

Rock Hill was the place where rich folk lived

Less than 100 years ago, the per-capita income was the state's highest

In 1904 The (Columbia) State newspaper stated that in its opinion Rock Hill had more money per capita than any other town in South Carolina. In this well-to-do town the wealthiest individual was Capt. William Lyle Roddey, who had numerous businesses.

Captain Roddey also had strong opinions, among which was a detestation of tobacco. So, it is no surprise to read in The Record that directors of the Rock Hill National Bank (owned by Roddey) passed a resolution that "no person addicted to the habit of smoking cigarettes should apply for, or receive employment" in the bank.

The directors called cigarettes an evil that "sapped the strength and vitality of men, thus unfitting them to perform, in perfect manner, duties assigned."

Clubbed and coiffed

I've written about Susannah Barnett Smartt before and how this granddaughter of the legendary Thomas "Kanawha" Spratt of Fort Mill knew two future presidents of the United States. Young Andrew Jackson and his mother had spent several months with her family as refugees from the Revolutionary War battles in the Waxhaws area. Young James "Jimmy" Knox Polk was a neighbor of hers in Mecklenburg County. And, in later years, William Crawford, a Georgia congressman and opponent of Andrew Jackson in 1824, often stopped at the Smartts' on his way from Georgia to Washington.

Brig. Gen. Thomas Sumter was yet another famous person Susannah, or "Sukey," met in the course of the Revolution. When Sumter was surprised by British troops at Fishing Creek in Chester County on Aug. 18, 1780, he was forced to flee. Asleep under his wagon, Sumter did not have time to find his horse but took another.

Early the next morning the road in front of the Barnett home was filled with soldiers and fugitives headed for Charlotte. General Sumter and several aides stopped and Sumter asked Mrs. Barnett whether she would spare him a piece of johnnycake (cornbread) and a cup of milk. Mrs. Barnett had fed many a soldier and only had a little reserved for the family, but she set it before Sumter.

The story as told by Godey's Ladies Book in its February 1856 issue was that Sumter then turned to 19-year-old Susannah and said, "Miss Sukey, please to arrange my hair; but never mind combing it, it is so tangled." Susannah found his hair to be impossibly tangled but "clubbed" it the best she could.

A portrait of Sumter in the S.C. State House shows his hair to have been light colored and, typical of his time, brushed straight back on top. As for its being

NEARBY HISTORY

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"clubbed," that was the style of the Revolutionary era, not only for soldiers but for "gentlemen" who allowed their hair to grow long.

First, the hair was greased with candle wax and braided. Then, the braids were twisted around a small leather bag that was usually filled with sand. A thin strip of leather secured the braids, "so that the hair hung like a club at the nape of the neck." Last, the hair was powdered white with flour which, as one writer on Revolutionary dress customs observed, "provided a haven for lice and fleas."

The young and the reckless

In June 1882 the Yorkville Enquirer reported that McIver Law was practicing riding on the first bicycle to be seen on the streets of Yorkville. It said that Charlotte already had a bicycle club, and it appeared that two or three young men in Yorkville had placed orders for bicycles and that maybe the town would have a club one day.

As a model of what was possible, the paper cited the accomplishments of two Charlotte bicyclists. Messrs. Gilmer and Pharr had "mounted their iron steeds" and pedaled 22 miles to Davidson and made it in 1 hour and 48 minutes, the same amount of time it took a freight train to travel the same distance.

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