

Homes, towns come and go, but springs remain

*Before bottled drinks,
people lived wherever
the waters flowed*

When the first settlers moved into this area, they immediately sought house sites that were convenient to a spring. There were other considerations, of course, but fresh, clean water was a necessity.

Over time, some springs acquired names. Either they were prolific enough to furnish water for a village or some famous event occurred at the site. Some had minerals that were bottled and sold as cures for almost any disease. Inns advertised the "curative waters."

In the 1850s, a three-story hotel called the Hanging Rock Mineral Spring Inn was built in Lancaster County. Guests were provided with a buggy and driver to carry them to the springs, which were heavy with sulfur, magnesium and iron. A race track was built nearby. James Ingram built an entertainment hall with a bowling alley and billiard table.

Sherman's troops destroyed the hotel and cottages, but the mineral spring still existed. In 1888, Benjamin Heath, a native of Lancaster County's Waxhaws area, bought the spring and the land around it. It became Heath's Springs. Now, it's a town of more than 850 people called Heath Springs.

In upper Lancaster County, there is a community called Osceola. It is named for Osceola, famous warrior chief of Florida's Seminole Indians who is said to have stopped there frequently.

When Seaboard railroad officials needed names for two depots on their Lancaster route, they chose to name the first depot Van Wyck, which was the maiden name of the wife of the president of the railroad. They asked Capt. James Steele to name the depot that lay between Van Wyck and Waxhaw, N.C. Steele remembered that Chief Osceola enjoyed "lounging" at the nearby spring. He suggested the name be Osceola.

But Sam Massey, writing from Osceola in 1906, says that "the soulless railroad corporation lately dishonored the famous warrior and put on their depot in large letters 'Hancock.' But, 'Uncle Sam' is more reverent of antiquity and generous toward the memory of a fallen foe; so the post office remains Osceola."

At one time, Osceola had a half dozen houses, three stores, several warehouses, a cotton gin and a water tank. There's nothing left today except the spring.

North of Fort Mill near Bailiwyck, at a housing development on Pleasant Road, there is an unusual spring. In 1920s, Stephen Epps of Fort Mill, when writing to some Pettus cousins in Tennessee, said, "The house was located about 300 yards from a spring flowing from an immense rock, covering at least half an acre of ground. It is still in use today and has as fine flow of good water as there is in the state. Later a well was dug nearer the house, 70 feet deep, through 40 feet of solid rock. The well is still in use."

The house that Epps referred to was built by William Pettus in 1807 and burned in 1973.

Yorkville, now York, and the countryside around it has a number of springs, which over the past two centuries acquired names.

The largest and strongest spring inside York was called the Herndon Tanyard Spring in a 1935 newspaper article. It was located to the rear of the residence of Mrs. Jeannette Herndon on West Madison Street.

The writer described it as about 4 feet in diameter and a foot or more deep. Three to six crayfish could be seen in the water, which was "crystal clear always."

About a mile from the courthouse was a popular picnic spot known as the "O'Leary Spring." There were other springs known by such names as Murphy Springs, Langham Branch Spring, which served a one-room log schoolhouse, and the Jeremiah O'Leary Home Place Spring.

Sutton's Spring, about three miles west of York, was one of the springs with a lot of sulfur in it.

People would drive out to Sutton's Spring, according to A.M. Grist, "and sit around and drink that water by the quart and quart after quart. It especially affected the kidneys. Then after drinking until they could drink no more, visitors would fill up cans and jugs and bottles and bring them home. Soda fountain drinks and bottled drinks just were not in those days and even ice was a great luxury, shipped to Yorkville by express mostly from Columbia."

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NEARBY HISTORY



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