

The Upstate in 1849

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■ Artist-writer described countryside he traveled while tracing steps of men who fought at Kings Mountain.

■ *The first of two parts.*

In January of 1849, an artist-writer fascinated by tales of the Revolution came here to make sketches that he could turn into etchings to illustrate a history of the war.

Benson J. Lossing's multivolume work, "Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution," was not to be published for four decades and is so ponderous and old-fashioned that there were probably not enough copies sold to pay for the time and energy spent in producing it.

What is interesting today has nothing to do with the battles, but with his descriptions of the countryside he traveled while tracing the steps of Gens. Thomas Sumter and William Richardson Davie and the men who won the great victory at Kings Mountain.

Lossing entered York District at the Cherokee Ford crossing of the Broad River on an icy, blustery day. A strong dam built by the owner of an unnamed nearby iron works kept the water only a foot deep.

On the side of Kings Mountain Lossing witnesses "from the fissures of the rocks, where the water-fountains were bursting forth, hundreds of icicles . . . glittering in prismatic beauty . . ."

After crossing Kings Creek the hills were so rough and the road so bad that he covered only 10 miles in a day, even though he had a good horse and buggy, he said. (His horse was named Charley and is mentioned so frequently that Lossing might have subtitled his book "Travels With Charley.")

The buggy had to be repaired and he was told that the town of Yorkville, 14 miles distant, had a good smith. Lossing spent the night at a log cabin where food and shelter were minimal. The only light came from the flames of the fireplace.



Nearby history

LOUISE
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Lossing wrote, "Lying in bed, I could count the stars at the zenith while the open floor below afforded such ample ventilation, that my buffalo robe, wrapped around me, was not uncomfortable on that keen, frosty night."

Even though the host had little to offer, he generously provided Lossing a lumber wagon and a team of mules to carry Lossing's baggage, and his teenage son to drive the broken buggy and Charley into Yorkville.

The mules were less than cooperative in spite of being prodded by a rod as long as a fishing pole. They barely moved on flat ground, but when they topped the hill, the mules "would descend with the vehemence of the swine of old, who, filled with devils, ran down into the sea."

By midday they reached Yorkville, "a very pleasant village of about eight hundred inhabitants . . . the streets are regularly laid out, and adorned with beautiful Pride of India trees, filled, when I was there, with clusters of fruit. I saw some elegant mansions; and in the gardens, fine palmettoes, the first I had seen, were growing."

Lossing thought Yorkville the loveliest village of the upcountry, but left it after several days to travel southward. Instead of taking the road to Columbia, he went closer to the Catawba and to the Catawba reservation. He found that the Catawbas were reduced to about 100 in number and predicted they would be extinct in a few years.

Lossing stopped south of Fishing Creek for the night at a one-room cabin occupied by a young couple and their baby. They had two beds in the room and refused to accept payment for the lodging or the meal they served him. Lossing came away "full of reverence for that generous and unsuspecting hospitality of Carolina. . . ."

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Louise Pettus is a retired history professor from Winthrop College. Her column appears Sundays.

A 19th-century visitor

Dec 2 1997

■ Second of two parts.

On Jan. 15, 1849, Benson J. Lossing traveled from Fishing Creek in upper Chester District several miles to Rocky Mount at the Great Falls of the Catawba. He was visiting the Revolutionary War site in this area with plans to write an illustrated history of the battles of that war.



Nearby history

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He turned to the left at Beckamville and "traversed a rough and sinuous road down to the banks of the Catawba, just below the Great Falls." There he found the site where a United States military academy was projected (it was built at West Point, N.Y., instead). There he also found a cotton yarn mill using water power oper-

ated by Daniel McCulloch.

The scene was "wild and romantic. . . . There are no perpendicular falls; but down a rocky bed the river tumbles in mingled rapids and cascades, roaring and foaming, and then subsides into comparative calmness. . . ."

After Lossing completed his sketch of the falls, he went to the home of Mrs. James Barkley at Rocky Mount (the house was to later serve as Gen. Sherman's headquarters). At the fine home with its commanding view of the Catawba, Lossing found hospitality but also found the family wearing mourning clothes.

James Barkley, a member of the S.C. legislature, had been thrown from his carriage and killed.

Three of Mrs. Barkley's daughters and a young planter friend took Lossing to see the sites of old Revolutionary skirmishes. Lossing left the scene with some regret.

Lossing, after traveling over "a crooked, steep, and rough road down to the brink of the river," crossed the Catawba on a bateau at Rocky Mount Ferry, which plied its trade just south of the mouth of Rocky Mount Creek.

He was in Lancaster District headed for Hanging Rock, which is south of present-day Heath Springs. Huge, scattered conglomerate boulders fascinated Lossing. When he was within about 3 miles of Hanging Rock, he passed Anvil Rock, "one of the remarkable curiosities of the South." The 12-foot-tall boulder is shaped like an anvil and still attracts sightseers.

■ Journalist views geographic curiosities.

Lossing was directed to the Lancaster-to-Camden road and noted that the road turned to sand, different from the "adhesive" red clay of York District. The sand was "in many places soft and difficult to travel, making progress slow."

He crossed the high rolling plain called Cole's Old Field and rode to Hanging Rock Creek, which flowed through a steep, narrow valley. On the banks of the creek Lossing found a miller, a black man, at work in his grist mill.

He was over 80 years of age and had witnessed "de red coats scamper when Massa Sumter and Jacky McClure pitched into 'em."

The old slave pointed Lossing in the direction of Hanging Rock some 25 feet in diameter. The famous rock hung so far over a cliff that Lossing estimated 50 men could stand under its shelter.

Lossing described the Buford massacre and how the wounded were taken to Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church north of Lancaster. But he did not visit either the Buford community or the Waxhaws. Instead, he turned southward toward Camden.

Still in Lancaster District, Lossing saw the famed Flat Rock, "a mass of concrete, like that of Anvil Rock, five hundred yards across." Flat Rock was pockmarked with many cavities. Lossing was told that Indians had hollowed out cisterns for the purpose of holding water.

The following day, after "heavy traveling," Lossing was in Camden.

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