the summer of 1846 was the coldest "in the memory of man." Crops were a total loss for three years in a row.

Three area men had stored corn in large granaries for years - Robert McCaw of Yorkville, John Springs of Fort Mill and William Davie of Landsford in Chester County. Each generously shared a fixed price of \$1 per bushel with those who could pay and gave corn away to those who couldn't.

The names of McCaw, Springs and Davie were not soon forgotten. Their praise was sung for generations.

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