

Massive 1949 Travel Guide Included U.S. 21, Side Trips

Hastings House in New York published "The American Guide — A Source Book and Complete Travel Guide for the United States" in 1949, a massive 1,270-page account in fine print. Much of the basic research had been done by the Federal Writers Project, which terminated in 1939.

One of the highway routes followed was U.S. 21 from Charlotte to Columbia, via Fort Mill, Rock Hill and Chester, with side trips. It is interesting to see what the guide found worthwhile for tourists in 1949.

Fort Mill was given one line: "... A textile mill village. has Mon. to Catawba Inds. & one to faithful slaves." We wonder why the guide ignored the two other monuments of the park — one to the Confederate soldier and one to women of the Confederacy.

Rock Hill, described as a college and industrial town, got a great deal more attention. Its three-line history states that Rock Hill "... was country crossroads & R.R. stop as late as 1860s. Confeds. used it in transport of troops and supplies, & 1 townsman was killed when Fed. cavalry descended to destroy R.R. [the reference is to Stoneman's Raid, which resulted in the burning of the railroad trestle at Old Nations Ford.] Later town became a center for KKK operations."

Certainly there was a great deal of KKK activity in York County in the 1870s and Rock Hill had its proportionate share of members, but most of the violence occurred in Yorkville, Brattonsville, McConnellsville and the more rural areas of the county.

The guide continues: "Today it has a cotton printing plant (Rock Hill Printing & Finishing Co.), said to print 1/5 of all cotton goods manufactured in the U.S., factories that produce denim, hosiery, rugs & even coathangers, a hydroelectric power plant, & a \$40,000,000 Celanese Corp. Plant."

Following a history of Winthrop College is the judgment that the red brick buildings of the campus "show Eng. influence."

The Glencairn Azalea Gardens were open in April to the public for a fee. Confederate Park, which offered swimming, golf, tennis and picnicking was also available to the public.



Nearby History

Louise Pettus

White Plantation House, built in 1838, was described as Rock Hill's oldest home. The house on White Street, once the home of George and Anne Hutchison White, has "Prophets' Chamber," a room set aside for visiting ministers.

The side trip from Rock Hill was to the Catawba Indian Reservation, "where live S.C.'s only Indians. Most are mixed blood and few tribal customs remain. Throughout early Amer. Catawba fought on Amer. side and even supplied soldiers to Confeds."

Moving on to Chester, the guide described it as a textile mill town settled in the 1750's, "that also manufactures cotton seed products & farm implements. On Cth. (1850) grounds is Mon. to Jack Simons (sic.)" According to Anne P. Collins' "A Goodly Heritage," 1986, the monument to Jack Simmons, a Jewish confectionery store owner, was erected by Gentile friends who appreciated Simmons' love of children.

As side trips from Chester: the Erwin house at Lowrys, Guthriesville, Brattonsville and York (where 1st KKK in state is said to have org.) The statement was made that "Dr. Rufus Bratton was the model for Dr. Cameron in Thomas Dixon's "The Clansmen" from which the movie, "The Birth of a Nation" was made. There was no mention of York's lovely antebellum homes.

Kings Mountain State Park and Kings Mountain National Park were described along with the monuments and museum.

Another side trip from Chester was Lancaster, "a mill-village center" with a courthouse and jail both designed by Robert Mills. Seven and a half miles north of Lancaster was the Waxhaw Presbyterian Church, with its graves of Gen. William R. Davie and Andrew Jackson Sr. The historic marker for the birthplace of Andrew Jackson was noted. The Andrew Jackson State Park had not yet come into existence.

Last, the tourist was directed to Chester State Park but warned that the lake in 1949 was "unsuited for swimming but this is expected to be remedied in the near future."

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